

The Simple Truth of Justification

Galatians 2:15-16, 3:10-13

Man's Views of Justification

“Justification, according to [the British monk] Pelagius, involves persons overcoming sinful habits, pursuing noble ethical goals, and fulfilling God's law. Pelagius claimed that people are capable of realizing their own justification, and many, in fact, do so.” (*The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, by Bruce Demarest, p.347)

“Justification ... means that Jesus Christ offers himself to me as my divine companion and if I accept his companionship I can be made virtuous although I have been guilty.” (congregationalist pastor Lyman Abbott, cited in *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, by Bruce Demarest, p.347)

“Liberationists generally define ... justification as the implementation of justice across the social arena Although God motivates [it], justification nevertheless is a human activity freely effected by human beings who are offended by social, political, and economic injustices.” (*The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, by Bruce Demarest, p.355)

“Viewing justification as a process, Catholicism speaks both of the inception and the increase of justification.... God through Christ's merits and via the sacrament of baptism remits past sins and infuses into the soul new habits of grace.... The baptized work for eternal life by means of love-inspired virtues that are the fruit of grace infused into the soul. Rome upholds the ‘merit of worthiness’ (*meritum de condigno*) – i.e., the merit wrought by free moral acts performed in this state of grace.... Traditional Roman Catholics, in other words, trust in God's infusion of a new nature and plead the worth of their God-enabled works.... For Rome, justification is not [God's] objective *pronouncement* of righteousness but [man's] lifelong *process* of becoming righteous. The church traditionally has taught that surplus merits earned by Christ and exceptional saints can be transferred.... Mary contributes ‘her share to the justification of the human race...’ Catholics believe that assurance of final justification normally is not possible. Justifying grace, defined as the infusion of righteousness to the soul, can be forfeited by mortal sin but may be restored by the sacrament of penance.... If the process of justification ... is not completed in this life, the individual must endure the purifying sufferings of purgatory.” (*The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, by Bruce Demarest, p.350)

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” (Article #3 of *The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*)

Galatians 2:15-16

“Justified” refers to a _____ declaration that the _____ has nothing against a person.

The only two options that humanity has are 1) keep the law perfectly so that God has nothing against you or 2) place your _____ in Jesus Christ so that God can justify you.

Galatians 3:10

“Cursed” = facing _____ and _____

The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.... All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed ... The Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. (Deuteronomy 28:20, 45, 63)

Galatians 3:11-12

- Verse 11: those who are justified (the righteous) receive life by faith [in God's promises]
- Verse 12: the law works differently – it is about rules that you obey, not promises you believe. So those who receive life by the law receive it by obeying the law.

There is the option of _____ in God's _____, or there is the option of _____ everything in the _____.

So how can a just God justify sinners through faith? Three puzzle pieces from

Galatians 3:13:

When God's servant came the people *esteemed [him] to be stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities* (Is. 53:5).

Imputation means that our sin and curse were credited to Christ, as if they were His. This made _____ possible: He could be cursed by God in our place. Our curse (destruction and death) was carried out upon Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake [God the Father] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin.*

Why is faith the only way that God can say about us, 'My law has no claim against you'? Why is faith the key?

Romans 5:1 *Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

What is the tendency of the human heart that leads us to twist the doctrine of justification (**Galatians 2:15**)?

“I myself am __[fill in the blank]_____ and not like those other people.”

Luke 18:9-14 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.”

“Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.” (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, p.723)

“We may define justification as that instantaneous act of God whereby, as a gift of grace, he imputes to a believing sinner the full and perfect righteousness of Christ through faith alone and legally declares him perfectly righteous in his sight, forgiving the sinner of all unrighteousness and thus delivering him from all condemnation.” (*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, ed. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, p.612)

“By justification we mean that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, he declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law, but to be restored to his favor.” (A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1907), p. 849.)

“We define justification as God’s gracious, legal verdict in respect of those who believe in Christ, forgiving their sins and declaring them righteous through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.... This divine verdict occurs at the moment of conversion but logically follows the person’s conscious decision to believe the Gospel, turn from sin, and trust Christ as Savior and Lord.... Justification is a once-for-all, completed decision and not an ongoing process in believers’ lives.... Progressive sanctification follows upon and is continually rooted in justification.” (*The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, by Bruce Demarest, pp.367-68)

“God’s justification of those who trust him, according to the Gospel, is a decisive transition, here and now, from a state of condemnation and wrath because of their sins to one of acceptance and favor by virtue of Jesus’ flawless obedience culminating in his voluntary sin-bearing death. God ‘justifies the wicked’ (ungodly: Rom. 4:5) by imputing (reckoning, crediting, counting, accounting) righteousness to them and ceasing to count their sins against them (Rom. 4:1-8). Sinners receive through faith in Christ alone the ‘gift of righteousness’ (Rom. 1:17, 5:17; Phil. 3:9) and thus become ‘the righteousness of God’ in him who was ‘made sin’ for them (2 Cor. 5:21).” (From “The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration” cited in *Getting the Gospel Right* by R.C. Sproul, p.102).