

# Justification

## By Arthur Whiting

Arthur Whiting:

It is indeed a joy to greet you once again in the name of our savior as we welcome you to another session of Dr. Talbot's Bible study hour. And now Lord help us as we come to meditate upon my word. May we take it into our hearts and may our wills be moved to act upon it to thy glory and to our good for we ask these things in our savior's lovely name and for his sake. Amen and now friends we come to our study as we consider what the Bible reveals about justification.

How can a man be justified before God the sixteenth century of the Christian era is noted for outstanding events and great discoveries. The first printing press in America was set up in Mexico in fifteen hundred and thirty six. The famous Polish astronomer Copernicus announced to a startled world that the sun and not the Earth was the center of the universe. The most stupendous and far reaching event of the century however was the rediscovery of God's way of justifying a guilty sinner. Luther and his companion who at that time were devoted members of Catholicism were sent on a mission to Rome during their month stay in this famous city.

They visited St. John's Lateran the highest in rank of all the Catholic Churches of that day. This building contained the so-called Pilate's stairway constructed supposedly of the marble steps from the judgment hall where our Lord was condemned. An indulgence from penance for nine years was promised by Leo the fourth for each step claimed by the pilgrim on his knees as he repeated the appointed prayers Luther's son states that his father told him he started climbing the

famous stairway when Romans 1:17 flashed into his mind. For there in is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written. The just shall live by faith. That was indeed God's light for Luther's darkened mind. This passage from Paul became the gate to life and liberty as the pure grace of God was made very real to Martin Luther.

It was the start of the Reformation. It was the very core of Protestantism but both the problem and the remedy. The question and the answer are older than the reformation of the 16th century. The important question of the ages has been how can a man be justified before God? It was asked back in the time of Job. It came to the forefront. Throughout the history of the Jews it found expression in heathen sacrifices. It is back of all the futility of oriental religions. The only place where the true and sufficient answer may be found is in the Bible that blessed book which gave birth to the Reformation and to Protestantism first of all lets us consider the meaning of justification. What exactly does it mean to be justified?

Now regardless of what others say to the contrary it is quite clear from the biblical use of the word that the term justify signifies the declaring or pronouncing of a person just or righteous. In Matthew twelve thirty seven we read this for by thy words Thou shalt be justified and by thy words Thou shall be condemned. Here you will notice the words justified and condemned are thrown into contrast. The one is the opposite of the other but both of the words are judicial terms words that belong to the courtroom. This is at once seen by the reference in verse 36 to the Day of Judgment when a person justifies or condemns he acts as a judge. What he judges to be wrong. He condemns what he judges to be right. He justifies the action is altogether forensic.

The person who is condemned is not thereby made bad. The person who is justified is not thereby made good.

The individual is only made out to be wrong or made out to be right. He is not made wrong nor is he made right. He is simply reckoned wrong or reckoned right. This my friends at a most important distinction and failure to recognize it brings about great confusion indeed. It is just at this point that some have erred so grievously they confuse justification with sanctification. The Reckoning righteous with the making righteous the Council of Trent is on record as declaring that justification is not merely the remission of sin but the sanctification and renovation of the Interior man by his voluntary acceptance of graces and gifts whence the unjust is made just the enemy a friend that he made the heir according to the hope of life everlasting.

So said the council of Trent but my friends according to the Bible when a man is justified he is counted as righteous justification is an external process. It does not affect an internal change in the sinner. It does not make him any better than he was before. Justification is simply the declaration of the judge that the offender is put in a right relation to the law. That is the testimony of the fourth chapter of Romans verses one through eight where it is clearly shown that a man is justified before God when God counts him righteous. Let us pause for a moment and take a look at these wonderful verses the fourth chapter of Romans verses one through eight. What shall we say then that Abraham our father asked pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Did you get that. Abraham believed God. And it was counted unto him for righteousness but the passage goes on to say now to him that worketh is the reward not reckond of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not. But believeth on him that justifies the ungodly. His faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness this of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works saying Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. And I have read to you the first eight verses of the fourth chapter of Romans. You can see that the essence of the idea in justification is judicial acceptance. A verdict of the Laws contentment with the accused person.

