

Justification by Grace through Faith

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Introduction.

Justification is a legal term that declares a person to be righteous ie, innocent of any wrong doing. It is an acquittal by a Judge in a court of law. The justified christian is released from the death penalty demanded by the law of God and is made an heir of the free gift of eternal life.

Justification: “a forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards its nature, it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law, i.e., as conformed to all its demands. In addition to the pardon of sin, justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect of the justified. It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law”

([Romans 5:1-10](#)) M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition*, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Public Domain, copy freely.

In the parable of the unmerciful servant recorded by Matthew, Jesus gives a clear picture of how much we owe God and how justification is obtained.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Slave

Matthew 18:21-35 “Then Peter came to him and said, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times! 23 “For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 As he began settling his accounts, a man who owed 10,000 talents was brought to him. 25 Because he was not able to repay it, the lord ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, children, and whatever he possessed, and repayment to be made. 26 Then the slave threw himself to the ground before him, saying, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything.’ 27 The lord had compassion on that slave and released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 After he went out, that same slave found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 silver coins. So he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ 29 Then his fellow slave threw himself down and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you.’ 30 But he refused. Instead, he went out and threw him in prison until he repaid the debt. 31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were very upset and went and told their lord everything that had taken place. 32 Then his lord called the first slave and said to him, ‘Evil slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me! 33 Should you not have shown mercy to your fellow slave, just as I showed it to you?’ 34 And in anger his lord turned him over to the prison guards to torture him until he repaid all he owed. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if each of you does not forgive your brother from your heart.” NET

Justification, the wiping out of our debt, the record of our sins. The debt that we owe God is pictured as being 10,000 talents, one talent being about 20 yrs wages for a labourer. An impossible sum of money to pay back. But because he begged for mercy God had pity on him and cancelled his debt. This is a picture of God justifying his people. He wipes out the debt and carries the cost himself. The servant was free to go. But a fellow servant owed this forgiven man a hundred silver coins, one coin equalling one days wages for a labourer. Quite a small amount in comparison to the debt the man owed God.

The master was furious and called the man in. Because he failed to show mercy to his fellow servant like the master had shown to him he had his justification taken off him and he was thrown in jail. Not only was it not possible for him to repay the debt now that he is in jail where he cannot work to earn money making it impossible to repay any money at all. Jesus finished by saying that this is how God will treat us who refuse to extend to others the same mercy and grace that God has shown to us. Clearly Jesus is teaching that Justification is a free gift given on account of God's mercy and that there is nothing that we can do to earn it. And that by our works we can lose that Justification.

The Sin problem: All of mankind is infected with a mysterious mental disease that the English Judaeo-Christian bible calls “SIN”. This disease entered our world through the wilful disobedience to God by Adam in the garden of Eden. Our debt that we owe God is the penalty we have on account of our own sin not Adams’.

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In an attempt to teach us what sin is God has given us his law. The law of God has two purposes. To educate man as to what sin is. And to condemn those who transgress that law ie fall into sin.

Romans 3:19-20 “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.” NET

1 Timothy 1:8-11 “But we know that the law is good if someone uses it legitimately, 9 realizing that law is not intended for a righteous person, but for lawless and rebellious people, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10 sexually immoral people, practicing homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers—in fact, for any who live contrary to sound teaching. 11 This accords with the glorious gospel of the blessed God that was entrusted to me” NET

Romans 7:7 “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! Certainly, I would not have known sin except through the law. For indeed I would not have known what it means to desire something belonging to someone else if the law had not said, “**Do not covet.**” NET

Paul describes the purpose of the law of God. The law is described here as an educator not a saviour. It is designed to educate us about the reality and nature of sin, but the law cannot justify or declare us righteous. If a person were able to recite all the laws of God and be able to quote the entire bible verbatim that would only show that they were are an educated person not a righteous person.

