

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Things which accompany salvation: Justification

Today's subject is one that has bothered thoughtful people for a very long time.

The Book of Job is possibly the oldest book in the Bible. In it, Job twice poses the same question. In chapter Job 9:2, he asks, "*How should man be just with God?*" In Job 25:4, he raises the query, "*How can man be justified with God?*" It is our job today to find an answer, indeed **the** answer, to this very question.

It is sometimes suggested that to be justified is to be made "just as if I'd never sinned." At first, this sounds fine:

- "Wipe the slate clean";
- "Cancel all the debt";
- "Clear the decks completely";
- "Let me have another go";
- "Let me start again from scratch."

Unfortunately, my personal experience of life is that such an approach would be no good at all, certainly for me. Knowing myself as I do, I have to say that if I was given a second chance, the opportunity to start again, make a fresh start, I would undoubtedly go twice as far in the wrong direction, at twice the speed, than I did the first time round. No! It would do me no favours at all to be given a second chance, without the power to respond to God's proffered way of earning the blessing, if such a thing were possible.

There is no doubt that the fundamental concept in justification is that it clears me of every charge that a holy God can righteously lay against me. That is what I would call the negative side of the very positive truth of justification; the righteous dealing with every valid charge that was previously hanging over me. It is a very good start, but it is only a start. It would be a very sad thing indeed if I was content to enjoy the fact of my being cleared of every charge of sin, but did not progress on to the very positive truth that God has, in a very definite way, pronounced me to have a fully righteous standing before Him.

That I have such a standing is without any shadow of doubt. Listen to 1 John 4:17: "*Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement: because as He is, so are we, in this world.*" Think about that! The love of God has reached its object when believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are absolutely convinced that they need have no fear at all in respect of the day of judgement. And why? Because Christ has fully answered to God in respect of every righteous demand that a Holy God can make against sinners. How do we know that? We have to ask ourselves a vital question. "Where is the Lord Jesus now?" In heaven, at the right hand of God! On what basis is He there? We would not dream of questioning the right of Christ to be in heaven now. There is, and can be, no suggestion that there could be any charge that could be laid against the Son of God that could rightly exclude Him from the presence of God. That we can fully and readily understand. But 1 John 4:17 goes further. It says that we have equal title to be in the presence of God as He has. With this difference. He is there, in heaven, because He personally is qualified to be there, because of Who He is. Our right to be there is based upon what He has done on our behalf. Wonder of wonders! Our place in heaven is as secure as Christ's own place there! As is plainly said, "*As He is, so are we in this world*" (1 John 4:17) That is, even while we are alive in this life, in this world, we have the full assurance that we are as clear of eternal judgment as Christ himself is. And none would dare suggest that Christ needs to suffer again for sin. That work will never need to be repeated. Or added to, because He did it perfectly, completely, the first time.

The longer I live, the more grateful I am, and ever shall be, that my salvation, my assurance of a place with Christ in heaven, is not dependent in any respect, or to any degree, on anything that I have done, or ever could do. The strength of a chain is governed by the strength of its weakest link. How glad I am, and am entitled to be, that not one link in the chain of salvation is in the least or smallest degree dependent on me or on anything I could ever do. This is one of the many things that the truth of justification brings to me. Again, how can this be so? I would suggest nine aspects of this wonderful truth.

1. We are justified by God;
2. We are justified by the grace of God;
3. We are justified by the precious blood of Christ;
4. We are justified by the personal bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ;
5. We are justified freely from all things from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses;
6. We are justified by faith;
7. We are justified by works;
8. We are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and
9. We are justified in the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. We are justified by God

It is God against Whom we have sinned. In the final analysis it will be God Who will judge us. So, if we are to be cleared of the righteous charges of which we shall be rightly accused, it must be the same God Who assesses us to be clear in His Holy sight and pronounces us righteous, or just, according to His own absolute standards. Can it be done? Listen to Romans 3:26, *"God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."* Secondly, in Romans 8:33, we read, *"It is God that justifieth!"* How can a righteous God possibly do that, on behalf of those who have clearly sinned against Him in every possible way?

2. We are justified by the grace of God

We move on to point number 2, we are justified by the grace of God. Listen to Romans 3:24 - 'being justified freely by His grace'. That is, while God is the personal justifier of the saved sinner, He does it by means of His free, unlimited grace. God is the source of the justification. His grace, His rich, unmerited favour, is the channel through which the blessing flows.

3. We are justified by the precious blood of Christ

Romans 5:9 says, *"being now justified by the blood of Christ."* That is, if the righteous claims of a Holy God against us are to be fully met, it can only be so because the price of redemption has been fully paid, by the shedding of the precious blood of Christ, when He offered Himself without spot to God.

4. We are justified by the personal bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The personal, actual, bodily resurrection of Christ has proved the truth of justification to be beyond dispute. In what way? In this way! Romans 4:25, *"He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."* How can we be sure that the price has been fully paid? How can we be sure that the debt we owe to God because of our sins has been fully discharged? Because He has raised Jesus from the dead! There need be no lingering doubt in any of our minds. Nothing remains to be done. The work has been fully accomplished. The debt has been fully discharged. There is nothing to do. Nothing to pay! Christ has completed the work. He has paid the full price, whereby we can be fully assured, because God has raised Him from the dead. The victory has been openly, fully declared.

