

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone

Romans 3:23–26

[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. (ESV)

Romans 5:1–6

[1] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [2] Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. [6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (ESV)

Romans 5:9–11

[9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (ESV)

1 Corinthians 6:9–11

[9] Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (ESV)

Galatians 2:16

[16] yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (ESV)

Titus 3:4–7

[4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (ESV)

Westminster Confession of Faith (1647): Chapter 11

1. Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; a not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, b they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. c

a. Rom 3:24; 8:30. • b. Jer 23:6; Rom 3:22, 24-25, 27-28; 4:5-8; 5:17-19; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 5:19, 21; Eph 1:7; Titus 3:5, 7. • c. Acts 10:44; 13:38-39; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:7-8; Phil 3:9.

2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; a yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. b

a. John 1:12; Rom 3:28; 5:1. • b. Gal 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26.

3. Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.^a Yet inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them,^b and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead,^c and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace;^d that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.^e

a. Isa 53:4-6, 10-12; Dan 9:24, 26; Rom 5:8-10, 19; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 10:10, 14. • b. Rom 8:32. • c. Mat 3:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:2. • d. Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7. • e. Rom 3:26; Eph 2:7.

4. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect,^a and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification:^b nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.^c

a. Rom 8:30; Gal 3:8; 1 Pet 1:2, 19-20. • b. Rom 4:25; Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 2:6. • c. Gal 2:16; Col 1:21-22; Titus 3:4-7.

5. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified;^a and although they can never fall from the state of justification,^b yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.^c

a. Mat 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2. • b. Luke 22:32; John 10:28; Heb 10:14. • c. Psa 32:5; 51:7-12; 89:31-33; Mat 26:75; Luke 1:20; 1 Cor 11:30, 32.

6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.^a

a. Rom 4:22-24; Gal 3:9, 13-14; Heb 13:8.

Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647):

Q. 33. What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace [a], wherein he pardoneth all our sins [b], and accepteth us as righteous in his sight [c], only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us [d], and received by faith alone [e].
[a]. Rom. 3:24 [b]. Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19 [c]. 2 Cor. 5:21 [d]. Rom. 4:6, 11; 5:19 [e]. Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9

Westminster Larger Catechism(1647):

Q70: What is justification?

A70: Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners,[1] in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight;[2] not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them,[3] but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them,[4] and received by faith alone.[5]

1. Rom. 3:22, 24-25; 4:5 2. II Cor. 5:19, 21; Rom. 3:22-25, 27-28 3. Titus 3:5, 7; Eph. 1:7 4. Rom. 4:6-8; 5:17-19 5. Acts 10:43; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9

Q71: How is justification an act of God's free grace?

A71: Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in the behalf of them that are justified;[1] yet inasmuch as God accepteth the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them, and did provide this surety, his own only Son,[2] imputing his righteousness to them,[3] and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith,[4] which also is his gift,[5] their justification is to them of free grace.[6]

1. Rom. 5:8-10, 19 2. II Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 7:22; 10:10; Matt. 20:28; Dan. 9:24, 26; Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12; Rom. 8:32; I Peter 1:18-19 3. II Cor. 5:21 4. Rom. 3:24-25 5. Eph. 2:8 6. Eph. 1:7

Q72: What is justifying faith?

A72: Justifying faith is a saving grace,[1] wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit [2] and word of God,[3] whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition,[4] not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel,[5] but

receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin,[6] and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.[7]

1. Heb. 10:39 2. II Cor. 4:13; Eph. 1:17-19 3. Rom. 10:14, 17 4. Acts 2:37; 4:12; 16:30; John 16:8-9; Rom. 5:6; Eph. 2:1 5. Eph. 1:13 6. John 1:12; Acts 10:43; 16:31 7. Phil. 3:9; Acts 15:11

Q73: How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?

