

Justification

God's Righteous Verdict



Justification is by grace alone

Introduction

How does a sinner come into a right relationship with God? The answer to this question alone determines whether a human being is a winner or a loser at life.

The person who gets this answer wrong remains outside of God's family, disconnected with God, under God's judgment, subject to God's wrath, and bound for outer darkness and eternal fire. This person may acquire wealth, gain a great reputation in the world, enjoy wonderful relationships with other human beings, and experience many enjoyments that life has to offer, but in the end—as Jesus says—“What does a man profit if he gains the whole world yet loses his own soul?” This life passes in a blink of an eye; eternity is forever.

The person who gets this answer right finds a place in God's family, enjoys a relationship with God, enjoys God's favor, lives under God's blessing and peace, and is bound for eternal light and everlasting glory. This person may be destitute of everything else in this life, may be scorned and rejected by this world, may suffer hardship, privation, illness, and loss of life and limb, but in the end he will enjoy an eternity of bliss, glory beyond the wildest human imagination, and a place at the eternal banquet table of his Savior. The trials of this life mean nothing in comparison to such immeasurable glory, honor and wealth in the life of the world to come.

How does a sinner come into a right relationship with God? There is no more important question!

What is justification?

Let's start with an understanding of the nature and scope of justification.

Justification . . .

- Is a declaration of God, not a process inside of a person.
- Is a change in status before God, not a change in personality or character.
- Is both universal—achieved and won by Jesus Christ; and personal—received through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Leads to sanctification, a new life that flows from love and obedience to our Savior.

Synonyms for justification in its many aspects include:

- Forgiveness.
- Acquittal, a verdict of not-guilty.
- Being clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
- Reconciliation with God.
- Cancellation of a debt.
- Quickening, regeneration, or rebirth.
- Atonement, expiation, propitiation, or substitution of righteousness that covers over sin.
- Curing the disease of sin and undoing its effects.

Note that not every term listed above is a direct synonym for every aspect of justification.

For reflection and discussion:

Consider the different aspects of justification and metaphors Scripture uses to describe justification in its various facets. Which picture gives you the most comfort, peace and joy? Why?

How do you look at yourself under God—as a sinner deserving of God's punishment, or as a dearly-loved child of God with whom God is enormously pleased, for Jesus' sake? How does your self-image affect your personal well-being?

Do you ever feel guilty about something you have been done? Even after you've received forgiveness, do you still feel guilty? Explain this phenomenon.

Justification is by grace alone

What is grace? Write your answer in the space below:

Words in the Bible that are sometimes translated as “grace” in English:

- Hebrew: *chesed* or *hesed*.
- Greek: *charis*.

Different ways the Bible speaks of grace . . .

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Which meaning are we referring to when we speak of justifying grace?

Read Romans 3:19-26. How does Paul’s letter to the Romans make it abundantly clear that only God’s grace can save us?

Characteristics of grace

Take a few moments to look up each of the following passages. Write down the characteristic of grace that is expressed in each group of passages.

- Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 3:24

- Romans 11:5,6; Acts 15:11; Galatians 5:4

- Isaiah 26:10

- Hebrews 4:16; James 4:6

- 1 John 3:1

How were the believers in the Old Testament saved?

Read Romans 4:1-8, 16. How was God’s plan of salvation exactly the same in the Old Testament? How was it different?

For reflection and discussion:

Have you ever felt that you have committed an unforgiveable sin? How does **Romans 5:20,21** bring you great comfort when you are troubled and afflicted by the burden of your sin?

Read Romans 3:8 and **Romans 6:1-4.** What can grace never become?

Read Galatians 2:20,21. In your own words describe how these passages describe our Christian life.