

Justification

by

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Justification Is Pronounced By God

The blessed doctrine of justification by faith lies at the heart of the Christian gospel. It is stated in brief summary in Romans 3:19-30. "Now we know that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the

circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." What a beautiful statement of a blessed Christian doctrine! We call it the doctrine of "justification by faith." I propose to spend some time investigating with you five aspects of that subject. I want us to see Bible teaching that justification of sinners is pronounced by God, provided by Jesus Christ, procured by faith, proven by works, and is present in experience to each one who repents and trusts Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Let us begin with an investigation of this truth: Justification of sinners is pronounced by God alone. We could say, "God is the source of our justification."

Romans 3:30 speaks of God calling sinners, then adds, "*whom he called, them he also justified.*" Romans 3:26 speaks of God as being "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Since sin is against God, none but God can justify the sinner. It is easy to say that, but it is astounding to realize all that is involved in it. You see the justification of a sinner is no small thing. It involves a most serious problem in view of man's sin and God's nature. Man is a sinner in condition and in practice. Adam, the forefather of all mankind, sinned in the Garden of Eden. His fall brought a weakness toward sin upon the whole human race. The Bible expresses it this way, "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*" Rom. 5:12. Again, the Bible reports, "*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ...Now we know that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law': that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be become guilty before God*" Rom. 3:11, 12, 19. That New Testament passage is a loose quotation of an Old Testament text to be found in Psalm 14: 1-3 and 53: 1- 3. It teaches that all men of all generation and cultures have sinned and are estranged from God. It is that sin and the separation that sin brought, which places man in the need of justification. But how can guilty sinners be justified? God's nature is so opposed to sin that He can never excuse the guilty nor pass over deserved judgment on sin. Yet, God must justify sinners or sinners will never be saved. Consider the law of God; it is perfectly just and holy. A basic principle of justice written in Holy Scripture is that good must be approved and evil must be condemned; good must be rewarded and evil must be punished. That principle is so important that God had it written in the law by which man is to govern men (Deut. 25:1). No partiality must be shown. Justice is pictured as blindfolded and holding balance scales. The symbol is that the divine law demands justice be meted out without partiality to any person. God is greater than the law He gives, of course, and yet He abides by that law of justice.

On the other hand, consider the mercy and grace of God. He feels for the sinner in his plight. He loves the sinner, even while He rejects the sin. He desires the deliverance of the sinner and moves to help him. But how can God be just if He ignores His own law of justice (to approve the righteous and condemn the unrighteous) and tries to forgive and justify the sinner? That was the very problem God dealt with in Romans, chapter 3. How can God .be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus" (verse 26)? God must pronounce the whole world guilty, upon the basis of justice. Yet, He does not desire that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3: 9) .The whole world is already concluded to be guilty. How, then, can anyone be saved? There would have been no hope apart from the infinite wisdom of God by which He planned the way of salvation for poor, lost sinful creatures such as we. God did not suspend, nor alter, nor ignore the law of justice when He worked out the way of salvation. He satisfied His justice in condemning and punishing sin. He expressed His mercy in

pardoning and accepting sinners. How! He satisfied both harmoniously in the person of Jesus Christ. That is the subject under discussion in Romans 3. Verses 23 and 24 set forth the guilt of man and the grace of God. Concerning man's guilt, verse 23 reads, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" Concerning God's grace, verse 24 reads, "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" What a glorious contradiction! On man's part, there is only sin and failure. On God's part, there is only grace and redemption. Yet, the two come together in peace and the sinner is justified. Do you ask, "How is it possible?" Verses 24 and 25 explain. It is an act of "redemption" by which one in bondage is set free by the payment of a price. That redemption is "*in Christ Jesus,*" that is, it is based upon something He did. That which Christ did to effect redemption is to provide "a propitiation (a covering for sin) through faith in his blood." Salvation and justification of guilty sinners is possible because Jesus Christ shed His blood in dying for them so those who trust Him are given a favorable verdict and no longer charged as sinners. Now we come to the heart of the matter: a definition of justification. Justification is the divine pronouncement that the one who is in Christ Jesus is fully acceptable to God, as acceptable as if he had never sinned." Father, we marvel at such grace. The fact that we who were guilty and inexcusable sinners are now declared acceptable to you because of Jesus Christ is almost beyond our comprehension. Thank you for the benefits of the atoning death of Jesus, which have come to us by your grace. To have all sin removed, all indebtedness cancelled, and to be acceptable to you as if we had never sinned is a gift of grace beyond our fondest dreams. But we accept it and thank you for it. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Justification Is Provided In Jesus Christ