Paul talks about the law being good if it is used lawfully. This shows that there is a right way and a wrong way to use the law. If we use the law as an educator that is good. Problems arise if we use the law as a saviour to justify us or as a way to find favour with God.

Romans 3:28 “For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law.” NET

Galatians 2:16 “yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.” NET

The reason Paul emphasises this is because many in the early church and others ever since have been deluded into thinking that by obeying the of law they are entitled to eternal life.

The heresy being taught to the Galatian Christian church was that due to their obedience to the law God was obligated to justify them. This heresy made the grace of God of no effect.

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Romans 3:21-24, 26 “But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (although it is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed— 22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;... 26 This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus’ faithfulness.” NET

Jesus Christ himself is the Righteousness of God apart from the law. He was witnessed by the law and the prophets as being the genuine thing. He alone can satisfy the demands of the violated law of God and freely give us Justifying grace to receive eternal life.

Results of Justification

Romans 5:1-5 “Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have also obtained access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God’s glory. 3 Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance, character, and character, hope. 5 And hope

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does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the [Holy Spirit who was given to us.](#)” NET

Romans 5:8-10 “But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God’s wrath. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life?” NET

Romans 5:9	Romans 5:10
Justified/declared righteous	Reconciled to God
By His blood	Through the death of his son
Shall we be saved from the wrath of God.	Shall we be saved

Is a Christian who has been Justified freely by Grace alone required to obey the law of God?

Isaiah 55:6-7 “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.7 [Let the wicked forsake his way](#) And [the unrighteous man his thoughts](#); And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For [He will abundantly pardon](#)”. NASB

1. Seek the Lord while you can.
2. The wicked are to forsake their ways and unrighteous thoughts – Repentance.
3. God will abundantly pardon – Justify

The message of Isaiah is that the work of the Spirit must take place in the life of a believer for forgiveness of sin, Justification, to take place. The Apostle Paul teaches the same thing. There is no justification without repentance ie, the lifestyle transformation that comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

Titus 3:4-7 “For we too were once foolish, disobedient, misled, enslaved to various passions and desires, spending our lives in evil and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But “when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 [he saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done](#) but on the basis of [his mercy](#), through the washing of the [new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit](#), 6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 And so, since we have been [justified by his grace](#), we become [heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life.](#)” NET

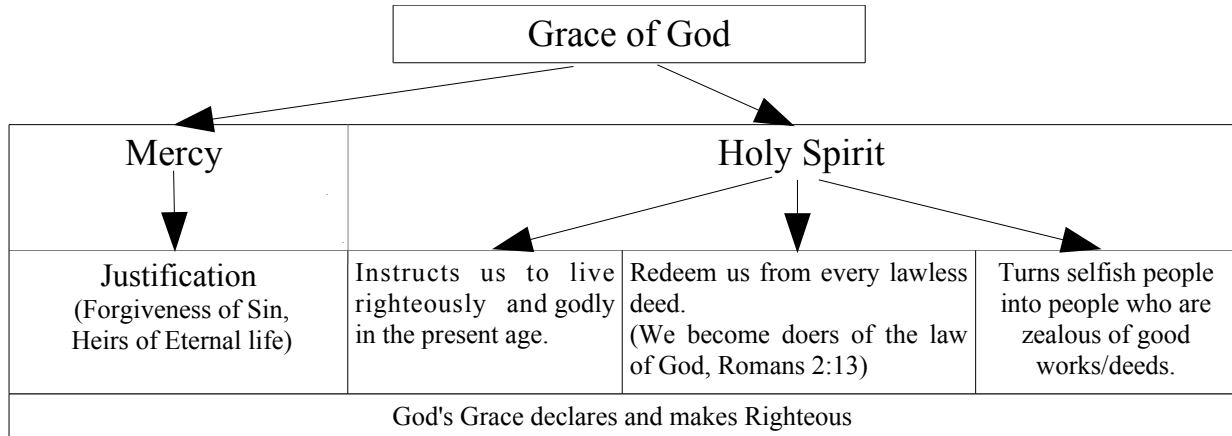
1. God's mercy
2. Washing of regeneration or new birth
3. Being renewing by the Holy Spirit
4. Justified by His Grace
5. Made heirs according to the hope of eternal life

Titus 2:11-14 “[For the grace of God has appeared](#), bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to [live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age](#), **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, **14** who gave Himself for us to [redeem us from every lawless deed](#), and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, [zealous of good deeds.](#)” NASB

The Grace of God given in mercy does a number of things for us.

