

JOYS OF JUSTIFICATION

Romans 4:25-5:2

4:25: "He was delivered up for our trespasses over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. **5:1** "Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²We have also obtained access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

INTRODUCTION

A Japanese soldier named Shoichi Yokoi fled to a cave on the island of Guam when the tides of the War began to shift against the Japanese in 1944. Fearing for his life, he stayed hidden for 28 years in his jungle cave, coming out only at night. During his self-imposed exile, this hermit lived on frogs, rats, snails, nuts, shrimp, and mangoes. He wore pants and a jacket of a burlap-like cloth made from tree bark. Yokoi said later he knew the War was over because of leaflets scattered by the Allies throughout the jungle. But he was afraid if he came out of hiding, he would be executed for being an enemy combatant. Finally, in 1972, two hunters found him and convinced Yokoi he need hide no longer. At last he realized he was a free man, not a hated enemy. With new clothes to wear and food to eat, he was taken by plane to his home in Japan!

This tragic story is thoroughly understandable, given the vast differences between the worldviews and ethics of the Japanese culture at that time and the cultures of the Allied nations based upon Christian ethics. Shoichi Yokoi was once an enemy sworn to wage unrelenting war upon the United States and our Allies. He had little choice but to serve Japanese Emperor Hirohito from 1941-45 while WWII still raged across much of the world. But after Japan accepted our terms of surrender and signed a treaty on August 15, 1945, and peace between the Allied nations and Japan was restored, he had nothing further to fear from his former enemies. His years as an enemy of the United States and its Allies were forgiven and he had opportunity to enjoy a new life. While he lived in hiding as fearful as a hunted animal, the United States poured millions in money and man hours to help rebuild Japanese society on a better foundation, turning a nation that had once been one of our greatest enemies into one of our greatest allies!

The Biblical doctrine of justification explains how our history of offenses against a holy God is both forgiven and forgotten. The verb form of the noun "justification," meaning "being pronounced" or "declared righteous," appears in the Greek text of **Romans 5:1**: "Therefore, since we have been *declared righteous* by faith." This is most often translated "*justified* by faith" (KJV, NASB, ESV). From the moment we embrace the terms of the peace treaty God offers to us, we are "justified" in God's eyes—declared free from the guilt and penalty of sin—because of God's grace toward us through **Jesus Christ**. If we lack a good grasp of what this means to us as individuals, we may not experience the quality of the new life God offers to us. Today we explore the Faith, Forgiveness, and Forever aspects of justification.

I. FAITH: THE BASIS

The Greek word for "trespasses" in **Romans 4:25** [reread] describes willful acts of disobedience; when we know what's the right thing to do and choose to sidestep God's will. We consciously leave God's moral path because we're deceived some sin offers us a greater gain than doing what God wants. Timmy, age 7, had been misbehaving and was sent to his room. He came out after a time and told his mom he'd thought over what he'd done and then said a prayer. "That's great!" said the pleased mom. "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, He will help you." "Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me not misbehave," said Timmy. "I asked Him to help you put up with me." We may convince ourselves we're good people with higher moral standards than the typical person around us. We are still tainted by enough violations of God's will that we can never measure up to His standards of perfect love, kindness, and goodness. **Jesus Christ**, the Son of God come to earth to become our Savior, died in our place and suffered the punishment our crimes against God's heart deserve. His resurrection proved God the Father accepted **Jesus'** sacrifice in our place and is

ready to forgive and forget our sins. A man preached to some fishermen. His subject was justification. He sought to make it plain to these common men what Christ's work on the Cross really meant to them. At last he asked, "Will one of you tell me, in your own words, what the Lord Jesus did do there?" An old salt looked up, and with tears streaming down his weather-beaten face, said, "He swapped places with me!"

Two key words are intertwined in our text. One word is "justification," in one form or another. The second key word identifies the condition we must fulfill before we can enjoy the blessings of justification. What is this word? "Faith." Harry Ironside (1876-1951) presented the Gospel on the streets of a certain town in California one day. A man interrupted him by objecting, "Look here, sir! There are hundreds of religions in this country, and the followers of each sect think theirs the only right one. How can poor men like us find out what really is the truth?" Ironside wisely replied, "Hundreds of religions, you say? That's strange; I've heard of only two." His interrupter insisted "Oh, but you surely know there are more than that." "Not at all, sir," said Ironside. "I find, I admit, many shade of difference in the opinions of those comprising the two great schools; but after all there are but two. The one covers all who expect salvation by doing; the other, all who have been saved by something done." In other words, Harry Ironside defined "religion" as doing something to gain God's forgiveness and the blessings of eternal life. If we think we are going to Heaven because of things we do—prayer, attending church, acts of charity or kindness—we have religion but we don't have Christ. "Christianity" is admitting we cannot do a thing to merit salvation, so if are to be forgiven and saved from our sins, we know we must receive such salvation as a gift or not at all. "Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²We have also obtained access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand."

God forbid, but if you were to die sometime this week and you found yourself standing before God's throne, what would you say to Him if He asked you, "Why should I let you into My Heaven?" Your exact choice of words may differ, but there really is only one right answer to this question: "Because I put my faith in Jesus Christ. You will have to let me in on His merits, because I have no merit of my own." A woman lies buried in an old churchyard in Enfield, CT. The six lines on her tombstone reveal she knew it's faith in Christ's perfect character and sacrificial death that saves us, not faith in our character and good deeds: "If friendship, kindness, truth, goodwill and love / Could prove a passport to the realms above, / The soul that tenanted this mouldering frame / To God's right hand might justly lay a claim. / But her own works she scorned as worthless dust: / Her Savior's merits were her only trust."

