

How Are You Justified???

We all must answer one day to our God, the Creator of the universe and all that is in it!

There is One True God, and we are all simply creatures on His earth.

And we are told in Holy Scripture to worship God alone, and not our fellow creatures, no matter how powerful or attractive they might seem to be.

Let's go to Romans chapter 1 for an example...

Rom 1:18-25 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Nothing and no one compares to our Creator! The One who created all things is FAR ABOVE what He has created, and that includes all of us!

And the astonishing thing is that our God and Creator, who holds all power and glory in His hands, LOVINGLY CHOSE to become flesh and dwell among us 2000 years ago so that we might be saved!

But how can we sinners be justified in front of such a Holy and All-powerful God?!

The Bible tells us the good news that a man CAN be justified before his God, but only by God's grace, and through faith alone.

But by faith in WHO, exactly?

The Truth of the Word of God (who IS Jesus Christ, acc. to **John 1**) tells us that a man can ONLY be justified by faith in our God and Savior Jesus Christ,...

... and man CANNOT be justified by the works of the Law (**Gal 2:16**), and NOT by trusting in his own wisdom or strength, or his own supposed goodness!

That last point may sound strange, but many people in this world have "faith" in themselves; that they're a good enough person to please God on their own.

But faith in oneself doesn't save anyone. These people don't realize it, but they're sadly deceiving themselves.

Justification by faith in Christ alone is a running theme throughout Holy Scripture, going all the way back to Abram. **Gen 15:6**

Gen 15:6 *Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

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There we see Abram was made righteous by placing his trust (faith) in the Lord!

How does that relate to our topic of Justification???

When God declares a man righteous, that means he is now **JUSTIFIED** in God's eyes!

But to receive this gift, sinful man must willfully and humbly turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, because He's the only One who can **justify** us before our Creator God.

Jesus' blood was **pure**, not tainted by sin like the rest of humanity; and **therefore** He was an **acceptable** sacrifice to God the Father on our behalf!

Let's see a few passages about the purity of Jesus as the only worthy sacrifice for our sins...

... the spotless Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!

Heb 4:14-15 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin.***

Rom 3:21-26 *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 **the righteousness of God through faith in 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 and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.** This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and **the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

The Bible says if you humbly place your trust in the Perfect One, the Holy One, the Lord Jesus Christ, then God makes you perfect, by His grace!

Rom 5:8-9 *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been **justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.***

And THAT'S why Jesus is the only One who can justify sinful man before God.

The Person of Jesus Christ IS the Good News (the Gospel) of God coming in the flesh to save and justify sinful man. Praise God!!

The apostle Paul later **expounds** upon justification by faith in his letters, such as in Romans, which we will see more of,...

... but the **originator** of this truth about justification is Jesus Christ Himself!

Let's read one of the Lord's parables in **Luke 18**, where we see two men approaching God for justification, but in two different ways.

One man goes to God **trying to justify himself**, while the other man **denies that he can justify himself**, pleading with God in humility, knowing he needs God's mercy as a sinner.

Luk 18:9-14 *"And He also told this parable to some people who **trusted in themselves** that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

*11 "The Pharisee stood and was **praying this to himself**: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'*

*13 "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.***"

Do you see the heart that God is looking for?!

THAT'S what saving faith looks like, my friends!

And here we see a main characteristic of saving faith is **humility**...

Jesus said "*he who humbles himself will be exalted*"; and in context, He's talking about **being justified** in God's eyes!

Here we see a willingness to surrender to God and Christ. He who humbles himself before the Lord Jesus as his Savior will be justified, by God's grace alone!

But, unless one is willingly humble before the Lord, he will not be granted saving faith and be justified by God.

***Eph 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Man must first admit that **he cannot justify himself before God**; he must be **willing to turn away** (repent) from self-reliance and his own attempts at goodness, as the Pharisee was NOT willing to do in **Luke 18**.

He was stuck in a prideful opinion of self (arrogance).

What a great deception that is; to think one can please God on his own!

In fact, if you think about it, that's the great deception of most world religions...

... they teach you must earn your way to God.

The Bible says we are all fallen creatures and filthy sinners in God's eyes. That's the God's Honest Truth.

NONE of us are good, according to Holy Scripture!!!

Rom 3:9-12 *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written,*

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

The message about our sinfulness is undeniable.

And therefore, as impure sinners, even our good deeds are filthy in God's eyes!

The Bible says, because we are sinners, **even our good deeds are not accepted by God.**

You might ask "why???"

Think of it this way... **if you add one small piece of dung to a bottle of pure spring water, is any part of it good any longer?!**

Would you dare drink it?? No! Because you know it's now ALL contaminated!

We are COMPLETELY CONTAMINATED because of sin.