1. It Justifies us.
2. It teaches us to live a godly life in the present age
3. It redeems us from being law breakers
4. It makes us zealous of good works/deeds

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God's Grace, which is a mixture of His mercy and the Holy Spirit is often pictured as a white garment given freely to sinners when they believe the gospel. This garment is pictured in some of the parables told by Christ himself. Often referred to as the robe of Christ's righteousness it covers the repentant sinner from the time of his belief in the gospel until his death. When God views a person covered by Grace he is viewed by God as if he were sinless. This grace does two things to the believer. It both justifies and sanctifies. Meaning that it reconciles us to God by removing our guilt and by transforming our lives. This transformation by grace reveals itself in the life of the believer by instructing us living a godly life, by not wilfully disobeying the law of God and by being zealous to do good works. Both justification and sanctification can be viewed as two railway tracks running parallel to each other and both being essential parts of the gospel.

2 Thess 2:13 “But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for [salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth](#). 14 He called you to this salvation through our gospel, so that you may possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” NET

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, 10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. 11 [Some of you once lived this way](#). But [you were washed](#), you were [sanctified](#), you were [justified](#) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ [and by the Spirit of our God](#).” NET

Being declared righteous also involves the work of the holy spirit. Without this transformation justification will not be given. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that we are justified apart from the law. yet Paul also writes this:

Romans 2:13 “For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous before God, but [those who do the law will be declared righteous](#).” NET

Is Paul contradicting himself here? Elsewhere he is clear that by the law no one will be justified and yet here he clearly states that only those who do of the law will be justified. This is because as shown in the above diagram the transforming grace of God redeems us from being law breakers. Those people who refuse to obey the law of God are showing by their actions that they have rejected the Grace of God and as a result will also lose justification that comes from that same grace. So in this sense the doers of the law are those who are being redeemed from every lawless deed by the holy spirit of grace. Therefore Paul is able to say that it's the doers of the law who will be justified - by the mercy of grace.

Romans 3:31 “Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! Instead we uphold the law.” NET

Therefore those who receive the grace of God through faith will uphold the law. They will obey it. Not as a means of salvation but as a consequence of having been justified by the Spirit of God.

Romans 6:1-2 “What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? 2 Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” NET

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Paul asks the question, shall we continue to transgress the law of God, ie to remain in sin, so that grace may increase? Never! Grace is not a licence to sin. Grace redeems from sin.

1 John 3:4 “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; indeed, sin is lawlessness.” NET

Here we are told by the Apostle John that sin is the transgression of the law of God.

1 John 5:18 “We know that everyone fathered by God does not sin, but God protects the one he has fathered, and the evil one cannot touch him.” NET

In the same letter the Apostle John informs us that Christians who are sons and daughters of God will not deliberately transgress the law of God.

Romans 7:12 “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous, and good.” NET

Even though the law is not a saviour it educates us to know what is righteous, holy and good.

