

JUSTIFICATION

What is the good work God began in us? (Philippians 1:6)

A. THE GOOD WORK

"...he who began a **good work** in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

1. Notice the three stages of the "good work"
 - Past: deliverance from the penalty of sin (Justification)
 - Present: delivering from the power of sin (Sanctification)
 - Future: deliverance from the presence of sin (Glorification)
2. The "good work" of God began with justification
3. Definition: Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he:
 - thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - declares us to be right in his sight
 - makes us right with God
 - establishes persons as righteous; that is, in right and true relationship to himself

B. JUSTIFICATION INCLUDES LEGAL DECLARATION BY GOD ("TO DECLARE RIGHTEOUS")

1. "To justify" commonly means "to declare righteous" (forensic=having to do with legal proceedings)
2. Scriptural examples: Acts 13:38-39; Romans 3:21-24; 4:5; 5:1, 9; 8:33-34; 10:9-10
3. Justification does not make us righteous, but rather pronounces us righteous



C. GOD DECLARES US TO BE JUST IN HIS SIGHT

1. God declares that we have no penalty to pay for sin (Romans 8:1, 4:6-8)
 - Yet forgiveness of sin is only one part of justification
 - Forgiveness alone makes us morally neutral, but does not give us favor with God
 - To have favor with God means we must also have Christ's righteousness within us
2. God also declares that we are righteous in his sight
 - God must declare us to have merits of perfect righteousness before him
 - Scriptural examples: Isaiah 61:10; Romans 3:21-22; 4:3; 5:19
3. Justification = forgiveness of sins + Christ's righteousness imputed within us

D. GOD CAN DECLARE US TO BE JUST BECAUSE HE *IMPUTES* CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS TO US

1. Imputes = God thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us (Romans 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9; Romans 4:6-8)
2. Imputation is essential to the heart of the gospel and has happened twice already
 - When Adam sinned, his guilt was imputed to us
 - When Christ suffered and died for our sins, our sin was imputed to Christ

E. JUSTIFICATION COMES TO US ENTIRELY BY GOD'S GRACE, NOT ON ACCOUNT OF ANY MERIT IN OURSELVES

"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." Ephesians 2:8-9

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Rom. 3:22-24

F. GOD JUSTIFIES US THROUGH OUR FAITH IN CHRIST (GAL. 2:16; ROMANS 5:1)

1. Why did God choose faith?
 - Faith is the one attitude of the heart that is the exact opposite of depending on ourselves
 - Scriptural examples: Romans 4:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:20
2. What about James 2:18-26, especially verse 24..."you see a man is justified by works and not be faith alone."
3. James is using justified to mean "demonstrate or show to be righteous," not "declare to be righteous"
 - Jesus to the Pharisees (Luke 16:15)
 - Jesus to the lawyer (Luke 10:28-29)
4. The context of James 2:18-26
 - James 2:21 is referring to something later in Abraham's life, long after God justified Abraham once for all, reckoning righteousness to him as a result of his faith
 - James is affirming a different truth, that an outward showing that one is righteous only occurs as we see evidence in their life
5. Practical implications of justification by faith alone:
 - This doctrine enables us to offer genuine hope to unbelievers who know they could never make themselves righteous before God
 - This doctrine gives us confidence that God will never make us pay the penalty for sins that have been forgiven on Christ's merit

THE BOTTOM LINE



You are justified, declared righteous, at the moment of your salvation. Justification does not make you righteous, but rather pronounces you righteous. Your righteousness comes from placing your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice covers your sin, allowing God to see you as perfect and unblemished. Because as believers we are in Christ, God sees Christ's own righteousness when He looks at us. This meets God's demands for perfection; thus, He declares you righteous—He justifies you. You are declared "Not guilty!"