II. FORGIVENESS: THE BENEFIT

Faith is the basis of justification but it's not the most exciting part of being declared righteous by God. Suppose a close friend thought you had greatly wronged him/her in some way. Later, it's proven you were innocent of all wrongdoing in this matter. How would you react if your friend told you, "Okay, I'll admit you are not guilty of doing this. But I'll never forgive you." Would this make any sense? Of course not!

Justification is a courtroom term. Actual courtroom terminology may be, "You are acquitted," or, "The defendant is found not guilty." We can refine the meaning of "justification" even further. If you meet someone who tells you, "When God looks at me, He sees a person who has never sinned," would you think this person is crazy, or a liar? If you know he/she has placed saving faith in Christ's merits alone for salvation, it could be this individual has a great grasp of the value of justification. When God pronounces us righteous by our Savior's merits, this means He will treat us just as if we had never disgraced His standards.

The base model of the 2015 Rolls-Royce sells for \$263,000 and the familiar Coupe sells for \$438,000; this gives us a fair idea of the luxury and standards of excellence behind the Rolls-Royce name. Probably 40 years ago, an Englishman put his Rolls-Royce on a ferry and went across to the Continent on holiday. While he drove around Europe, something happened to the motor. He cabled the Rolls-Royce plant in England to ask, "I'm having trouble with my motor; what do you suggest I do?" The Rolls-Royce people

flew a mechanic over! He repaired the car and flew back to England, leaving this man to continue his holiday. He couldn't help but wonder with some dread, "How much is this going to cost me?" When he returned to England, he wrote the plant a letter to ask how much he owed them. He received this written reply: "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce." This is justification. God does not keep a record of our wrongs. Our debts to Him are forgiven!

III. FOREVER: THE BREADTH

We've looked at the Basis of Justification. What is it? Faith. We've rejoiced over the Benefit of Justification: Forgiveness. Now we will celebrate the Breadth of Justification: Forever!

Habakkuk 1:13 describes our perfect Creator-LORD stating, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing." **Hebrews 12:28-29** (NIV) warns against a careless attitude about the consequences of deliberate disobedience after we've received the grace of justification and are confident of enjoying Heaven's glories: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,²⁹ for our 'God is a consuming fire'" [citing **Deuteronomy 4:24**]. Today, we can only dare to stand before a God of pure holiness by the grace of justification; being approved by God as righteous in His eyes because of **Jesus Christ** covering us with the purity of His righteousness and sacrificial death in our place. When we've been in Heaven for 10,000 years, will this still be true? Yes. We can be grateful. If our forgiveness and right standing with God could be earned by our merits, they could be lost by our demerits. Till the moment we die, we'd never have 100% assurance we were in God's good graces enough to escape the everlasting torment that is tragically the fate of many. Day by day, even in Heaven, we could not be 100% sure God might not decide to punish us for our past sins. If He ever demands justice from us solely on the basis of our misdeeds of commission or omission, the joys of justification—forgiveness, no remembrance of past wrongs, full acceptance into His blessed love—could be ripped away from us at any moment! But God promises us that not only is our justification on the basis of Christ's merits our only *safe* approach to a holy God; justification on the basis of Christ's merits alone is our only *secure* acceptance by God forever! "We have also obtained access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!"

CONCLUSION

The program committee for a national barber's convention promoted a publicity stunt to showcase their profession. They found a skid row derelict with long, unkempt hair; unshaven; ragged, filthy clothes; his body reeked with odors of cheap liquor and refuse. The barbers cleaned him up with a bath, shampoo, shave, haircut, and manicure. They liberally sprinkled talcum powder on him and added spicy cologne. They dressed him in a new suit and presented him before the convention as a new man. He certainly looked the part. Yet, within a week, he was back on skid row, back in the gutter, and back in his former pattern of living. The barbers vastly improved his outward appearance, but their services had not changed his inner nature. Anyone with the money to spend can put a man in a new suit, but only Christ can put a new man in the suit. **II Corinthians 5:17**: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come." The greatest joy of justification is that Christ alters us from the inside out.

A preacher stood on a street corner speaking to anyone who'd listen. A man approached who looked like he'd lived on the street for years. "Can I help you" asked the preacher. "I think you can" said the bum. "Would you like me to tell you about Jesus?" "No." "Would you like me to pray for you?" "No." "If you don't want me to tell you about Jesus, and you don't want me to pray with you, how can I help you?" "You can give me your Bible." "Why would you want my Bible if you have no interest in knowing more about Jesus?" "I noticed that the pages of your Bible are very thin. I can use the pages to wrap a cigarette or a joint." Wisdom came suddenly to the preacher, who said, "I'll give you the Bible if you'll agree to read the page before you smoke it." The bum agreed, took his new Bible, and left. The preacher thought he'd seen

the last of him. Several months passed. The preacher was on that street corner once again. A man came up to him dressed in a three piece suit. "You don't know me, do you?" said the man. "No. I've never seen you in my life." "Yes you have. I'm the man you gave a Bible to about four months ago." The preacher couldn't believe his eyes and ears. "What happened? Tell me what happened." "Well," this inwardly and outwardly renewed man said, "I smoked Matthew, and then I smoked Mark, and then I smoked Luke—and then John smoked me."