

More Than Being Saved!

Eight Major Doctrines Defining New Testament Salvation

III. JUSTIFICATION

Justification means to be pronounced righteous. It is the legal and judicial act where God declares the believer righteous in Jesus Christ. It is not only the *taking away* of the believer's guilt, but also the *imputation* of Christ's righteousness in its place. The believer is not righteous in himself but only in Christ.

A. The Two Aspects Of Justification

There are two distinct aspects of justification:

- a. The forgiveness, remission, and taking away of the believer's sins.
- b. The imputation (see *Imputation*) of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

1. As mentioned before, man generally thinks of salvation in terms of forgiveness or pardon. God, however, knew man needed much more than just his sins forgiven. If salvation only meant forgiveness, the believer would still be bound to his sin nature and unable to quit sinning. He would be forgiven for his sins but still hold the *position* of a sinner in God's sight. God did not want such a weak and practically useless salvation for believers. He devised one that not only takes the sins away but also puts righteousness in their place—both *imputed and imparted* righteousness. When He looks on a believer, He does not see someone who is still a sinner and only forgiven, or someone who is just innocent of the guilt of sin. He sees that saint *completely justified with the righteousness of His son Jesus Christ* (Romans 3:22-26, 10:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:22-23).

2. The term justification in itself only speaks of God imputing righteousness to the believer's *account*. However, the Christian not only has righteousness reckoned to him (see *Imputation*), he also has it IN him. It is one of the characteristics of the "**divine nature**" he received the moment he believed (2 Peter 1:4; see *Regeneration*). This imparted righteousness can also be found under the doctrine, *Sanctification*.

B. The Method Of Justification

1. Justification is apart from any work of the law (*the ten commandments, Sabbath keeping, the sermon on the mount, the golden rule, etc.*), but is only obtained by faith in the finished work and shed blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-30, 4:5, 5:1-9, 10:4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 2:16, 3:8, 22).
2. If one could be justified by keeping the law or by good works, then Christ died for nothing (Galatians 2:21, 3:24).
3. The reason God gave man the law was to show him that he is a sinner and unable to live up to God's righteous standard. Then, after the sinner realized this, its purpose was to *lead him to Christ for salvation* (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24).

C. The Extent Of Justification

1. Many believe that salvation only puts the believer in the same condition Adam was before the fall; that is, in an innocent state. Again, this is only forgiveness. Innocence and forgiveness in themselves do not speak of *righteousness* in any way. As Adam proved, it only takes one act of disobedience for a person to lose his innocence. On the contrary, the justified believer *gains much more* in Christ than he lost in Adam (Romans 5:12-20).

2. As mentioned before, justification includes forgiveness and the remission of sins (Acts 10:43; Colossians 2:13), but it does not stop there; it brings with it **"the righteousness of God"**. This the believer cannot lose; it is a gift God has given with no conditions (Romans 5:17-21, 6:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

3. When a sinner receives Christ, he receives a *death* he did not die, satisfying the curse of the law against him (Galatians 3:13); and a *life* he did not live, a holy and righteous life which only Christ could supply. Thus, every Christian is a *partaker* of Christ's death and resurrection. His position before God is the same as his Savior's, dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness (Romans Ch. 6; Galatians 2:20).

4. Although the believer is *legally* dead to sin in God's sight, he is not yet dead to it *physically*. This leaves him still able to sin. This ability to sin, however, does not affect the saint's standing or position before the Lord. To God the old sinful nature is forever *dead*, and a dead man *cannot sin!* God wants every Christian to reckon (account) himself that way so he won't sin (Romans 5:17-18, 6:1-14, 8:10; Galatians 2:19-20; Colossians 3:3; 1 Peter 2:24).

5. Also, justification brings *peace* with God. Since the law that cursed the saint has been satisfied by Christ, there is no longer any enmity between him and God. The believer can rest in the assurance that he will *never* experience God's wrath, for God poured it all out on Christ (Romans 5:1-10; Colossians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9).

D. The Permanence Of Justification

1. The justification that God gives the believer will extend throughout eternity. The reason is the saint is in an *eternal Savior* (Revelation 22:13), who purchased with an *eternal redemption* (Hebrews 9:12), an *eternal salvation* (Hebrews 5:9), that supplies him with eternal life (John 10:28)! Furthermore, since the saint is sinless, more than that righteousness in Jesus Christ, **"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died..."** (Romans 8:33-34). If the Holy, Righteous, Sinless, Perfect, and Eternal God of Heaven cannot find anything wrong with the standing of the justified Christian, *who can?*
