

JUSTIFICATION: GOD DECLARING SINNERS TO BE RIGHTEOUS

Romans 3:21-31

Introduction: The doctrine of Justification

I. The Reality of our Justification—If We Are Unrighteous, Is There Any Hope of Having a Righteous Status Before God? (v.21)

- A. A God-Given Righteousness has been made known
 - o “righteousness of God” = “righteousness *from* God”
 - o The righteousness we desperately need comes from *outside* of us
- B. God Promised it Beforehand in the Law and Prophets
 - o The Old Testament points toward the time when God would save his people from their sin
 - o Can you think of some examples of where the gospel was promised in the OT?

II. The Instrument of our Justification—How Do We Acquire This Righteous Status? (22-24)

- A. Not by the Law
 - o This righteousness comes “apart from the law” (v.21)
 - o The works of the law cannot save because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (v.23)
- B. But through Faith Alone
 - o We are saved *through* faith, not *because* of faith
 - o The value of faith is always in the *object* of faith, not the faith itself

III. The Grounds of our Justification—What Has Been Done That Allows Sinners to Have a Righteous Status? (v.25-26)

- A. Christ Fully Bore God’s Justice on Sin



- o "propitiation" (v.25) means Christ fully satisfied God's wrath on our sin
- o God does it this way "so that he might be *just* and the *justifier* of the one who has faith in Jesus" (v.26)

****Key point:** In Christ, God can uphold his own holy standard (he can be "just"), but he can also declare sinners to be righteous (he is the "justifier").

B. Christ Gives us His Perfect Righteousness

- o Christ kept the law perfectly and his righteous status is "imputed" to us
- o A divine exchange takes place on the cross: Christ is regarded as a sinner (though he is righteous), and we are regarded as righteous (though we are sinners)

IV. The Implications of our Justification—How Should We Respond to Having a Righteous Status? (v.27-31)

- A. We do not Boast
- B. We uphold the Law



Discussion Groups

1. If Christ has fully soaked up the wrath of God for you, then what implications should that have on the way you respond to sin in your life?

2. If Christ's perfect righteousness is given to you, how does that give you reassurance about your salvation?

3. How does understanding justification by faith alone humble you? How does it lead you to want to keep the law?

