



# *Foundations of*

# FAITH

## Justification from Sin Lesson 18

A prisoner is brought forth to hear the verdict of the jury. The foreman says, "We find the defendant not guilty." The accused has been acquitted of the charge against him. He has been **justified**, pronounced free from guilt.

The term "justify" with its variant forms is used many times in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Romans, to denote the fact that, through Jesus Christ, the sinner may be absolved of his transgression. This freeing from sin is called "justification." In this lesson we shall study how we are justified, especially as this relates to man's part in securing this acquittal.

**HOW GOD MIGHT JUSTIFY MAN.** In considering justification, God is the judge, his word is the law, and our sin is the transgression of that law. Theoretically, there are two ways that God might justify man. He might justify him because he is innocent. In this event, man would be justified because he was good and deserved it. He would have a right to demand justification as rightly belonging to him in the same way that an innocent man, against whom charges have not been proved, has a right to demand to be released. However, none of us who have reached the age of accountability can be justified in this manner because none of us is innocent. "For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) If a man could lead a perfect life, never speaking an unkind word, never doing a wrong deed, never thinking an evil thought, he would need neither forgiveness nor Christ. But such is a human impossibility, so we must find out justification on some other ground than innocence.

The second way that God might justify man, in fact, the way that he **does** justify him, is to pardon him. Since man is actually guilty of sin, he must depend for his justification upon the grace of God rather than his own merit. The pardon is extended because the debt of sin has been paid by the blood of Jesus Christ. Justice requires that there be punishment for sin. Christ bears that punishment for us, and in the light of that fact, God forgives us, justifies us, and finds us not guilty.

However, justification must be accepted to be of any value. A number of years ago there was a prisoner who was pardoned by an American president. He refused to accept the pardon, and the matter was carried to the courts which declared that a pardon must be accepted to be of any value. Similarly, although Christ died for all men, his sacrifice will not save all men because all men are not willing to accept his offering. All are not willing to comply with the conditions attached to such acceptance, and God will not justify those who do not meet the conditions.

**WE ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW.** Many Jews in the time of Christ and his apostles thought that they could be saved by virtue of keeping the law of Moses. In his Roman epistle Paul refutes this by showing that no man ever kept the law perfectly, and since perfection was required if one hoped to be justified by the law, he concludes, "**By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.**" (Romans 3:20 A.S.V.) Again he teaches, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have

believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal. 2:16) If a man could have kept the works of the law perfectly, he could have demanded justification as belonging to him. He would have earned it, and would not have had to depend upon divine grace. Such was clearly impossible, so Paul teaches that we are not justified by works. However, notice that he uses “works” in the sense of **works of merit**, works by which a man might earn salvation.

**WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.** The great theme of the book of Romans is that we attain justification by our faith. Paul states, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3:28) He takes Abraham as a case in point and shows that, had not Abraham believed God, he would not have received the promise. His faith, he concludes “was imputed (or counted) to him for righteousness.” (Romans 4:22) That is, Abraham was considered righteous or justified by God **because of his faith**, not because of his works or because he was actually without sin. His conclusion is, of course, that we also are justified by our faith in God.

**DOES JAMES CONTRADICT PAUL?** Some have found a seeming contradiction between Paul and James in regard to justification. James teaches, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and he was called the Friend of God. **Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.**” (James 2:21-24) James clearly states that we are justified by works and mentions the case of Abraham as an example.

But Paul takes the same man and cites the same Old Testament scripture and draws another conclusion. He says, “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory; but not before God. For what says the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” (Romans 4:1-3)

Are these conclusions contradictory? Not at all. Paul and James are speaking of two different kinds of works. Paul, as already shown, was speaking of works of merit or the law. He was demonstrating that we

cannot by our own goodness earn salvation. James, on the other hand, was refuting the teaching that justification is procured by faith only, and he shows that any faith, to be saving, must also be working. We must have **works of faith**. He concludes that we are not justified “by faith only” (James 2:24) because a faith that will not work is dead. But he is **not** teaching that we can earn salvation by works of merit or works of the law. Once the distinction is clearly made between the two kinds of works envisaged by Paul and James, an understanding of the Biblical teaching of justification is not hard to grasp.

**THE MANY ELEMENTS OF JUSTIFICATION.** A common difficulty in studying this subject is in the supposition that if we are justified by one thing then all other factors are necessarily excluded. Thus, some teach that man is justified by faith only, which implies that nothing else enters into man’s justification. But this does not follow. Consider the building of a house. Who builds it? The architect? Yes, because he draws up the plans. The contractor? Yes, because he directs the construction. The labourer? Yes, because he does the physical work. The owner? Yes, because he makes the arrangements for building the house. Each man plays a part in building the house and each is necessary. It would be incorrect to state that the house is erected by either the contractor or the labourer alone.

