



A study guide in the doctrine of justification by faith

by
Roger Smalling, D.Min

...and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 1 John 1:3-4

WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM, Question 1: What is the chief purpose for which man is made? Answer: The chief purpose for which man is made is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.¹

Why justification matters

To show how to have a more profound fellowship with God the Father and to increase the joy of our salvation.

All Christians understand the importance of glorifying God. Yet many fail to enjoy fellowship with God the Father. They perceive him more as an entity to serve than a personality to enjoy. They have put a barrier between themselves and the Father. This study will help identify what is that barrier and how to remove it.

Effects of fellowship with God the Father

- A new security of salvation.
- Freedom from a guilty conscience.
- Avoiding legalism.
- More profound understanding of how to grow in grace.

- Greater confidence in evangelism.

The essentials of justification

What is justification?

Does justification mean "made righteous"? Or does it mean, "declared righteous"? Luke 7:29; 16:15; 1 Tim. 3:16

Justification means _____.

Justification does not mean _____.

Justification: The legal declaration that a person is righteous relative to God's moral law. The basis is the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is attributed to the believer by faith alone in Christ alone.

It is a _____ declaration from God.

- It is relative to the moral law, which is still in force.
- Its basis is _____.
- Righteousness is _____ to the believer.
- The means is _____.

Why justification is central to the gospel

- What is the consequence of following another gospel?

- How many correct perspectives are there of the gospel? _____
- When Paul uses the word "justification," he means _____.

The background of justification

The problem of human sinfulness



What happens to those whose righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?
_____ Mt. 5:20

How does Gen. 1:27 define a human being?

What is the primary character attribute of God?
_____ Is. 6:3

What does God require of us as his image? _____ 1Pet. 1:16

How much obedience is required? _____ Mt. 5:48

The fall of Adam

What was the consequence of the fall of Adam? _____ Gen. 2:17

What are two other consequences of the fall of Adam?
_____, _____ Rom. 5:12-19

God's covenant with Abaraham

What was counted to Abraham for believing God? _____
Gen. 15:6

What did God establish with Abraham to make a relationship with him possible? _____ Gen. 17:1

Gen. 17:1, 7

- What is the condition? V.1 _____
- What is the benefit? V.7 _____
- Who are the participants? V.7 _____
- How long does it last? V.7 _____

Galatians Chapter 3

- According to verse 7, who are the participants? _____
- What does Paul call the covenant with Abraham in verse 8?

- What is the condition in verse 9? _____
- What is the benefit according to verse 14? _____
- What are we redeemed from according to verse 13? _____
- How long does the covenant last according to verse 15? _____

From Genesis 17 and Galatians 3, can we conclude that the covenant with Abraham is the Christian covenant today? Yes or no? _____

What defines perfection?

What did God promise as the reward for perfect obedience to the law, and how many commandments must be obeyed? _____

Luke 10:28

The purpose of the law

What is the purpose of the law? _____ Rom.3:20; 7:7

Does God still require the righteousness of the Law to be fulfilled in Christians? Yes or no? _____ Rom.8:3-4

Is the moral law still in force? _____ 1Jn. 3:4

What reaction does breaking the law provoke in God and why? _____ Rom. 4:15

From what does the gospel save us? _____ Rom. 5:9

Why partial obedience fails

Does partial obedience count? _____ James 2:11

What reward does our obedience deserve? _____ Lucas 17:10

God's solution

Christ our substitute under the law

What was the effect of the sacrifice of Christ on our relationship to the law? _____ Col. 2:13-14

Group Exercise

Rom. 3:24-25

- What makes the grace of justification possible?

- What is the price Jesus paid for our justification?

