

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

What We are Hearing -

What God is Saying -

Justification: a one-time irreversible act of God's free grace for guilty sinners, in which he forgives all our sins (even the ones we haven't committed yet!) and declares us perfectly righteous in His sight (even though we continue to fall terribly short of His righteousness!). He declares us perfectly righteous and therefore acceptable, not because we presently obey or are getting better, but only because of the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus, which God credits to us when we receive Jesus by faith alone. This declaration is a pledge and promise of what God will practically make us one day: perfectly righteous like Jesus. Until then, this declaration is the foundation for all moral improvement in our lives, though we continue to fall short.-

This doctrine [justification by faith] is the head and the cornerstone. That it alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour; that this doctrine is the heel of the Seed that opposes the old serpent and crushes its head. That is why Satan, in turn, cannot but persecute it." – Martin Luther

Small Group Questions - March 24. 24

The Big Idea: There are a bunch of things that happen to us the moment we become Christians. The Bible uses several images to capture this. Here's a sampler: we are rescued from peril (saved): set free from slavery (ransomed), made brand new (born again), made alive (resurrected), made children (adopted), etc. One of the images Paul develops in the book of Romans is pardon from judgment due to our sin. Can you think of other images?

Digging Deeper (Read Romans 3:19-24)

1. A simple definition for the word "justify" in our passage is *"the declaration of a guilty person as righteous."* Do a quick survey of how Paul uses this word in the book of Romans and share with the group any insights you glean.
2. Look over verses 19-24. What things do you learn about "justification" just from here?
3. Review the definition of justification at the bottom of these questions. Is there something you never thought of? Is there a question it raises?
4. Justification isn't not merely a pardon for sin, it is also God accounting Jesus' perfectly obedient life to us. What are some illustrations/analogies you might give to help people wrap their heads around this?
5. What should we find problematic about the following statements coming from a Christian: *"I might be justified," "I am being justified," "I will be justified."*
6. Look at the following breakdown and answer the questions below:
 - Justification (Past): Removed the Penalty of Sin
 - Sanctification (Present): Reduces the Power of Sin
 - Glorification (Future): Removes the Presence of Sin
7. Some Christians can make their "justification" and "glorification" depend on their "sanctification." In other words, God will only justify and glorify them after they have been successful living a godly life for Jesus.
 - a) How would you correct this from our passage?
 - b) How does sanctification relate to justification?

8. The reason why many Christians struggle with assurance of their salvation is because of the gap that exists between their position/status in Christ and their practical lives filled with moral failures.

a) In some of these cases, what are they inadvertently placing their trust in?

b) Why is truly understanding the doctrine of justification critical for giving them a sense of security?

9. Some have argued that justification (as defined below) gives people a license and incentive to sin. How would you address this concern?

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Resources

Romans: *Righteousness from Heaven* | R. Kent Hughes.

www.blueletterbible.org

www.preceptaustin.org