

GROW IN GRACE

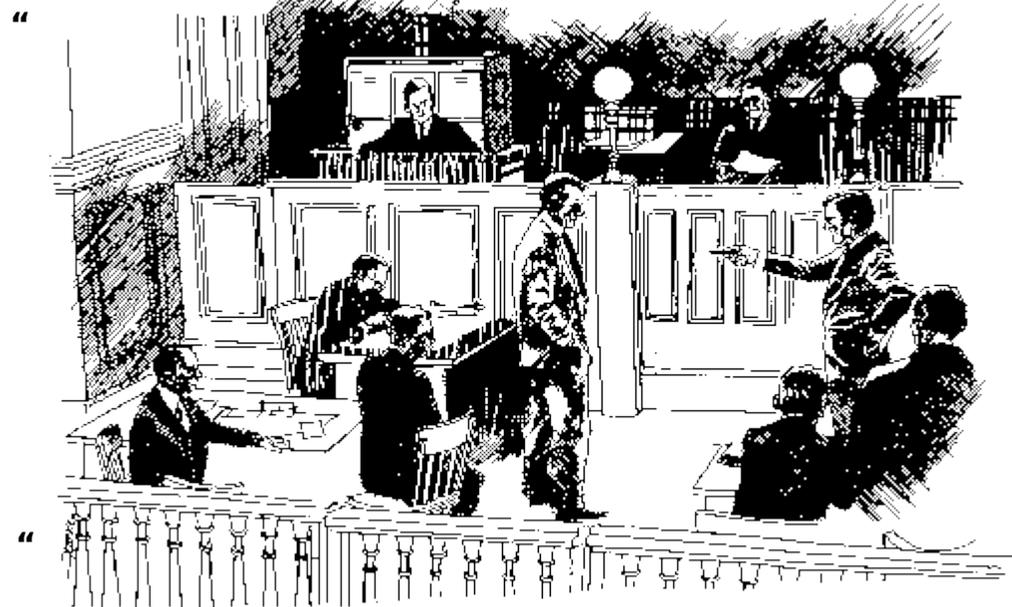
NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.11, March 12, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

[Note: There is some overlapping and repetition in this article. It is edited from several different sources— from articles saved on my computer from years back. Unfortunately, for most of them, the 'sources' were not kept. AS TO THE REPETITION, I decided to not edit it out. I believe it is needed. This is not shallow stuff. IT IS VERY NEEDFUL. Pray and read and meditate... and be blessed!]

JUSTIFIED! BY GOD!

Once a Seminary professor, Dr. R. C. Sproul, asked a room full of students this TRUE or FALSE question:



It is in the Cross of Christ that we find the only means whereby a sinner is acquitted before Holy God— True or False? The students answered, "TRUE!"

To which Dr. Sproul replied,

The answer is FALSE—

God does not acquit the guilty! God justifies the guilty!

Yes, there are some good theologians, teachers, and pastors who seem fond of using the word, 'acquit, acquitted, or acquittal.' Moreover, a thesaurus will show *acquittal* as a synonym for justification! But I have noticed that **very often synonyms are not exactly the same as the word** for which you desire a synonym? Words have meanings and usage. The words ***acquit, acquitted, or***

acquittal are commonly used and clearly understood in our court system. Due to their meaning and usage, **there are far better words** for conveying accurate Biblical truth about the critically important doctrine of Justification.

Example: Let's pretend that I am accused, charged and tried in court before a jury and judge for the crime of stealing \$16 TRILLION which had been printed to pay off the Government's debt! However, after all the evidence was in place, the arguments and accusations made and the dust had settled— thankfully, the jury was unanimous, ***"This man is NOT GUILTY; HE IS INNOCENT ON ALL COUNTS!"*** The judge slams his gavel and cries out, "I hereby declare Mr. Bell to be **ACQUITTED** of all charges. You are free to go!"

I had been (1) falsely accused, (2) found innocent and, thus, (3) acquitted; and I fully deserved acquittal! **This illustration shows a common and proper use of the concept of 'acquittal'... This word does not naturally and accurately 'fit' the gospel of Christ.**

Before the judgment bar of God, no one is falsely accused, then acquitted and innocent of all charges. Rather, the human race is guilty and deserves only the just sentence of God's holy justice and wrath!

In God's gracious salvation of sinners, we experience something beyond amazing! — ALL WHO FLEE TO CHRIST are converted, regenerated, redeemed, forgiven and more— plus they are **JUSTIFIED, credited with the righteousness of Christ.** All of these blessings and more are due to the MERITS of Christ's sinless life; and due to His sacrificial, substitutionary, wrath satisfying death on the Cross and His glorious RESURRECTION.