This is a picture of sinful man trying to do something pure/good in God's eyes. But it's impossible because we're contaminated.

*Isa 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

In the Hebrew language, "filthy garment" refers to a woman's menstrual rag! - As you can see, God is very direct and honest with us, because **He loves us and He doesn't want us to deceive ourselves!**

Again, why are man's **righteous deeds** so disgusting and unacceptable to God?

There's one very simple reason; **our righteous deeds are tainted and polluted by our sin.**

Even man's righteous deeds are **impure** because of the sin within him (think of the dung in the bottle of water).

And let's also remember this - our perfect God demands PERFECT righteousness!

And due to sin in us, even our good deeds are un-righteous in God's eyes.

Again:

*Isa 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

Do you see the HUGE PROBLEM we have??? (this is what we need to explain as we share the Gospel with the lost; we need to set the stage for people, as the Lord and the apostles did)

How can sinful man be saved in the face of a perfect God?!!

Our only hope is to be granted the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ! 2Co 5:21, Rom 5:17

2Co 5:21 *He made Him (the Lord, Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Through faith in His precious Person, we share His righteousness!

And look at this lovely explanation in Romans 5:

Rom 5:12-19 *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

*15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses **brought justification**. 17 If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and **the free gift of righteousness** reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

*18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so **one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men**. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience **the many will be made righteous**. (I ask that you read this passage again to take it in fully!)*

The Lord Jesus became a sin offering for us on the Cross so that we could be made righteous (justified!) through Him!

But without receiving Christ's righteousness, by faith, man has no hope. So says the Word of God.

If we think following the Law can make us righteous, we are deceived, because we cannot follow the Law perfectly as is required by God.

Salvation must be pursued by faith in the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ,... and not by an effort to earn one's own way with God.

Rom 9:30-33 *What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 as it is written,*

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Gal 2:21 *"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

The Lord came down from heaven and died for us because it was the only way we could be saved from our sins!

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come and "justify the many" by bearing their sins.

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.*

Notice the Righteous One "will justify the many" (speaking about sinful people like us).

Again, just think about the HUGE PROBLEM that sinful man has without Christ as his Substitute in judgment!

How can one who is UNRIGHTEOUS justify himself before a pure and holy God?

The Bible tells us it's totally impossible and unacceptable to God!

Unfortunately, many **religious** people think they can **earn** God's favor. Or, they think their good deeds can outweigh their sins and satisfy God.

But this is the great deception!!!

This is exactly what Satan wants people to think. Satan is the author of such religious thinking.

If a man isn't willing to surrender himself before the Lord, admitting he needs a Savior,.. then he's going to cling to his own supposed goodness...

... and therefore, he's not going to turn to Christ alone for justification, even though Christ is his only Hope!

God might say to us something like this: *Only I can justify you, by grace, if you humbly turn to My Son. I've judged my Son FULLY for YOUR sins. Are you willing to deny that you can save yourself and trust in My Son instead? (It's one or the other! Mat 16:24, Luk 18:9-14)*

In other words, are you willing to repent and believe in Christ alone, and simply say THANK YOU for His gift of salvation?

Matt 16:24-25 *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

This is what true faith looks like. But a person must be **WILLING**.

This is where man's will comes into play. God will not force anyone to turn to His Son.

And ultimately, God's the one that elects His children to receive saving faith! **Mat 22:14** - *For many are called but few are chosen.*

In an attempt to describe the supernatural... God is waiting for a humble heart in man. It's then that God gives grace to the humble, including the grace gift of saving faith. **Luk 18:14, Jam 4:6, Eph 2:8-9**

The problem is that our sinful flesh has a great desire to justify itself so it can take some credit in the process. (this is what we might call "creature credit", as described in **Romans 1**)

And let's remember, we CANNOT fool God. God knows all things, including our the motivations in our hearts.

ALL the glory (credit) must go to Him alone for saving us. NO credit goes to self/our flesh, or our own supposed goodness!

Luke 16:14-15 *Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who **justify yourselves** in the sight of men, but **God knows your hearts**; for that which is highly esteemed among men is **detestable** in the sight of God.*

What a bold statement from our Lord Jesus Christ! Do you seek to justify yourself??

In other words, man and his self-justification are **DETESTABLE** by God's holy standards.

And again, we're NOT talking about man's sin here... we're talking about man's own attempts at goodness, or righteousness! (how foolish for a sinner to try to justify himself before our Holy God?!)

Man's own attempts at goodness are **NOT EVEN CLOSE** to pleasing God.

In fact, it takes man in the other direction, and it's **disgusting** in God's eyes (remember **Isa 64:6**).

So,... what hope does man have?! - NONE in himself. NONE on his own.

This a big part of the message of **Biblical Justification**.