The same principle applies to justification from sin. We are justified by God’s **grace**. “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:7) We are justified by the **blood** of Christ. “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Romans 5:9) We are justified by our **faith**. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) We are justified by **works**. “You see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.” (James 2:24) We are justified by all of these things, all are necessary, but none alone will justify man.

Without God’s grace, the blood of Christ would never have been shed to pay the price for sin. Without the blood, faith in Christ would be of no avail. Without faith, our works would be mere empty actions, yet without works our faith would be dead and of no value in securing salvation from sin. The doctrine of justification by faith only is wrong because it not only

denies that works play a part in our justification, but it also denies that the blood of Christ has anything to do with salvation. If we grant that we are justified by the blood then it is obviously wrong to state that we are justified by faith **only**.

The real key to understanding the part that faith plays in justifying us is found in the Biblical meaning of saving faith. The faith that justified is that which trusts. One may factually believe in Christ and still not trust him. We read, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42, 43) We are informed, "The devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19) Certainly, neither these Jewish rulers nor the devils were justified because of their belief, because they did not have the proper kind.

The faith that justifies is the faith that obeys. In Romans 1:5 and 16:26 Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith." It is obedience which stems from our faith and without which faith is valueless. The man who says, "I believe in Christ," but will not obey him may

have faith, but assuredly not saving faith. In Hebrews 11 we are told of the great things accomplished by the heroes of the Old Testament through faith. But in each case that faith obeyed. By faith "Abel offered...", "Noah prepared...", "Abraham obeyed ..." Had these men not done the things which God required they would not have been acceptable to him. Similarly, if we do not obey the commands of the Lord, we are not acceptable to him and our faith does not justify us because it is not the right kind of faith.

**BAPTISM AND JUSTIFICATION.** Many have denied that baptism plays any part in justification because they consider it a work of merit. Baptism is not a work. In the first place, the person being baptised is passive and does no work. Baptism is an act of faith. One is baptised because he has faith in Christ and realises that baptism is a divine command which he must carry out to express that faith. Baptism, then, is the expression of our faith which puts us into Christ. When we are baptised into him, we are justified by faith because our faith has led us to be baptised. But until we are baptised, our faith does not justify us because we have not obeyed.

#### TEST ON LESSON 18

**Underline the phrase which correctly completes each of the following statements:**

1. One who is justified from sin is: (a) prevented from sinning again, (b) found guilty before God, (c) acquitted of his transgression.
2. If a man could live a perfect life, God would justify him because of: (a) innocence, (b) good works, (c) the blood of Christ.
3. We cannot be justified by: (a) faith, (b) the blood of Christ, (c) works of the law.
4. In apostolic times, many Jews thought they could be justified by: being good citizens, (b) keeping the law of Moses, (c) grace.
5. We are justified by faith, but not by: (a) grace, (b) faith alone, (c) works expressing our faith.
6. Saving faith requires: (a) only factual acceptance of the gospel, (b) praying for salvation at the altar, (c) trusting obedience.
7. Baptism is: (a) a work of merit, (b) only an outward sign of an inward grace, (c) an act of faith necessary for justification.

**Read James 2:14-26 and then fill in the blanks:**

If a man says he has faith and not ....., can that faith save him? If we tell the naked and hungry to be warmed and filled, what does it ..... ? Faith, if it does not have ....., is ..... We may show our ..... by our works. We know that the ..... are not saved even though they believe and tremble. The faith of ..... was made ..... by the offering of Isaac upon the altar. Furthermore, his faith was imputed to him for ..... He was called the ..... of God. Man is justified by ..... and not by faith ..... The body without the spirit is dead, and so is ..... without works.

**Romans 5:1-11 gives several results of justification by faith. Place an (X) after those statements which express a result of justification taught in this passage:**

1. We have peace with God through Christ. ....
2. We are reconciled to God by Christ's death. ....
3. We have access by Christ into the grace wherein we stand. ....
4. We can never be lost. ....
5. We glory in tribulations. ....
6. We receive a second definite work of grace. ....
7. We shall be saved by the life of Christ. ....
8. We rejoice in hope through Christ. ....
9. We do not need to perform any works. ....
10. We shall be saved from wrath through Christ. ....

# Justification from Sin

## Lesson 18

### Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

Section 1 – 1 (c)  
2 (a)  
3 (c)  
4 (b)  
5 (b)  
6 (c)  
7 (c)

Section 2 – works, profit, works, dead, faith, devils, Abraham, perfect, righteousness, friend, works, only, faith.

Section 3 – X before 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10.

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