Here is a Bible truth almost too good to be true: God declares that guilty sinners are acceptable to Him when they are trusting Jesus Christ." God is not ignoring sin-guilt when He makes that pronouncement, nor when He receives those who come to Him. He is acting in grace on the basis of a great deed He has accomplished in the person of His only begotten Son, whom we call Jesus.

"*In Christ*". Is a key to an understanding of the Christian scriptures? All our spiritual blessings (from salvation in time to glorification in eternity) are secured to us in Jesus Christ. By grace, God has "made us accepted in the beloved" Son whom He sent to be our Savior (Eph.1: 5). The benefits of justification are secured to the penitent believer" In Christ." There are four great elements of that teaching which are set forth in the New Testament. Let us review them one by one.

The believer is justified because he is "in Christ." To be "*In Christ*" means to be saved, and to be saved means one is "*in Christ.*" Second Corinthians 5: 17 reads, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Look what a change is made when one is "*In Christ.*" That change by which one becomes "*a new creature*" is the basis of God's act in declaring him to be accepted as if he had not sinned.

What does it mean that a person who trusts Jesus Christ becomes "*a new creature*"? It does not mean there is a physical change in the person. He remains the same age, sex, weight, height, language, etc. The change is spiritual. It is like being born into a new life (John 1:11-13, 3:3, 5), being resurrected from death into life (Eph. 2: 1-20), and thus being changed into a new kind of spiritual relationship with God and sin.

We were born under the consequences of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. We were members of the kingdom of Satan, who is the god of this present age. We were sinners by birth and by choice, by inheritance and by practice. We were dominated and governed by a nature which was weak to resist sin and which desired the way of sin. We were separated from God in the present and subject to eternal banishment from Him in the future judgment. We were *"without God, and without hope in the world"* Eph. 2:12. But something wonderful happened when Jesus Christ became our Savior. *"Old things (all old relationships) passed away forever and all things (all future relationships) became new and different."* That is the word of II Corinthians 5: 17.

What happened? Jesus Christ became our Master, not Satan. We received a new nature that is nothing less than the very nature of God himself. We were made citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We were given eternal life. We became children of God. Heaven became our home and eternity with God our glorious prospect. All those blessings, and many more were secured to us because we were justified in Christ.

The believer is justified because he is. *"made righteous"*. That sounds almost too good to be true, but it is a Bible doctrine. Christ is *"made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* 1 Cor. I: 30. Another text reads, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* II Cor. 5:21. To be *"in Christ"* means to be *"found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"* Phil. 3:9. The clear teaching is that the one who is *"in Christ"* is actually made righteous by receiving the righteousness of God. Therefore, there is no fault or guilt to be found in him, for there is no way to condemn the righteousness of God. Therefore, he is justified.

Theologians have argued through the years whether justification means that a person was just *"declared"* righteous, or whether he was actually made *"righteous"*. The answer is of great importance. In redemption and regeneration, the believer in Jesus Christ is *"made"* righteous by receiving the imputed righteousness of God. In justification, God declares that He accepts without reservation the person who has been *"made"* righteous in salvation because such a person *"is"* righteous. You who are trusting Jesus Christ are accepted before God with the same freedom that God accepts His only begotten Son. That is why the Bible says God has made you *"accepted in the beloved"* Eph. 1:6.