- What _____ does propitiation mean?
- How do we appropriate this redemption? _____



In what consists our righteousness? _____ 1Cor.1:30

What is our relationship to law as a means for obtaining righteousness? _____ Rom. 10:4

Why was it necessary for Christ to be born under the law? _____ Gal. 4:4-5

Is Christ an addition or supplement to our own righteousness? Yes or no? _____

Is faith itself our righteousness? Yes or no? _____ Rom. 3:22

What do we have as a result of justification? _____ Rom.5:1

From what are we free? _____
Luke 1:74

How can we now approach God for mercy, yet do so with an attitude of confidence? _____ Heb.4:16

Why do we have eternal life? Is it based on being born again? Or based on justification? _____ Titus 3:4-8

Freedom of conscience



Discuss what these verses teach about the sense of sin-consciousness in the believer.

How is the sacrifice of Christ supposed to affect our conscience? _____ Heb. 9:13-14

What is the difference between sin-consciousness under the law versus under grace because of the sacrifice of Christ? _____ Heb. 10:1-4

With what attitude do we draw near to God, relative to our conscience? _____ Heb. 10:22

Group Exercise

New security: Ro. 8:30-34 (See the text in your Bible.)



- Does God accept accusations against his elect? If not, why not?

- Who has the right to declare them righteous?

- What relationship is there between the elect and justification?

- What does the continuing intercession of Christ have to do with the security of our salvation? _____

Freedom from sin-consciousness

If sin does not condemn us, what is to prevent us from sinning all we please? The following exercise will help answer this.

Group Exercise

Based on Rom. 6:15-18, answer the following questions:

- Does being free from the condemnation of the law give us freedom to sin? Why or why not? _____
- Are sinners capable of not sinning? _____
- What do Christians naturally pursue? _____

How do justified and non-condemned people behave and why? _____
Rom. 8:1-2

Living under grace

Lessons from 1 John

What is the natural motivation of those who are saved? _____ 1Jn.3:3

Who or what is the cause of our obedience? _____ Phil.2:13

Those who are born of God are incapable of what? Why?
_____ 1Jn.3:9

Who or what keeps the Christian from living a life of sin? Is it his own obedience to laws and rules, or something else? _____ 1 Jn. 5:18

Freedom from legalism in Galatians

From what is Paul exhorting Christians to be free? What is the *yoke of slavery*? _____ Gal.5:1

Paul says we have been called to freedom. What freedom is he talking about, and what is the warning he gives? _____ Gal. 5:13

The point: Fellowship with the Father



I promised to identify the barrier that keeps us from enjoying God the Father fully.

Performance-based versus cross-based righteousness

It seems we put rules between God and ourselves as conditions for him to accept us more than he already has. This is a performance-based, rather than a cross-based, righteousness. There is nothing between God the Father and us but the cross. That is not a barrier. It is an invitation.

God is our father, not our judge

God is no longer our judge. he is our Father. His wrath has been satisfied, and he will never be angry with us again. We are no longer criminals before a bar of judgment. We are children with wounds.

Our new identity

Group Exercise

Ephesians Chapters 1-3

How many of the epistles were written to "sinners" versus how many were written to "saints?" Should we view ourselves primarily as sinners with grace or saints with remnants of corruption? Write a list of all the good things Christians are in Christ and have, found in the first three chapters of Ephesians.



From this study we learned...

- Justification by faith alone in Christ alone is the gospel.
- God requires absolute holiness and perfection from people as his image bearers.
- God's moral law is in force forever and defines perfection.
- The gospel saves us from the wrath of God for breaking his moral law.
- Partial obedience is disobedience.
- Christ's death on the cross freed believers from the condemnation of the law.
- God attributes perfect righteousness to those who trust in Christ.
- The gift of eternal life is based on justification.
- If we lack fellowship with God, we may have put rules on ourselves that God did not place there.
- Christians have a new identity as saints and are no longer considered sinners by God.

This corresponds to the material in the book Joyfully Justified available free of charge at

<http://www.smallings.com/english/books/JustEngBk.pdf>

¹ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Modern Translation, Question one.
<http://matt2819.com/wsc/>