



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 013: Justification

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Justification

1. What is it?

The word 'just' carries with it the sense of fairness and being honourable. The dictionary definition of the word 'justify' is 'to demonstrate or prove to be just, right or valid'. It also means to free (a human) of the guilt and penalty attached to grievous sin, and thus to be in a right standing with a holy God.

2. How does it work?

Read Rom 3:23. In the light of what this verse tells us, none of us can claim to be "just" in the eyes of a holy God. However, what does the next verse tell us (see verse 24)? Jesus took the punishment for our sin, by His death on the cross, and we are *justified freely through His grace*. As an old pun puts it, it is *just-as if-I'd* never sinned.

Roms 4:25 tells us "*(Jesus) was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of* our justification.*" (*Most translators render this "**for** our... justification.") Why do you think the resurrection of Jesus had a bearing on our justification? See if Bible Commentaries have anything to say on this.

We cannot justify ourselves before God by anything we do, even by trying to obey God's Law (read Roms 3:20). Gals 3:24 tells us the purpose of the Law, which is? If observing the Law will not justify us, what will? (This verse gives us the answer).

3. What does this mean?

Jesus' death and His shed blood secured our forgiveness from God and put us in right standing with Him. But we need to live out what has been achieved on our behalf.

After a little study it becomes clear that justification is akin to righteousness. The Bible tells us that the just shall live by faith and he who practices righteousness is righteous. William Barclay said, 'justification is irrelevant without sanctification.'

The fullness of this teaching is that our relationship with God does not depend on our behaviour, performance or obeying a set of rules and regulations, but on receiving by faith the forgiveness of our sins, and justification by the death and resurrection of Christ.

For further study: Using a concordance, find the Bible references to the two quotes above concerning justification and righteousness.

- 1) The just shall live by faith.
- 2) He who practices righteousness is righteous.

To dig deeper: Read Romans 5:1-5. Justification by faith brings peace with God, through Jesus. What does this passage teach us about what a believer should expect from the Christian life?