The believer is justified because He has been *"perfected in Christ."* Hebrews 10: 14 reads, *"For by one suffering he (God) hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."* That term *"perfected"* does not refer to moral purity so much as to full development. God looks upon us in Christ. He does not see us as little spiritual babes who stumble and fall and try again. He sees us as full and mature. That does not mean God deceives himself, or plays games with His children. Not at all, The salvation provided in Jesus Christ reaches from eternity to eternity. It is God's act of foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying, and eventually glorifying Rom. 8:29, 30. God looks upon us not only in view of what we now are, but also in view of what we will become. He looks upon us in view of the perfection that belongs to Jesus Christ, which perfection we will eventually experience.

The believer is justified because he has received the fullness of Christ. Kenneth Taylor expressed the idea most perfectly in his paraphrase of Colossians 2:9, 10, *"For in Christ there is all of God in a human body; so you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest ruler, with authority over every other power." You see, " ...It pleased the Father that in him (Jesus Christ) should all fullness*

dwelling" Col. 1: 19." *And of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace*" John 1:16. That is not the inheritance of a few Christians, but of all Christians.

To be saved means we are in Christ and Christ is in us. He becomes our very life. We are so intimately united with Him that our physical bodies become members of Christ 1 Cor. 6:15. All that belongs to Christ belongs to us in Christ. He shares with us all that He is and all that He has. That is what it means to be saved.

That is why the person who is "*in Christ*" is justified by God. The Christian is placed in Christ, made a new creation, robed with the righteousness which belongs to Christ alone, is made complete in the Son, and shares in all the perfection's which belong to Christ. Upon that basis, God makes a divine pronouncement that the one who is "in Christ" is fully acceptable to Himself. That pronouncement is justification.

Take special notice, however, that justification before God is related to being "in Christ." There is no justification or acceptance before God apart from Jesus Christ. That is why the Christian gospel urges so strongly that there is salvation in no other, "*...For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" Acts 4: 12.

"Father, we thank and praise you that you have declared us justified - acceptable in your presence. We thank you for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom all that we need to make us acceptable before you has been provided to us. Help us to love Him and serve Him because of all the spiritual blessings that have come to us through Him. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

Justification Is Procured By Faith

Romans 5: 1 reads, "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" That text is essential to an understanding of the Bible doctrine of justification. It tells how the sinner receives the verdict, "*Justified,*" before God. Note the reading again: "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" To be "*justified*" is the blessing. "*Peace with God*" is the effect of justification. "*Faith*" is the method by which one enters into such a relationship with God that he is declared justified.

Do you remember what it means to be justified? To be justified means to be declared just, to be acquitted of any and all guilt for sin, to be accepted before God as if one had never sinned. In fact, some one has suggested to be justified means to be "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. It is the act of God by which He declares that the one who has received forgiveness in Jesus Christ is fully acceptable.

We have come now to the third aspect of our study of the doctrine of justification. We have observed (1) that justification is pronounced by God and (2) that justification is provided by Jesus Christ. Now the third observation is that justification is procured by faith. "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" Rom. 5: 1.

As God is the source of our justification, and the blood of Jesus Christ is the ground of our justification, so faith is the condition of our justification. The Bible makes great emphasis on the fact that justification is "by grace through faith." Set in contrast to that is the repeated emphasis that justification is not by good works which a person can do, nor can have done for him, nor can become capable of doing by divine aid. Justification before God is based solely on His grace and man's faith, not upon any works of merit of any kind. That is what the Bible means when it insists we are saved "*by grace through faith*" Eph. 2:8, 9.

Hear these words of the Lord Jesus: "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even*

so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ...He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" John 3:14-18, 36; 5:24. That reading encompasses seven verses of scripture.

