

The Doctrine of Justification

In the Old Testament justification is based on the Hebrew word *tsadiq*, which is a legal term meaning to be just, righteous or one who is acquitted and declared innocent. The New Testament word for justification is the Greek *dikaioo* and is synonymous with *tsadiq*. As a doctrinal issue justification is the act of declaring a guilty person to be righteous before God. A guilty sinner is viewed by God just as if no sins had been committed, or “just as if I’d never sinned.” How is this possible? The following presents the New Testament perspectives on justification.

1. Justification is a promise and act of the grace of God. It is not deserved and cannot be earned, see Rom 3:23-24, 28; 4:2; 8:30; Gal 5:4; Titus 3:7.
2. Justification is implemented at salvation. Our justification is a result of “putting on” Jesus as a covering for our sin, Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27. The Greek *endusasathe*, “put on,” means “clothe yourself” with Jesus as your justification. When God looks at you, He sees the righteousness of Christ. Clothing ourselves in Christ is the balance of faith and works. Christ makes faith possible, Rom 4:2; Gal 3:24; Heb 11:8-10. We receive Christ by faith as our covering for sin.
3. Justification was accomplished for us by Jesus. He died on the cross to pay sin’s penalty for us, Rom 5:8-9. The mystery of Godliness is that He sustains our justification by the work of His Holy Spirit, 1 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:5.
4. Justification was confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected to confirm our justification, see Rom 4:9, 20-25; 1 Cor 15:17-28; Gal 2:20; Heb 9:28.
5. Justification is demonstrated by our life change at salvation. Human works cannot produce salvation or justification, Rom 3:20; Acts 13:38-39; Gal 2:16-17; 3:11. Our works, however, are an evidence of the change that occurs when we are saved and justified, see Acts 15:1-29; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Titus 3:1-8; Jms 2:14-26.
6. Justification must be bathed in humility. Jesus gave the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector as an illustration that true righteousness cannot be earned by human works or merited by religious deeds. God rejected the religious Pharisee but the repentant sinner, “tax collector,” went home “justified,” Lk 18:9-14.
7. Justification through Christ is our only hope of salvation. The writer in Hebrews 2:1-4 said God gave us His supreme revelation in Christ, (see Heb 1:1-4). If we reject Christ the living word, we also reject the written word and “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” The answer is we will not escape!!

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