



Topic:
Making My Call and Election Sure
(Understanding the Steps of Salvation)
Part 2: Justification

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

~ Romans 5:1-2 (NKJV) ~

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INTRODUCTION

As we continue our series study, we now move our topic of discussion and sharing to ***“justification”*** in the life of believer. One of the greatest truths of salvation is that of justification. But what is ***“justification”***? Justification is a change in man’s relation or standing before God. It has to do with relations that have been disturbed by sin, and these relations are personal. To Justify means “to demonstrate or to prove to be just, right or valid; to declare free of blame; absolve; to free of guilt and the penalty attached to grievous sin.” Therefore, justification is a legal declaration of innocence. It is a change from guilt and condemnation to freedom and acceptance.

Whereas regeneration has to do with the change of the believer’s nature; justification, has to do with the change of the believer’s standing before God. Whereas regeneration is subjective; justification is objective. The former has to do with believer’s state; the latter with believer’s standing. In other words, regeneration is influenced by man’s personal feelings and opinions. Man has to believe in the work of regeneration before regeneration can take affect in man’s life. This makes regeneration subjective. The work of justification stands in contrast to regeneration. Justification is NOT influenced by personal feelings or opinions. This makes justification objective. Justification is the work of God where the righteousness of Jesus is reckoned to the believer (sinner), so the believer (sinner) is declared by God as being righteous under the Law.

Romans 4:1-6 (NKJV)

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works.

The message the apostle Paul was conveying is that justification cannot be obtained by natural efforts nor through legal obedience. Nothing we can do in our flesh will ever earn us justification. If works were the grounds of Abraham’s justification, he would have matter for boasting; but as it is perfectly certain that he had none in the sight of God, it follows that Abraham could not have been justified by works. It was Abraham’s faith (Abraham believed God) that brought him into right standing before God. In the matter of

justification, faith is set in direct opposition to works. Abraham believed in the promises which embraced Christ, as we believe in Christ Himself; and in both cases, faith is merely the instrument that puts us in possession of the blessing gratuitously bestowed. Verse 4 of this portion of scripture clearly sets forth that if justification was gained through works than it would not be counted as an act of God's grace (His unmerited favor toward undeserving man). Man would simply receive justification as wages for his work.

Justification is an instantaneous occurrence with the result being eternal life. It is based completely and solely upon Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and is received by faith alone. The moment we believe Christ's atonement for sin wrought on Calvary's cross and embrace a life committed to God, the act of justification becomes a reality in our life. We are at peace with God. As our scripture text for Part 2 of this series declares:

Romans 5:1-2 (NKJV)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Peace with God is the most wonderful gift that anyone can possess! Genuine peace with God means that we are truly reconciled with Him. We are no longer enemies with God, but friends with Him. We do not need to fear His judgment.

This peace is something Christ secured through what He did for us in His identification with sinful man on the cross. It is not a calm feeling that we as believers have. It is the result of the eternal victory that Christ won over sin and death. It far exceeds weak human emotion and experience (although we do get to experience it in our emotions). See, we were at war with God in our fallen minds.

Colossians 1:19-21 (NKJV)

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.

Jesus then enters humanity and becomes our perfect representative to the full extent of His substitutionary death and resurrection. The sin of the world was placed entirely upon Him, thus He made peace with God as the vicarious man. Both God's righteous anger towards sin and the hardened state we had towards God because of our sin were resolved in the work of Christ.

OUR STUDY

There are three steps, after the initial act of repentance, by which we are to reach "the prize of *our high calling*"--glory, honor, and immortality. Not one of these steps can be omitted by those who win the great prize, nor can they be taken in any way but their order as directed in Scriptures.

Justification comes *first as a necessity*, because all the human race being sinners, as such God could not either sanctify or glorify them (fill them with his Holy Spirit); therefore, by some means, they must be "made free from sin" (brought to a condition of *guilt-free*) in order that they *might* "have their fruit unto holiness" (*sanctification*), and receive the gift of the Father (*indwelling of the Holy Spirit*) and eventually receive "the end thereof--eternal life" (*redemption*)(*cf. Romans 6:22*). As sinners (carnal), men are not

subject to the law of God, neither indeed can they be (*cf. Romans 8:7*). We are made “free from sin” by faith. We are told of God that a ransom has been given for our sin and that if we by faith accept the ransom, He no longer regards or treats us as sinners, but as the redeemed who are going on to perfections.

Upon what grounds does God reckon sinful man as justified or righteous?

The ransom for our sin has been paid by Jesus, who “Himself bare *our sins* in His own body on a tree”.

1 Peter 2:24 (KJV)

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on a tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness by whose stripes ye were healed.

Jesus was treated as a sinner on our behalf, and we are now treated as *just* persons on His behalf.

1 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

Only Believers are justified.

Those who do not believe that Christ *died for our sins* according to the Scriptures, and that “He rose again *the third day*,” for our justification are not justified.

1 Corinthians 15:12-18 (NKJV)

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

When we believe the “good news” of our justification, it gives us joy and peace to realize that we may now come to God; and we no longer dread or fear God but now love God, because we see His goodness and love, for “herein is the love of God manifested” (*cf. 1 John 4:9*).

Justification Consists of Two Elements.

1. The Forgiveness of Sin and the Removal of Its Guilt and Punishment. The gravity of our sinful standing before God is summarized in Romans 3:23 “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*”. God thus has provided righteousness for unrighteous man through the atonement of Christ. The way of forgiveness and freedom has been offered to all, Jews and Gentiles, through the sacrificial death of Christ. Through Christ’s atonement, the penalty or punishment for sin has been satisfied. Through sinful man’s repentance before God, the forgiveness of sin is afforded and the guilt of sin removed.

2. The Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness and Restoration to God’s Favor.

The forgiven sinner is not like the discharged prisoner who has served out his term and is discharged from further punishment, but with no rights of citizenship. No, justification means much more than

acquittal. The repentant sinner receives back in his pardon, the full rights of citizenship. He stands before God as having never been separated from God through sin. He stands before God with full restoration of rights of his kingdom citizenship.

Micah 7:18-19 (NKJV)

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity, and passing over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us; and will subdue our iniquities, You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

It is as though we have never sinned. Our joy and peace is full because we know that when the Father looks at us, He sees us as though we are without sin. Christ's perfect life of righteousness can cover the worst sinner.

CONCLUSION

As we have shared, justification does not require works, deeds or proof that we are a changed man. The thief on the cross did not prove that he was a changed man, but he was granted righteousness of Jesus that very day. I am sure the thief would have become a different man if he could have lived longer. The profound beauty of justification is that it begins in Heaven the moment we become willing to submit to the authority of the Spirit of God. As long as we continue in a submissive attitude (to be, to go, to do) toward God's authority over our lives, we have the assurance of our standing of justification and of eternal life. This, in a nutshell, is how our justification begins before God through Christ. Even though the process is simple, it is a miracle. How the Holy Spirit transforms a rebellious heart into a submissive heart is a mystery that God alone knows, but it does happen. If you are missing the joy and peace that comes from "letting go and letting God," if you have not experienced the full assurance of God's salvation through the justification that Jesus offers, if you have not grasped something about God's great love for you, I beseech you to ask God to lead you by His Holy Spirit to a revelation of the finished work of your justification wrought through Christ's sacrificial life given on your behalf. Be encouraged my brother and my sister as we continue our journey of understanding the steps of salvation. Prepare your heart and mind to begin our study on *Sanctification*.

God's peace and blessing be upon you....

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