

Justification

The Principle of Reversal (7)

May 29, 2016

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One way to understand the work of Christ on the Cross is to consider the situation and status of Jesus Christ compared to the situation and status of mankind. It is clear that Jesus situation and status was changed as He left heaven and took on human form; He became like us. It is equally clear that our situation and status was changed as a result of His death upon the cross; we become like Him. This is called the Principle of Reversal; Jesus' situation was reversed so that ours might also be reversed.

12. He was charged so that no charge could be laid against us.

Jesus was declared guilty so that we the guilty might be declared justified.

Rom 8:30-35 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

I. Definitions:

Justification:

Justification comes from a Greek concept meaning "to declare righteous." It is a legal act wherein God pronounces that the believing sinner has been credited with all the virtues of Jesus Christ. Justification is the gift of righteousness given by God to those who believe in Jesus Christ (from The Moody handbook of theology).

The declaration of being righteous before God (as judge), was central to Paul's doctrine; it showed all that God achieved for believers through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (from Dictionary of Bible Themes).

Justification - accounting the guilty just before God (from Nelson's Topical Bible)

Greek words: (justification, justify and just) from Vine's Expository Dictionary

- dikaio**; is "the character or quality of being right or just". (Vine's); It is translated - Righteousness 92X; [Mt 3:15; 5:6,10,20; 6:33; Mt 21:32; Lk 1:75; Jn 16:8,10; Ac 10:35; 13:10; 17:31; 24:25; Rom 1:17; 3:5,21; 3:22,25,26; 3:5,6,9,11,11,13,22; 5:17, 21; 6:13,16,18,19,20; 8:10; 9:28,30,30,30,31,31; 10:3,3,3,4,5,6,10; 14:17; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 3:9; 5:21; 6:7,14; 9:9,10; 11:15; Gal 2:21; 3:6,21; 5:5; Eph 4:24; 5:9; 6:14; Phil 1:11; 3:6,9,9; 1Tim 6:11; 2Tim 2:22; 3:16; 4:8; Tit 3:5; Heb 1:9; 5:13; 7:2; 11:7,33; 12:11; Jas 1:20; 2:23; 3:18; 1Pt 2:24; 3:14; 2Pt 1:1; 2:5,21; 3:13; 1Jn 2:29; 3:7,10; Rev 19:11]
- dikaio**; It denotes "righteous," a state of being right, (Vine's); It is used 81X; and **translated as**:
 - Righteous** - (64X) [Mt 5:45; 9:13; 10:41,41; 13:17,43,49; 23:28,29,35,35; 25:37,46; 27:19; Mk 2:17; 6:20; Lk 1:6,17; 2:25; 5:32; 14:14; 15:7; 18:9; 20:20; 23:50; Jn 7:24; 17:25; Ac 3:14; 7:52; 10:22; 22:14; 24:15; Rom 1:17; 3:10; 5:7,19; 7:12; Gal 3:11; 2Thes 1:5; 1Tim 1:9; 2Tim 4:8; Heb 10:38; 11:4; 12:23; Jas 5:6,16; 1Pt 3:12; 4:18; 2Pt 2:7,8,8; 1Jn 1:9; 2:1,29; 3:7,7,12; Rev 15:3; 16:5,7; 19:2; 22:11]
 - Just** - (8X) [Mt 1:19; 27:24; Jn 5:30; Rom 2:13; 3:26; 2Thes 1:6; Tit 1:8; 1Pt 3:18]
 - Right** - (7X) [Mt 20:4; Lk 12:57; Ac 4:19; Eph 6:1; Phil 1:7; 4:8; 2Pt 1:13]
 - Innocent** - (1X) [Lk 23:47];
 - Justice** - (1X) [Col 4:1;]
- dikaio**; primarily "to deem to be right," signifies, in the NT, (a) "to show to be right or righteous"; to be justified; (b) "to declare to be righteous, to pronounce righteous;" (translated as) justification, justify, justifier. It is used 40X; [Mt 11:19; 12:37; Lk 7:29,35; 10:29; 16:15; 18:14; Ac 13:39,39; Rom 2:13; 3:4,20,24,26,28,30; 4:2,5; 5:1,9; 6:7; 8:30,30,33; 1Cor 4:4; 6:11; Gal 2:16,16,2:17; 3:8,11,24; 5:4; 1Tim 3:16; Tit 3:7; Jas 2:21,24,25; Rev 22:11]

4. **dikaionia**; It denotes the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal; It is used 10X; [Lk 1:6; Rom 1:32; 2:26; 5:16,18; 8:4; Heb 9:1,10; Rev 15:4; 19:8].