In those seven verses there are eight references to the place of faith. Believe in the miracle of salvation. There is no substitute for faith in the Christian experience. Justification is received by faith. Please understand that we do not speak of faith as if it were a payment by which we merit salvation from God. Not at all. One does not exchange faith for forgiveness like he would give money to a clerk in a store in exchange for certain merchandise. Faith is not a deed of merit. Christian faith means confidence in a person. It is a surrender, a trust, a turning of confidence from every other person and thing to center it in God alone. Faith is not payment for forgiveness; it is a sinner reaching out an empty and undeserving hand to receive what God offers to him as an act of grace. Man cannot merit nor purchase forgiveness, but he must receive it. He can do nothing by which he can become justified before God, but he must receive the pronouncement of justification that God gives. Faith is the way a sinner receives the Savior. A patient goes to a physician with complaints of certain symptoms of illness. After a thorough examination, the physician prescribes surgery. The patient has confidence in the person of the physician, and so accepts his diagnosis and prescribed treatment. He is taken into surgery, permits himself to be put to sleep, and surrenders his very life to the skill of the surgeon. That is the expression of faith in a human realm. In like manner, a sinner goes to God. He confesses his problem with sin. He asks for help. God prescribes the atonement effected by Jesus Christ in His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. The sinner has confidence in God and surrenders himself to the saving work of Jesus Christ. That is the expression of faith in a divine realm. In each instance, faith was the expression of confidence in a person. In each instance, faith involved surrender to the care of another. In each instance, faith was rewarded with the solution of the problem and the restoration of wholeness. No wonder the Bible calls for faith in Jesus Christ.

Here are some typical verses that express that divine imperative. John concluded his account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ with these words: *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" John 20:30, 31.* That is to say, the Gospel According to John was written to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ and thus to salvation in Him. That was the purpose of the entire revelation recorded in the Old Testament scriptures. Galatians 3:24 reads, *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."* How did justification come? *"By faith"* the inspired apostle said. Let us compare Romans 3:28 with Galatians 2:16. Romans 3:28 reads, *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."* Galatians 2:16 reads, *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the*

law shall no flesh be justified."

No man has ever been forgiven of sin and justified before God by works of righteousness that he did, such as pilgrimages, fasts, penance, tithing, nor any other religious rite. Justification is by faith, apart from works. It is God who justifies. He justifies on the basis of the merits of the sacrifice of His only begotten Son who died in behalf of sinners. He justifies those who come to Him claiming no merits other than the grace expressed in Jesus Christ, and who surrender to Him upon the basis of confidence in Him alone. Such a person will find "his faith is counted for righteousness" Rom. 4:5.

"Father, it is so difficult for human nature to renounce its professed merits and admit that in and of itself there is nothing good. It is so difficult for us to turn all confidence from self and place it in God alone. And yet, because that is the only way of salvation, grant that many turn to You in like precious faith just now. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

Justification Is Proved By Works

We believe that justification is the great blessing that God gives to believers in Jesus Christ. It includes the pardon of sin, the imputation to us of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the gift of eternal life, blessed peace and favorable acceptance before God, and all other blessings needful for time and eternity. Justification is not bestowed in consideration of any deeds of merit nor works of righteousness that we have done, but solely by God's grace. It is received upon the exercise of personal faith in Jesus Christ. Justification is that act of God whereby those who trust Jesus are declared righteous in His eyes and free from guilt or danger of punishment. But where do good works enter in? Are they in any wise related to justification before God? Indeed they are! They are very important. But they are important as the proof that one is justified, and not as the merit by which one is justified. That is to say, good works follow justification, not precede it. They come after one is justified, not before. It is very important to keep that order in mind as one thinks of the relationship of justification and good works.

Good works are ineffective in recommending one to God or securing the favor of God before one is saved. Hear this solemn word of Romans 4:4, 5. *"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt? But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* I say that is a solemn word, indeed. It says that when a person sets out to merit forgiveness on the basis of works of righteousness that he can do, God holds him responsible for perfect and sinless obedience as if he owed a debt to God. No man can meet such a standard. Therefore, the man who tries to merit forgiveness is left in a hopeless condition. On the other hand, the man who does not try to work to deserve salvation, but who repents of sin and trusts God to save him, will receive salvation as a free gift apart from any works of merit. Jesus told of some, who would stand before Him in judgment and say, *"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?"* Now, if good works could ever merit salvation, works like those should guarantee heaven to a person. Don't you think? But listen to the response of Jesus, *"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity?"* See Matt. 7:22, 23. Why were such wonderful works called *"iniquity"* by the Lord? They were works performed in the power of depraved human nature; not works inspired and empowered by the Spirit of God. No one can do truly good works unless he is saved.