Understanding one's total depravity in the eyes of God sets the stage for a person to receive the Savior.

And throughout the Bible, God has made Himself very clear to those who are willing to listen.

The root of the problem is this: **how can a sinful person be justified before a perfectly holy and righteous God?!!**

This question should be part of our preaching of the Gospel!

This will help us set the stage to share the Good News with others.

And if God can't look upon sin with favor, then how can sinful man possibly be saved into heaven with Him?

Hab 1:13a *Your eyes are too pure to approve evil,
And You cannot look on wickedness with favor.*

The Bible tells us that God hates sin, and that He must judge sin. And that man is born in sin and is therefore under the condemnation of death.

Don't believe me?? Then look up all these passages for yourself. (**Gen 8:21, Job 14:4,15:14-16, Psa 51:5,58:3, Joh 3:18,36, Rom 5:12, Eph 2:3**)

Let's first look at one of the wisdom books, the book of Job.

It clearly tells us about the total depravity of man, who is separated from God by his sin...

Job 14:1-4 *Man, who is born of woman,
Is short-lived and full of turmoil.
2 "Like a flower he comes forth and withers.
He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.
3 "You also open Your eyes on him
And bring him into judgment with Yourself.
4 "Who can make the clean out of the unclean?
No one!*

There we see the **hopelessness** of sinful man (which includes all of us).

Job 15:14-16 *"What is man, that he should be pure,
Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?
15 "Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones,
And the heavens are not pure in His sight;
16 How much less one who is detestable and corrupt,
Man, who drinks iniquity like water!*

If a person isn't willing to admit his sinfulness before God, how will he turn to Christ as his Lord and Savior?! - HE WILL NOT (at least not from the heart)!

Again, this is a vital part of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:12 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*

Eph 2:1-3 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest.*

We're all born trapped in the same sinful boat. We're all born condemned and under sin!

NOW, with all that understood, the Good News is that there is HOPE!

That's why many of you are listening right now - HOPE!

It's called **being justified by God's grace, through faith alone in the only Righteous One, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on our behalf!**

Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that **being justified by His grace** we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

What a gracious and loving God we have, despite our many sins against Him!

For those who are willing to repent, we see the bad news turn into good news in **Ephesians chapter 2...**

Eph 2:1-10 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

To the humble person, this is wonderfully good news!

But to the arrogant person who wants to justify himself, this insults him, thinking this is too simple, OR that he can be good enough on his own to please God!

What a horrible, deceived state of mind that is!

Again, it's ultimately a choice for each person to make in their heart; to either justify himself before God OR to turn away from self, turning to the Christ alone to be justified!

Who are you placing your trust in for your salvation... yourself, or the Lord?!

Sinful man (that's all of us) can only be justified by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In John 6, Jesus says that He will one day raise up everyone who has placed their trust in Him!

John 6:35-40 *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and **the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.***

*38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that **everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.**"*

The Lord Jesus is the only way a man can be saved from his sins; even declared "justified", and made righteous in the eyes of God!

This is God's grace plan to save sinful mankind!

Jesus made it very clear that He is the only way to eternal salvation.

John 14:1-6 *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

4 "And you know the way where I am going." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Placing one's trust in the perfect One, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only "way" a sinful man can be justified before our Holy God. **Joh 14:6**

And that same message of Jesus is what the apostles share with us in their letters to the churches regarding Justification!

Romans 3 is a good place to see that God's plan for the justification of man has always been BY FAITH, and never by man's own works or goodness, or any form of self-justification.

Rom 3:21-30 *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; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that **He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

*27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is **justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will **justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.***

It doesn't get more plainly stated than that!

God's grace plan is illustrated to us in His saving of Abraham, many centuries before the Law was even given through Moses.

Rom 4:1-8 *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. 5 But to the one who does not work, but **believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness**, 6 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." ...

Notice, the Lord only accepts faith, APART from works (as we saw in Eph 2).

FAITH (trusting in the Lord) gives all the credit to the Lord for what He has accomplished for us at the Cross!

Let's read on...

Rom 4:13-16 *For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was **not** through the Law, **but through the righteousness of faith**. 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.*

*16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are **of the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all,*

And it goes on to say that Jesus was raised from the dead for OUR justification:

Rom 4:25 *He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.*

And the conclusion continues right on into chapter 5 (remember, there are no chapter breaks in the original languages of Holy Scripture):

Rom 5:1-2 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.*

Ahhhh.... HOPE! - God is telling us we can hope in Him!

The New Testament letters (from Romans - Jude) give us more on justification, describing to us in a forensic way (as making a case in a courtroom) what was already accomplished on the Cross for the sins of mankind.

The authors of these books are speaking to the churches, presumably most of whose members were already believers.