A73: Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it,[3] nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification,[2] but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applies Christ and his righteousness.[3]

1. Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:28 2. Rom. 4:5; 10:10 3. John 1:12; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:16

Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

60. Q. How are you righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.[1] Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them,[2] and am still inclined to all evil,[3] yet God, without any merit of my own,[4] out of mere grace,[5] imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ.[6] He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me,[7] if only I accept this gift with a believing heart.[8] [1] Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8, 9; Phil. 3:8-11. [2] Rom. 3:9, 10. [3] Rom. 7:23. [4] Deut. 9:6; Ezek. 36:22; Tit. 3:4, 5. [5] Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8. [6] Rom. 4:3-5; II Cor. 5:17-19; I John 2:1, 2. [7] Rom. 4:24, 25; II Cor. 5:21. [8] John 3:18; Acts 16:30, 31; Rom. 3:22.

61. Q. Why do you say that you are righteous only by faith?

A. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, for only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God.[1] I can receive this righteousness and make it mine my own by faith only.[2] [1] I Cor. 1:30, 31; 2:2. [2] Rom. 10:10; I John 5:10-12.

62. Q. But why can our good works not be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of it?

A. Because the righteousness which can stand before God's judgment must be absolutely perfect and in complete agreement with the law of God,[1] whereas even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.[2] [1] Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10. [2] Is. 64:6.

63. Q. But do our good works earn nothing, even though God promises to reward them in this life and the next?

A. This reward is not earned[1]; it is a gift of grace.[2] [1] Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6. [2] Luke 17:10; II Tim. 4:7, 8.

Martin Luther Quotes:

This doctrine (justification) is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour.

Every week I preach justification by faith to my people, because every week they forget it.

"Because if this article [of justification] stands, the church stands; if this article collapses, the church collapses."

Martin Lloyd-Jones:

"To make it quite practical I have a very simple test. After I have explained the way of Christ to somebody I say 'Now, are you ready to say that you are a Christian?' And they hesitate. And then I say, 'What's the matter? Why are you hesitating?' And so often people say, 'I don't feel like I'm good enough yet. I don't think I'm ready to say I'm a Christian now.' And at once I know that I have been wasting my breath. They are still thinking in terms of themselves. They have to do it. It sounds very modest to say, 'Well, I don't think I'm good enough,' but it's a very denial of the faith. The very essence of the Christian faith is to say that He is good enough and I am in Him. As long as you go on thinking about yourself like that and saying, 'I'm not good enough; Oh, I'm not good enough,' you are denying God – you are denying the gospel – you are denying the very essence of the faith and you will never be happy. You think you're better at times and then again you will find you are not as good at other times than you thought you were. You will be up and down forever. How can I put it plainly? It doesn't matter if you have almost entered into the depths of hell. It does not matter if you are guilty of murder as well as every other vile sin. It does not matter from the standpoint of being justified before God at all. You are no more hopeless than the most moral and respectable person in the world."

R.C. Sproul: *"The grounds of your justification are the perfect works of Jesus Christ. We're saved by works, but they're not our own."*

R.C. Sproul: *"Without the doctrine of justification by faith alone, the gospel is not merely compromised; it's lost altogether."*

John Bunyan: *"And, indeed, this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world; namely, that a righteousness that resides in heaven should justify me, a sinner on earth!"*

J.I. Packer: *"[N]obody can produce new evidence of your depravity that will make God change his mind. For God justified you with (so to speak) his eyes open. He knew the worst about you at the time when he accepted you for Jesus' sake; and the verdict which he passed then was, and is, final."*

Illustration:

Dickey Simpkins, perhaps unknown to most, actually has more NBA championships than the megastars Barkley, Lebron, etc.... He won all three with the Chicago Bulls (1996-1998). Yet, in 1996 and 1997 he 0 points, 0 rebounds, 0 assists, 0 blocks, 0 steals...in the entire playoff run. Why? Because he played 0 minutes. Yet, his ring is the same cut, same quality, same design as MJ, Pippen, Curr. Why? He was on their team and benefitted from their work, their sweat, their effort. He is a champion, in the record books, though he contributed nothing. In like fashion, justification says to us, that we bring nothing to the table and yet, we are counted righteous through the efforts, work, obedience of another-Jesus.