Hear this tragic word from the pen of the Apostle Paul. He wrote of Israel's religious fervor in

these words, **"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"** Rom. 10:3. How pitiful, Here is God offering His own imputed righteousness to a people. But they are so busy trying to make themselves righteous enough to be approved of God that they do not accept the righteousness which He freely offers them. What an adequate description of multitudes of good-intentioned "religious" people in all generations. Salvation, justification before God, can never be received upon the merits of good works that a sinner can perform. The only good work acceptable to God is the once-for-all sacrifice for sin that Jesus offered in His death and resurrection. The benefits of that are received by faith alone. But that does not mean good works are not related to justification. Here is the truth of the matter. Good works are the proof that one has received forgiveness of sins and is justified before God. Understand it clearly: good works are the proof that one is already saved. Consider Ephesians 2:8-10, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* Examine those verses carefully.

(1) Salvation is by grace through faith. (2) Salvation is not of works of any merit performed by any man. (3) Salvation causes the believer to be "created in Christ Jesus." (4) Salvation's new creation was "unto good works" -that the believer might live a life of good works. (5) God predestinated that those who became new creatures in Christ Jesus should live a life marked by the doing of good works. (6) The good works are possible after salvation, not before. The Apostle James placed great emphasis on the importance of good works in the life of a believer. He declared, *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. ...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* James 2: 18, 26 .A life of good works is the proof before men that a person is a new creation in Christ Jesus, being justified before God. How important is it that the believer lives a life of good works? It is so important to God that He gave the Bible to help each Christian live that kind of a life. Consider II Timothy 3: 16, 17, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* That's how important good works are in the Christian life. Here is the purpose of the Bible as expressed in the Amplified Version rendering of II Timothy 3: 17, *"So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well-fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Had you thought about that? God has given the Bible to you, as a Christian, that you might be aided in becoming efficient in every kind of honorable conduct and service. Amazing, isn't it? God is so concerned that His people live a life of good works, as proof of their justification before Him, that he has promised several rewards to them. There will be a great Day of Judgment at the end of the age. Men will be judged according to their works (Rev. 22:12). The person whose works are honorable will *"receive a reward"* I Cor. 3: 14. The person whose works are unworthy will suffer loss of rewards, even though he is saved (I Cor. 3: 15). Since we will account to God in the day of judgment where our works will be evaluated, what manner of persons we should be in all holy conduct and godliness (II Peter 3:11). Do not be deceived at this point. Put out of your mind once for all any suggestion that you will ever be good enough, or do enough good works, to deserve the forgiveness of God. Turn attention from yourself to the Savior and trust Him alone as Savior. Then devote the rest of your life to living the kind of life that will be a living testimony that you have met Him and are justified before

God. Jesus said it this way, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* Matt. 5:16.

"Father, grant that Christians every where might live with such discipline of life that their conduct would daily point sinners to you alone in who is justification and life eternal. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Justification Is Present In Experience

There are many blessings that come to the Christian. He recognizes some of the blessings that have come in the past. He acknowledges some of the blessings that are coming in the present. And there are some blessings which are yet future. One of the great blessings, which are presently enjoyed in the life of the person who trusts Jesus Christ as Savior, is the assurance of justification. Remember that to be justified means God has announced that we are welcome in His presence because Jesus Christ has settled the sin problem. The privilege of access to God, in the here and now, is a blessing almost beyond comprehension. Consider Romans 5: 1, 2 again: *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* Notice the statement *"we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."* Access! That is a word to make one shout. It means we have the right to approach God freely, without constraint and without fear of rejection or condemnation. That is what justification means.

