

Question: "What is justification?"

Answer from GotQuestions.org: Simply put, to justify is to declare righteous, to make one right with God. Justification is God's declaring those who receive Christ to be righteous, based on Christ's righteousness being imputed to the accounts of those who receive Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). Though justification as a principle is found throughout Scripture, the main passage describing justification in relation to believers is Romans 3:21-26: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

We are justified, declared righteous, at the moment of our salvation. Justification does not make us righteous, but rather pronounces us righteous. Our righteousness comes from placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice covers our sin, allowing God to see us as perfect and unblemished. Because as believers we are in Christ, God sees Christ's own righteousness when He looks at us. This meets God's demands for perfection; thus, He declares us righteous—He justifies us.

Romans 5:18-19 sums it up well: "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." It is because of justification that the peace of God can rule in our lives. It is because of justification that believers can have assurance of salvation. It is the fact of justification that enables God to begin the process of sanctification—the process by which God makes us in reality what we already are positionally. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Recommended Resource: Jesus: The Greatest Life of All by Charles Swindoll.

Why We Should be So Grateful for Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross

- **Atonement - God's planned answer to human sin whereby He blamed [imputed] our sin on His perfect Son, Jesus, and then punished Him for it (1 Cor. 11:23-26).**
- **Propitiation - On the cross Jesus, bearing our sin and guilt, faced the wrath of God instead of us and paid fully on our behalf the debt we owed to the broken law of God. The wrath of God fell upon Jesus, our substitute, instead of upon us (1 Peter 3:19).**
- **Regeneration - In this God gives new life, spiritual life, to those who are dead in sin (Titus 3:5).**
- **Repentance - The sinner, conscious of his guilt and aware of God's mercy in Christ, turns from his sin to God (Acts 3:19; Acts 26:20).**
- **Reconciliation - Means the ending of enmity and the making of peace and friendship between persons previously opposed. God and men were at enmity with each other by reason of men's sins; but God has acted in Christ to reconcile sinners to Himself through the cross (2 Cor. 5:18-21).**
- **Redemption - Means to set someone free from captivity or slavery by the payment of a ransom price. We are redeemed from the slavery of sin by the blood of Jesus (Rom. 6:20-22).**
- **Justification - Only God can justify; we cannot justify ourselves. He does so when he clothes the guilty sinner in the righteousness of Christ and then declares that person to be acceptable to him because of Jesus (Rom. 3:22-25).**