

## Justification

We have been studying the wonderful theme of experiencing God. We can truly experience Him because of the reality of union with Christ and new birth by the Holy Spirit (regeneration). What we see in Romans 3:19-26 is that we can experience intimacy with Him because He has “justified” us; that is, He declares us acceptable in His sight and includes us among His beloved children.

### Romans 3:19-26

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—<sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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.

### Made Right Before God

In verses 19 and 20 we discover the “Gravity of Justification”, that is, the urgent necessity to be justified by God. Whether we are law abiding Jews or conscientious Gentiles, we have all violated our own moral standard and thus stand before the Lord, by nature, condemned. No one in all the earth can ever say before the Lord, “I stand on my record.”

In verses 21-24a we see the “Gift of Justification” - God has done for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves. He has given us a way to be declared righteous apart from our own moral efforts. This justification is merely received, not earned. It is by faith, not works. And the faith by which we receive justification is itself a gift! (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

In verses 24b and 25a we come to the heart of the matter - the “Grounds of Justification”. Why is God’s gift of justification not a mere legal fantasy? Because our justification is grounded upon a real sacrifice in real space and time that really paid for our transgressions. The atonement of Christ was a “penal substitution,” a sacrifice made in our place which completely satisfied the demands of God’s justice concerning our sin. This truth has liberated hundreds of millions of Christian believers through the centuries and still does today.

In verses 25b and 26 we see the “Glory of Justification.” The ultimate end of this infinitely gracious act of God is to glorify His own matchless Name. We are not saved at the expense of God’s reputation. No, our salvation enhances God’s reputation as the living and true God

Whose justice and grace are both infinitely glorious. Hallelujah to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

*Justification is God's act of remitting the sins of guilty men, and accounting them righteous, freely, by his grace, through faith in Christ, on the grounds, not of their own works, but of the representative lawkeeping and redemptive blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf.*

—J.I. Packer

### Discussion Questions

- 1) What is the purpose of “the law” (v.20)?
- 2) What must we do to receive the gift of justification (v.22)?
- 3) How would you describe what is meant by the “penal substitutionary” nature of Christ’s atonement?

### Related Reading

#### HELPFUL BOOKS

[The Cross of Christ](#)  
by John R. W. Stott

[Faith Alone](#)  
by R.C. Sproul

*The Westminster  
Confession of Faith,  
Chapter x 1*

### Digging Deeper

How do you tend to justify yourself rather than trusting in God’s justification of you?