Hebrews 10: 19-22 expresses the truth in these words: *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. ..."* Look what privilege of access is given the Christian. (1) The Christian can *"enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."* That means like the High Priest of the Old Testament could enter into the Holy of Hollies of the tabernacle and temple of God, so the Christian can enter into the *"holiest"* also. However, the Christian does not enter a holy place on earth. He is privileged to go personally into the very presence of God him- self, even while in this body on the earth. (2) More than that, the Christian can *"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."* There is no danger of rejection. The Christian has been *"justified"* -declared righteous and acceptable before God. He can come with no hesitation and with no fear. God will receive him like a dear child. The blessed thing about that truth is the present element of it. The believer can enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, today! He can draw near with the true heart in full assurance of faith, right now! It is present tense. Another wonderful element is this: The privilege of access to God is not limited to a few, but is available to all. It is not the professional clergy, nor the unique saints, who alone can approach God. Not at all, That is the blessed birthright for every person who has been *"born again"* through repentance toward God and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Look at the present tense of the verbs used in Romans 5. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have (present tense - present possession!) Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have (present tense -present privilege) access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* Look a little further down in that same chapter. Verses 10 and 11 read, *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now (note the present tense again) received the*

atonement." Praise God, He is a God of the present tense. The Bible knows nothing of the petition so often expressed in prayers, "And finally in heaven save us." Salvation is a present experience. Justification is a relationship we bear with God right now. Every day, hour after hour, we stand justified before God. That is what it means to be saved. Jesus' words, recorded in John 5:24, underscore the more this emphasis on the present reality of a saving relationship with God. He said, *'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.'* Examine those words carefully. Jesus said the one, who hears the gospel and responds in faith toward God, *"hath everlasting life."* That verb *"hath"* is the old English form of the word has, and refers to a present possession. Eternal life has already been received by the person who is trusting Jesus. That means, he is forgiven of all sin and stands before God as one fully and forever justified. Jesus said such a relationship with God is to be enjoyed today and every day hereafter.

The apostles preached the same message. Hear Paul's sermon at Antioch, as recorded in Acts 13. He concludes it, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39). Notice the present tense of the verb are justified." *"All that believe are right now justified,"* the apostle declared. Do you catch the meaning of that for you? If you are trusting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you have already received all the blessing of God in Him. Salvation, sanctification, regeneration, redemption, justification, forgiveness, and all other spiritual blessings are already yours. It is as much yours today as it will be at any time in the future. Believe it. Rejoice in it. Live like it. Our God is a God of the present tense. Hallelujah! Justification before God in Jesus Christ is instantaneous, complete and final. The believer is fully and forever justified. He can approach God in perfect peace. It sounds like a contradiction. We have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are condemned as a result of that sin. How can God receive us when we are under condemnation? Here is how. God, in finite grace, by the work of the Holy Spirit called "regeneration" (being "born again"), puts the sinner in Christ and gives to him as his own all the blessed resources of Christ. God looks on that sinner who is now in Christ, fully forgiven of every sin because of the atonement of Christ's blood, and says there is no basis upon which I must condemn him, but adequate basis upon which I may receive him. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1: 6, the sinner is accepted in the beloved." The apostle John caught the idea and wrote, concerning Christ, *"as he is, so are we in this world"* I John 4: 17 Jesus Christ cannot be brought into judgment before God, because He is the holy and sinless Son of God. No more can one who is "in Christ" be brought into condemnation. God says of the Christian believer, "I accept him in the Beloved. I declare him to be acceptable to My righteousness and holiness. While I cannot acquit the guilty, this one is no longer guilty because he is in Christ." That is justification! Justification is pronounced by God, provided in Christ, procured by faith, proved by work, and is present in experience. I pray God that you are one of those of whom the Bible speaks, *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* Rom. 5:1. For through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, God can be "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" Rom. 3:26. Father, we who have been justified bow before you in humble recognition that we did not and do not deserve your act of grace. But we thank you for declaring us acceptable to you in Jesus Christ. Grant, please, that many who

share these words may better understand the doctrine that they might enter into the experience through salvation in Jesus Christ. For Jesus sake, Amen."