

Justification

God's Righteous Verdict



Justification is personal and subjective

Introduction

In our last lesson we saw that everything Jesus did as our Savior he did for the entire world. He atoned for the sin of the world. He redeemed the world. He reconciled the world to God. In Jesus' death and resurrection God passed a verdict of "not-guilty" upon the world. God forgave the sins of all people through the death of his Son, nailing the world's transgressions to the cross.

But although Jesus' completed work is for everyone, not everyone will be saved.

Each sinner individually comes into a right relationship with God by God's grace through faith in Jesus. This is the personal and subjective side of justification. A sinner who repents of his sin and trusts in Jesus for forgiveness appropriates personally and individually all of the blessings of salvation. Apart from repentance and faith in Jesus there is no entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Justification is through faith alone

Ephesians 2:8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 5:1,2 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 4:13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Galatians 2:16 So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

The nature of faith

For consideration: Think of ways that the word "faith" is used in our culture. How does popular use of the word often differ from the biblical concept of faith?

Faith is not merely knowledge, but it is a conviction.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Greek word: πίστις (*pistis*—*faith*). Underlying meaning of the word:

Related words: πιστῶ (*pistō*—to believe or have faith), πιστὸς (*pistos*—faithful)

Not sorrow without trust.

Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Acts 16:29-31 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

Faith is simple trust, reliance upon something. We have faith in many things: Objects, machines, other people, history, etc. Faith has an object; it is not merely an opinion or something imagined.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

2 Thessalonians 1:10 This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

John 4:39-42 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Psalms 130:4 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.

Psalms 78:4 We will not hide them from our children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.

Romans 10:9,14,15,17 If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Hebrews 11 In this "faith chapter" the writer to the Hebrews gives many historical examples of people who lived by faith.

For consideration: Explain the object of your faith. What or whom do you trust?

What common misconceptions persist about faith in popular culture, even in the church? Have you learned anything new and helpful today about the nature of faith?

Don't equate faith with feelings. Look outward, not inward.

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The benefits of a personal relationship with Jesus

We live in daily repentance. We are constantly aware of God's grace in our lives. We are acutely aware of God's love and forgiveness. We hold only to Jesus' teaching, but to Jesus himself as our Savior, our brother, and our friend.

Clothed in his righteousness

Isaiah 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Righteousness is imputed to us

Romans 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

God placed his name on me, made me a member of his family

Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Made alive in Christ

Ephesians 2:4,5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

We have access to God's throne in prayer

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

We want to love and serve Jesus

John 14:15 If you love me, you will obey what I command.

For consideration: You possess each of these blessings—and many more!—through your living trust in Jesus. Which of these personal blessings do you find especially comforting? Explain why you feel as you do.

Faith is the hand that receives Jesus' completed work

Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Paul is quoting Habakkuk 2:4.)

Genesis 15:6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Faith does not complete justification; it receives it. Faith does not cause justification.

We are justified by faith alone, but faith is never alone

Because the Holy Spirit lives and works in and through us, he enables us to put our faith into practice, do good works, and produce the fruits of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:6 The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Repentance is incompatible with continuous, deliberate sin.

Hebrews 10:26,27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

1 John 3:6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Romans 3:8 Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.

Romans 6:1,2 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Martin Luther's Thesis 1 (from his 95 Theses): When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ commanded "Repent!" he willed that the whole life of the believer be one of repentance.

Faith without works is dead.

James 2:17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

We have been saved . . .

- By grace
- Through faith
- For works