5. **dikaiosis**; denotes the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal". It is used 2X [Rom 4:25; 5:18].

II. Justification and the work of Jesus Christ

On account of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the demands of the law of God are met, and believers are granted the status of being righteous in the sight of God.

A. Justification was promised in the Old Testament, is fulfilled in Christ

Isa 45:25 In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory.

Isa 50:8-9 He who vindicates (justifies) Me is near; who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. 9 Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them.

Isa 53:11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

Isa 54:17 No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication (righteousness) is from Me," declares the LORD.

Isa 61:10 I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Jer 23:6 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'

B. Prophetic picture of Justification in Zechariah

Zech 3:4-5 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." 5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

C. Illustrations and examples

Teaching of Jesus of the Pharisee and Tax Collector

Lk 18:13-14 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Lk 18:9-14)

Example of Abraham

Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. (Rom 4:1-9; 4:20-25; Gal 3:6-18; Jas 2:21-23)

Example of David

Rom 4:6-8 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT" (Ps 32:1-2).

Example of Paul

Phil 3:8-9 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

III. Justification under the Law:

A. Requires perfect obedience.

Jas 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, is guilty of all. (Rom 2:13; 10:5).

B. It cannot be attained by man.

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom 9:31-32; Job 9:2-3; 9:20; 25:4; Ps 130:3; 143:2)

IV. Justification is grounded in the death of Jesus Christ

A. The death of Jesus fulfills the demands of the law of God

Rom 8:3-4 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 3:25-26; Gal 3:13; 1Jn 2:2).

B. The death of Jesus shields believers from God's wrath

Rom 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (Rom 3:24; 4:25; Rom 5:18; 1Pt 2:24).

V. Justification under the gospel

A. The need for justification

Rom 3:21-25 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed (Rom 3:27-30; 4:5; 5:1; 9:30-32; 10:10; Ac 13:39; 1Cor 6:11; Gal 2:16; 3:8, 14; Eph 2:8).

B. Justification is not by:

1. The Law

Ro 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (Gal 2:16-18, 21; 3:11; 3:2-5; 3:24; 5:4-6; Rom 3:20; 4:5; Eph 2:8-9)

2. Man's righteousness

Ro 10:1-5 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.

C. Human works

Ro 4:1-4 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. (Ac 13:39; Rom 8:3; Gal 2:16; 3:11).

D. Faith with works

Rom 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Rom 11:6; Gal 2:14-21; 5:2-4; Ac 15:1-29)

E. Intellectual assent

Jas 2:18-26 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22

You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

C. Justification is by:

1. Grace

Rom 3:24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (Jn 5:24; Ac 13:39; Rom 3:30; 4:16; 5:1; 5:17-21; 8:33; Tit 3:7).

2. The blood of Jesus Christ

Rom 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ

Rom 4:25 He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification (1 Cor 15:17; Rom 10:9-10 Ac 2:22-39; 4:10-12; 17:30-31; 1Pt 3:18-21)

4. The righteousness of Jesus Christ

1Cor 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,(2Cor 5:17; Rom 10:4)

5. Imputed - Justification is an imputed free gift of righteousness

Rom 5:18 ... through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

The term "reckoned" is used to refer to the process by which God treats believers as being righteous in his sight on account of Jesus Christ's death (Rom 3:22; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 5:21).

6. Faith - Alone

Gal 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (Gal 3:11; Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; 5:1; Eph 2:8; Phil 3:8-9).

7. The name of Jesus

1 Cor 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

D. Justification results in:

1. No boasting

Rom 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. (Rom 4:2; 1Cor 1:29, 31)

2. Being blessed

Rom 4:6-8 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin" (Ps 32:1-2).

3. Being free from condemnation

Rom 8:33-34 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Is 50:8-9; 54:17).

4. An inheritance

Titus 3:7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

5. Glorification

Rom 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

13. He was condemned so that there is now no condemnation for us.

Rom 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Rom 8:33-34 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

We can have a good conscience

1Pt 3:21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Heb 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb 10:22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

We are accepted by God

Eph 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (NKJV)

Rom 14:3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

Rom 15:7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

Resources used in this study:

The Moody's Handbook of Theology
Nelson's Topical Bible
Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words
Dictionary of Bible Themes
MacArthur Topical Bible