

The Biblical Doctrine of Justification

How Can I Be Right With God?

Covenant Life College

Teacher: Robin Boisvert

Session 2, Part 2

Statements

justification; to justify

1. It is a forensic term. The idea of justification takes its imagery from the law court (Deuteronomy 25.1).
2. It is the act of a judge **pronouncing** or **declaring** someone righteous.
3. Such a declaration does not *make* a person righteous in the sense that there has been an inner transformation of character. The process of being made righteous we call sanctification.
4. Justification is a legal declaration of a person's status before the law.
5. It is the opposite of a pronouncement of condemnation.
6. It cancels a legal liability before God (Romans 8.1).
7. It confers a privileged status upon the one justified (Romans 8.33). He has all the rights and privileges of someone who never sinned.
8. It saves from the past; it secures for the future (Romans 8.34-39).
9. It is an irreversible pronouncement (Romans 8.30, 33).
10. The basis or ground of justification is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Romans 3.24).
11. It is a free gift; it cannot be earned (Romans 5.17).
12. It is received by faith; faith is the instrument through which justification is obtained (Romans 3.22; 4.3; 5.1; Galatians 2.16).

“God’s justifying decision is in effect the judgment of the Last Day regarding where we will spend eternity, brought forward into the present and pronounced here and now. It is a judgment on our eternal destiny; God will never go back on it, however much Satan may appeal against the verdict.” [Geneva Study Bible, Nelson Publishing, p. 1852]

“The doctrine of justification means then that in God’s sight the ungodly man, now in Christ, has perfectly kept the moral law of god, which also means in turn that “in Christ” he has perfectly loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and his neighbor as himself. It means that saving faith is directed to the doing and dying of Christ alone and not to the good works or inner experience of the believer. It means that the Christian’s righteousness before God is *in heaven* at the right hand of god in Jesus Christ and *not on earth* within the believer. It means that the ground of our justification is the vicarious work of Christ *for* us, not the gracious work of the Spirit *in* us. It means that the faith-righteousness of justification is not personal but vicarious, not infused but imputed, not experiential but judicial, not psychological but legal, not our own but a righteousness alien to us and outside of us (*justitia alienum et extra nos*), not earned but graciously given (*sola gratia*) through faith in Christ that is itself a gift of grace. It means also in its declarative character that justification possesses an eschatological dimension, for it amounts to the divine verdict of the Eschaton being brought forward into the present time and rendered here and now concerning the believing sinner. By God’s act of justifying the sinner through faith in Christ, the sinner, as it were, has been brought, “before the time,” to the Final Assize and has already passed successfully through it, having been acquitted of any and all charges brought against him! Justification then, properly conceived, contributes in a decisive way to the Calvinistic doctrine of assurance and the eternal security of the believer.”¹

[Robert Reymond, Systematic Theology, Nelson, p. 742]