This is something very very different from sanctification. And I want you to listen now as we designate for you some of these great differences justification concerns our position sanctification affects our condition justification concerns our standing sanctification affects our state justification concerns our relationship sanctification affects our fellowship justification concerns our acceptance sanctification affects our attainment you see friends justification is not simply a matter of forgiveness it involves forgiveness it is true but it is much more than forgiveness. If you will turn to the thirteenth chapter of Acts and take a look at versus 38 and 39 you will see that there is a distinction between these two acts thirteen versus thirty eight and thirty nine.

Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren that through this man that is referring to the Lord Jesus that through this man is preached unto you. The forgiveness of sins. There you see you have the matter of the forgiveness of sins but the next verse goes on to say and by him all

that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. You see this is a passage which is making the distinction between forgiveness and justification. A man may be pardoned for his crime but he is not thereby justified or regarded as righteous. For the simple reason that forgiveness merely removes the charges against him whereas justification involves the postponement of righteousness whereby he has a perfect standing before the one he has wronged so that the offended one can declare him forever right and accepted before him. But you say how can this be done? And so we pass on to consider the method of justification before God and I want us to view this from two standpoints. First of all from the standpoint of the divine. Let's view it from the divine side and from that side justification is something that only God can do.

You see there are two ways open to men in which a man who is accused of an offence may be justified first he may be justified by the demonstration of innocence. It may be shown that the charges against him are false that he never committed the offence. Now can any of us claim justification on that ground? Of course not. One of the first problems to contend with is the problem of our guilt. Romans 3:19 declares that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Yes that is it. My friend's guilty before God that is our status by birth and by experience the Scriptures brand us as sinners and our conduct. Day by day confirms it.

So friends men cannot plead innocence man is guilty of infringing God's law. He is guilty of being unlike him and the penalty for such is death for the Lord had said in the day that thou we just that of thou shalt surely die and in the fifth chapter of Romans verse twelve we read by one

man sin entered into the world and death by sin oh we're guilty all right. Not one of us can plead innocence we cannot be justified by the demonstration of innocence it is no use saying that we are not worse than others for we are all in the same boat together it is no use saying that we are not very bad or never did any special harm.

The truth of the matter is the word of God declares all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. However there is another possibility with men. A man may be justified by the satisfaction of justice by the endurance of the penalty. You see the prisoner may be condemned to a term of penal servitude when the last hour expires. He is free from the law. The claims have been met and justice has been satisfied in his relation to the law. That man is a justified man. Justice has been satisfied the penalty has been endured but just for a moment. Let us suppose that the extreme sentence of the law is imposed. Let us suppose that the man is condemned to die. The sentence is finally executed and he dies. Then the situation that Paul expressed in Romans 6:7 would hold good for in Romans 6:7. We read he that half died is freed from sin.

You see the man has paid the penalty and justice is satisfied but now let us go one step further in order illustration suppose that following death this man could be miraculously raised to life.

What would be his status then? Well it is clear that the law would have no claim against him for it would not be an act of justice but a deed of terrible wrong to repeat the execution. He had died once he had paid the penalty once justice was satisfied he is free from the law the payment of the penalty satisfies justice and the law has no more hold upon him. Now let us pause a moment can we be justified in this matter before God by paying the penalty. Certainly not. That is if we want to live since the death penalty is final and irretrievable and it results in eternal separation from

God. Then you say we are hopelessly lost. Is there no way out from this seemingly inexorable logic.

Well we thank God today that he is greater than his own revealed laws. He is himself legislator as well as Judge and his laws are simply the expression of his own moral character. He who is Love contrived a way to be just. And yet the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus. Yes as we love to sing truly love found a way. You see the problem presenting itself to God was to be just. And yet justify the guilty sinner. Three factors had to be taken into account in order to be justified. A person must possess a righteousness upon the basis of which the verdict is pronounced. Justice must be satisfied on account of our sin nature and its manifestation our righteousness is as filthy rags. It is totally inadequate. Therefore righteousness must come from the outside. God must provide himself. Thirdly this righteousness provided for us would have to be imputed or reckoned to us.

Now when we turn to the first five chapters of the book of Romans we find that these are the very fact set forth in God's wonderful scheme of salvation. First we are told that God is just and as such he demands complete satisfaction of justice. Secondly in those wonderful five chapters of Romans we are told that man is a sinner one who is incapable of rendering satisfaction to God so that he can enjoy God. And thirdly we are told that God has provided the needed righteousness in Christ the one who became the sinners substitute in such a way that his death became the singer's death and his resurrection life becomes the sinner's life through faith.