The Lords' brother James, on Justification **Faith in Action**

James 2:14 - 26 “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,” but you do not give them what the body needs, what good is it? 17 So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead being by itself. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear. 20 But would you like evidence, you empty fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that his faith was working together with his works and his faith was perfected by works. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “**Now Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness,** [Genesis 15:6].” and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed 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.” NET

Paul. Galatians 3:6-9 “Just as **Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,** [Genesis 15:6] 7 so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, “**All the nations will be blessed in you.**” 9 So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer.” NET

In Gen 15:6 is recorded that Abraham was justified by faith. A careful reading of the story shows that he was 86 yrs old when this happened. Abraham was 100 yrs old when Isaac was born and Isaac was a teenager about 16 yrs when Abraham offered him as a sacrifice. This puts around a 30 yr gap from the time of his being Justified by God to the time that he offered Isaac. Abraham was justified by faith from the time that he believed the promise of God. When he offered Isaac around 30 yrs later the action was an evidence of that faith. The action did not contribute to the justification but shows how people of faith obey God as opposed to demons who mealy believe the facts and tremble of the thought of God.

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Justification

“Paul insists that people are not justified by what they themselves do. Justification is not the result of the infusion of new life into people, but comes about when they believe. The apostle points to the important example of Abraham, the great forbear of the Jewish race, as one who was not justified by works (Rom 4:2-3). And, of course, if Abraham was not justified by works, then who could possibly be? Specifically Paul says, "a man is not justified by observing the law"; indeed, "by observing the law no one will be justified" (Gal 2:16 ; cf. also Gal 3:11).

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There is something of a problem in that, whereas Paul says quite plainly that justification is by faith and not by works, James holds that "a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" ([2:24](#)). James chooses Abraham and Rahab as examples of people who were justified by works ([James 2:21](#) [James 2:25](#)). He points out that Abraham "offered his son Isaac on the altar" and that Rahab lodged the spies and sent them away.

But we should notice that both these Old Testament worthies are elsewhere singled out as examples of faith. Paul cited Abraham to establish the truth that we are justified by faith rather than by works. Indeed, he quotes Scripture, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" ([Rom 4:3](#) , citing [Gen 15:6](#) ; he cites it again in v. 22). In Romans 4 Paul has a strong argument that it was not works that commended the patriarch to God, but faith: Abraham is, for Paul, the classic example of a man who believed and who was accepted by God because of his faith. And the writer to the Hebrews says plainly that it was "by faith" that Rahab welcomed the spies ([Heb 11:31](#)).

If we look more closely at what James says we see that he is not arguing for works in the absence of faith, but rather for works as the evidence of faith. "Show me your faith without deeds, " he writes, "and I will show you my faith by what I do" ([2:18](#)) and goes on to cite the demons who believe that there is one God as examples of the kind of faith he deprecates. James is sure that saving faith transforms the believer so that good works necessarily follow; and he complains about people who say they have faith, but whose lives show quite plainly that they have not been saved. When people have saving faith God transforms their lives and James' point is that in the absence of this transformation we have no reason for thinking that those who profess to be believers really have saving faith. We should not overlook the fact that James as well as Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 to make it clear that Abraham was justified by faith. And we should bear in mind that this was many years before he offered Isaac on the altar; indeed it was before Isaac was born. While the offering of Isaac showed that Abraham was justified, his justification, even on James' premises, took place long before the act that showed its presence.

And we must say much the same about Paul. He certainly calls vigorously for faith, but he calls equally vigorously for lives of Christian service. And when he writes, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" ([Gal 5:6](#)), he is saying something with which James would surely agree. For James says, "I will show you my faith by what I do" ([2:18](#))._ Leon Morris

Conclusion

Two of Satan's most successful lies:

- (1) By obeying the law of God a person will become more holy and acceptable to God and will be justified because of obedience to the law and made an heir of eternal life.

- (2) A justified person is exempted from having to obey the law of God.

The Gospel: Through the Grace of God alone a person is freely justified and granted eternal life. This transforming grace turns a justified person from a life of sin to a life of holiness manifested in obedience to the holy law of God and from a life of selfishness to a life zealous of good works.

Any person who refuses to live a holy life, who refuses to obey the law of God, who refuses to be zealous of good works is showing by his actions that he has not been transformed by the Grace of God and therefore will not receive Justification and will not be made an heir of eternal life that also comes from God's Grace.

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