Our hope of being acceptable to God has been made possible through faith in the sacrificial Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Savior.

Remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus coming:

Joh 1:29 *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

God's amazing, sacrificial love has given us a way out of slavery to sin and death, into which we were born!

We had NO HOPE of salvation without the Lord taking action on our behalf.

Out of His great love, He shed His blood for us!

Rom 5:8-11 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been **justified** by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

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.*

Remember, in context, a lot of the conversation in the NT letters was directed to the newly-believing Jews.

And many of them were stuck in thinking that following the Old Testament Law could justify them before God.

But one reason the Law was given was to show mankind that he couldn't do it on his own!

How do we know this??

Gal 3:6-14 *Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.*

10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

As Holy Scripture tells us, **the Law was given as a tutor** to reveal to men that they were unable on their own, and to stop trusting in themselves and to turn to Christ alone to be saved (repenting/believing is a turning in the heart of man from sin/self to Christ alone; **Mar 1:15, Luk 13:1-9, 18:9-14**).

Gal 3:22-26 *But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore **the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.** 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

The OT Law actually revealed to man that he was unable to keep it all and meet God's perfect requirements!

Even this is another picture of God's grace in action! Man had to go through it and see for himself there was no other way, other than seeking the mercy of God alone.

Gal 5:4-5 *You have been severed from Christ, you who are **seeking to be justified by law**; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, **by faith**, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.*

Every person has to make a choice!

Who is YOUR hope in, right now??

Only by faith in the Lord Jesus we can be justified, and saved.

The Apostle Paul knew this quite well, and therefore he was willing to turn his back on his own attempts at goodness, reaching out to the only One who offers true hope of being saved.

Phil 3:8-9 *More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, **not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,***

We would be very wise to turn in our hearts to God's grace, not to our own works!

Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that **being justified by His grace** we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

The Scriptures are clear that man can only be justified by God's grace, through humble, repentant faith in Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior.

If a person relies on his own works or his own keeping of the Law, HE WILL COME UP SHORT EVERY TIME because perfection is the requirement!

The only perfect One was Jesus Christ and that's why **through believing in His sacrifice alone** man can be justified before God.

Let's close our lesson on Justification this way:

Some confusion in Christianity lies in the book of James, which speaks of man not being justified by faith alone, but also by his works!

Context is everything when reading Holy Scripture, and when reading the book of James we can see James is speaking about **being justified before men**, not before God.

A man's good works are an evidence to others of his justification through faith in Christ.

For example:

James 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.

James is saying that works are the PROOF of genuine faith...

... and works are the evidence to other people that one has been changed by God; having been justified by faith in Christ.

In other words, since men can't see the faith in your heart, how will men know you are of God?? - By your works, or by your fruit, as our Lord Himself said in **Mt 7:15-23. (cf Heb 12:14)**

Heb 12:14 *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

Whether we like it or not, people see the Lord in us by the way we live.

And the Bible teaches if there is NO good fruit in the life of one who claims to have faith, there might be a deeper problem!

But James is telling us that men cannot see the faith in your heart. **In their eyes**, you are justified by your works.

And good works are the proof of saving faith. (**1Pe 1:7**)

1Pe 1:6-9 *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that **the proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly*

rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

As Jesus said, a good tree will bear good fruit, and a bad tree will bear bad fruit. That's simply the reality of the spiritual life!

Lk 6:43-45 *For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44 "For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. 45 "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.*

And remember, a person can only do divinely good works when he is first given a new heart by God, because good is a product of the Spirit of God living within the believer.

Thus, good works will come forth as part of God's plan all along, for the one who has turned to Christ in humility,... as we have seen with the tax collector in **Luke 18**, and Zacchaeus in **Luke 19**.

We are given the full picture of saving grace in Eph 2:8-10: *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

What does God's grace, through faith in Christ, produce in a believer??
- Good works!

In summary, let's never forget, man is justified before God by faith in Christ alone, by the grace and mercy of God.

And the believer is changed by God, resulting in divinely good works to the glory of God.

Amen?!

And because no person can see the heart of another person, this is all very personal. It's between each person and the Lord.

Who do you place your hope in?

Are you trusting in yourself to save yourself and to be able to stand before Almighty God one day?

That is not a wise move for anyone!

Right now, you can choose to repent and ask forgiveness of God, placing your hope in Christ alone as your Justifier! **Rom 3:26**

Christ alone is worthy. And He alone satisfied God the Father's righteous demands on our behalf at the Cross.

Salvation is a free gift of God, offered to all who are willing to humble themselves before the Lord. **Rom 6:23**

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Mark 1:14b-15 *Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**"*

John 3:16-18 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Acts 16:30b-31 *he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

One must place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to be justified before the Holy God of the universe.

We thank God for His amazing grace.