5. We are justified freely from all things from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

How much has been gained by the full discharge of the debt we owed to God in respect of the sins we have committed? Acts 13:39 gives the answer. *"We have been justified freely from all things from which we could not have been justified by the Law of Moses."* The Law of Moses held out blessing on the basis of what the Law-keeper deserved. Far be the thought! Being sinners by nature and by practice, the utmost we could ever deserve in respect of our own performance would be condemnation at the hand of a Holy God. But, what we could never deserve on our own account, God has credited us with. Not because we deserve it, or ever could! No! No! Solely on account of the value to Him of the Person and work of His beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What a vast panorama of blessing is held out - *"all things"* - but God in His goodness has made it available because of what Christ has done.

Let us pause at this stage. There are two things I want to draw to your attention. First of all, what we have considered so far hasn't depended in any way on you or me as individuals. Nor has it depended on any particular Christian, or group of Christians, or the vast aggregate of all those who have believed the gospel of their salvation since the Day of Pentecost. It is all of God. It is what we call the sovereign side of the truth of justification; God's side. They are matters connected with our salvation and blessing that we could have no part in. We must never forget that.

6. We are justified by faith

Moving on, then, to man's responsible side, we find that if we are indeed justified, we must be justified by faith. This is point 6 in our study, we are justified by faith.

Romans 5:1 says, *"Wherefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Without the sovereign work of God, there would be no blessing to secure or enjoy. But, once it has been established, it is to be enjoyed, by the apprehension of faith. What God has planned, provided, procured, and proved, opening out such a vast panoply of blessing, faith grasps, or possesses, by simple trust. Personal trust in the One Who died for your sins! That is the quality that grasps this wonderful blessing of justification. Faith accepts as a free gift what we could never deserve or achieve by any performance of our own.

7. We are justified by works

Moving on to number 7, we come to what to some minds appears to present something of a problem, we are justified by works

Faith is certainly an essential requisite to the reception of justification. But, equally plainly, we read in James 2:21-24, that justification is by works. Yes indeed! The secret is declared in Romans 4:2 - *"if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God."* Again, in Galatians 3:11, *"no man is justified by law in the sight of God."* So, then, we are justified in the sight of God by the value to Him of the work of Christ for God's glory, and on our behalf. That having been settled, once and for all, before **God**, we are under a moral obligation to be justified before **men** on the basis of **our** works, the lifestyle that men can see. **Our** works demonstrate the effect of justification in us. If our **faith** possesses justification, our **works** proclaim the fact that we are justified.

Listen to James 2:21-24: *"Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way."*

So far, so good! But, there are yet at least two more aspects of justification to look at before we are finished our study. Listen to what is said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."*

What a terrible catalogue of sinful living is given in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The most horrific thing about the list is that they are things that we are all capable of doing, if the circumstances are conducive and we lose our grip and control of our desires and actions. As long as we live in this world, the flesh is still in us, and looking for every opportunity to express itself. How can we control these urges we will always have as long as we live in this world? We get here a double answer. But, before we are given the answer, we get the reminder of the change that has taken place since we trusted Christ as our Saviour, and confessed Him as Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:11 says, *"And such were some of you."* This was no figment of the imagination. These were real matters affecting real people. *"And such were some of you."* But then, 1 Corinthians 6:11 goes on to declare the double reason, in two more aspects of justification.

8. We are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ

In confessing our sins, and the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only one who could meet our desperate need of salvation, we put ourselves willingly, voluntarily, under the Lordship of Christ. We owned His authority over us. That is the secret. We are righteous in the sight of God because we believe that *"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures"* (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-4) Nothing can affect that. We are saved, and saved for ever, because of the value to God of the work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary. But, if we are to live clean lives, well pleasing to God, and witnessing to unbelievers, it is only by continuing to submit to the Lordship of Christ in every aspect of our lives. Can it be done? What power have we to do so?

9. We are justified in the power of the Holy Spirit

That brings us to number 9, we are justified in the power of the Holy Spirit. The only power by which anything can be done for God and in the Name of the Lord Jesus is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Let us recap. Justification, rightly understood, and spelled out by the Bible, has at least nine aspects. If we are indeed justified, vindicated before God and men.

We are justified:

1. By God - God **planned** it;
2. By grace - Grace **provided** it;
3. By blood - The blood of Christ **procured** it;
4. By the resurrection of Christ - The resurrection of Christ **proves** it;
5. From all things. - The whole **panoply** of blessing secured by it is indescribably vast;
6. By faith - Our faith **possesses** it;
7. By works - Our works **proclaim** it;
8. In the Name of the Lord Jesus - His Name **authorises** it;
9. In the power of the Holy Spirit - The Holy Spirit **empowers** it.

Scripture tells us that *"a three-fold cord is not easily broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:12). In engineering, we know that each added strand gives extra strength and flexibility. Here we have a nine-fold cord that certainly cannot be broken, at all. Let us commit ourselves to live in the light of what we know to be true. In doing so, we shall demonstrate the enjoyment and thrill of knowing that we are justified before God. This will give us rich incentive to so live that we shall also be fully vindicated, justified, before our fellow men, giving ample evidence that we have put ourselves willingly under the Lordship of Christ, and His authority, and seek to do all things in the power of the Holy Spirit. God grant that it might be so.

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