My friends it thus becomes evident that justification is the act of God whereby he declares one righteous who believes in Christ because Christ's righteousness is through faith imputed to him. This word impute should be a word familiar to all of us. It simply means to reckon to to lay to one's charge. When I say I impute a bad or a good motive to a person certainly no one misunderstands me. Philemon had no doubt what Paul meant. When he told him to charge. Or impute. To him. The debt. Of Onesimus. Yes the meaning is very clear. Something is reckoned to us. Now friends listen closely for according. To Bible testimony. There are three great reckonings by God. The first reckoning is the reckoning of Adam's sin to us. Resulting in condemnation. The second reckoning is the reckoning of our sin to Christ. Resulting in reconciliation. The third reckoning is the reckoning of Christ's righteousness to the believer. Resulting in. Justification. God counts are reckons. His death. As our punishment. And causes his merit. To become that. Of the believer. It is this reckoning of the merits of Christ to the one who believes. That makes possible God's action in declaring us righteous. It is truly as acts thirteen thirty nine declares by him all that I believe are justified from all things it is because of what Christ has done for us at Calvary. That God is able and free to declare that the one who accepts that work for himself is righteous.

A person is made righteous by virtue of his union with Christ. But he is justified by God as God recognizes and declares that fact justification very simply is God's proclamation that he sees a person perfect in his son. Thus on the divine side justification is through Christ. It is not the result of our own work but it is the fruit of another's work. Romans 4 twenty five declares who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification. That's Romans four twenty five. While much misunderstanding prevails as to the meaning of this verse the real significance

of it comes to light when we realize that the preposition for in each case should be rendered on account of or because making it read who was delivered on account of or because of our offenses and was raised again on account of or because of our justification. The sense is that as our sins caused his death our justification caused his resurrection.

He was raised from the dead to signify that what he had accomplished in his death in providing the ground for our justification was fully accepted of the father. It was just God's way of saying that there was nothing more to pay. Jesus paid it all. Justification does not depend upon what I do but upon what he has done. There is nothing we can do to earn it. Romans 3:20 declares therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight from the context it is clear that these works are seeking after God fearing God. Doing good. Having a reverence for human life. In fact every kind of moral excellence on the ground of his own character and conduct man never can be justified before God morality and religiosity are totally inadequate bases on which to stand before God. There is absolutely nothing we can do to merit since it is offered as a free gift. Romans 3:24 tells us that being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in praise Jesus not only as justification something that God does for us without being paid for it by us.

But it is something that God does for us without finding any cause in us for so doing. There was nothing in us but there was everything in him. We do have however some part to play in this matter for viewed from the human side. Justification is through faith Romans four or five says but to him that worketh not. But believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly. His faith is counted for righteousness. Faith is the means of appropriating what Christ has done for us. The question

is then not do we have any work too often. But do we trust him. Faith is the acknowledgement of my own inability and my need of another's ability. It is the act of receiving and resting upon the Lord Jesus Christ as our sufficient substitute and sacrifice. Now friends we have considered the meaning and the method of justification. Now just a word about the extent of it. To what extent is a person justified when he believes the answer to this question is found in Acts thirteen thirty nine and by him all that I believe are justified from all things. Did you get that from all things that is far reaching indeed?

It means that the entire account against us is wiped out. We are cleared of all the charges when we trust the Lord. While your record may be bad it may be black. God reckons none of it against you. But instead he credits you with all the goodness of Christ. Instead of reckoning things against you he reckons something to you and then declares you righteous before him. What a gospel of hope. This is for a man with a blackness of sin resting upon him. Yes my friends. God justifies the believing sinner and the greatest question confronting us right now that is this. Am I justifying before God. Friends it involves a choice that is deliberate voluntary and final. Have you made it? Are you justified or are you condemned?

Are you under the death sentence of outraged holiness and broken law or in full enjoyment of a perfect standing before God accepted in the beloved. My friends there can be no middle ground either God declares you a bankrupt in sin lost and undone with no hope in your unbelief or he declares you righteous in Christ. I wonder which is true of you right now.

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Let us pray accept our heartfelt praise our Father for such wonderful grace that can make hell deserving sinners to stand in thy sight. Clad in all the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ Lord may we never lose our sense of wonder as we think of thyself and of thy grace in the name of our peerless Savior we pray amen now friends it is time to bid you goodbye for the present. May the joy of the Lord always be your strength as you keep looking up.