The doctrine of justification deals with the question of how God, who is absolutely holy (Ex. 15:11; Lev. 11:44; Ps. 22:3; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15; Rev. 4:8) and whose holiness demands perfection, can allow sinners such as we, (who are guilty of breaking His law), into His presence and fellowship. IN OTHER WORDS, the greatest question in the universe is this: HOW CAN GOD BE JUST and the JUSTIFIER OF SINNERS? **We sinners have two problems and no solutions:**

(1) The penalty for sin must be paid in full. God's nature and law requires satisfaction for all disobedience; **and we cannot pay!**

(2) God requires perfect obedience; **and we are all miserable rebels!**

We sinners have a debt we cannot pay and a life we cannot live!

When a person believes in Jesus Christ, God the Father JUSTIFIES that person— **God declares that person righteous solely on the basis of Christ's full satisfaction for sin and perfect obedience to the law.** We are NOT righteous in our selves. Rather, we are declared righteous. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited to us— **this is the gospel foundation undergirding the wonder of our being 'Accepted in the Beloved!'**

The ground, the basis of being justified by God **is** Christ's sacrificial death and perfect obedience. **Stated another way, when by faith a sinner comes to Christ for salvation there is a DUEL exchange: Jesus receives the sinner's sin; and the believing sinner is GIVEN the perfect righteousness of Christ. This is a one time, once and for all time ACT OF GOD.** From that moment on, on good days or bad days, the Christian is fully justified, fully and perfectly righteous before Holy God based not on anything we have or will ever do— but based solely upon the MERITS of Christ. We are never MORE or LESS righteous than the moment we are first justified! We are not more or less justified based on how we lived today! **Practical Application:**

1. On a day when I have badly failed the LORD— GOD DOES NOT LOVE OR ACCEPT ME ANY LESS. He always accepts me on the merits of His Son. Thus, I can come boldly before the Throne of Grace to find help in time of need. I do not have to crawl my way to God or in any way try to earn my way— NO, I come boldly on the merits of CHRIST.

2. When I have had a grand day and I am tempted to be pleased with myself and maybe, sadly, think that God will be impressed— I DISCOVER GOD IS ONLY IMPRESSED with the perfect righteousness of His Son! THUS, HUMBLED, I come to the Throne of Grace... INDEED, 'tis the Throne of GRACE and not of my performance or good deeds!

When a man *by faith* lays hold of Jesus Christ and His merits— **God imputes** [Charges, credits] that person's guilt for sins past, present and future upon Christ on the cross. **God also imputes** [Charges, credits] Christ's perfect righteousness to that sinner. **The Father thus declares us righteous or just in the heavenly court!** [We are not declared ACQUITTED— which has the connotation of having been falsely accused. We are declared justified, righteous— which immediately POINTS to God's gracious provision for those who were found guilty; but are now justified by the precious blood of Jesus Christ!] Because Christ has removed the guilt of the believing sinner's sins past, present, and future legally before God— the Father sees us IN THE SON, clothed with His Son's perfect righteousness.

NOTE: ON EARTH we are in process of developing practical righteousness and holiness— but in heaven our record is perfect. *Judicially, before God,* we are just as righteous and perfect as Jesus Christ— for it is not our righteousness; we have been given His! (Phil. 3:9)

Now IN CHRIST, we do not find New Testament Christians going around proclaiming— 'Praise God, I am acquitted; I am just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned!' INSTEAD, Paul testified that he now possessed a RIGHTEOUSNESS which is of God by faith! (Phil. 3:9). We are DECLARED RIGHTEOUS, we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we are accepted in the Beloved.

YES, it is common and well intended to say that justification means '***just as if we had never sinned!***' However, we have sinned; and as justified people, we still sin and rightly view ourselves as FORGIVEN people. **I must never lose sight of the fact I**

am NOT an innocent person; but one resting in the continuing cleansing of the blood of Jesus! MOREOVER, the 'cute' little statement reveals nothing of the important fact that in the JUSTIFICATION OF GOD the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST is now credited to my account! **I must never forget that as a Christian I have been CREDITED, GIVEN God's own righteousness! Thus, since it is GOD WHO has justified me (Romans 8:33!) — no charge, no condemnation can stand against me! Furthermore,** we shall never forget the full redemption story, for in heaven JESUS IS THE LAMB! Thus, in heaven the redeemed are not singing a song of ACQUITTAL! They are singing a song of REDEMPTION! (Rev. 5:9-10)

I came into this world a sinner by nature and quickly became a sinner by choice! **IN JUSTIFICATION God declares me RIGHTEOUS; thus, He sees me IN HIS SON. He sees me clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ!** It is, as some theologians have said, an "ALIEN" righteousness. It's not mine. It's not from me. When by grace the guilty sinner believes in Christ **God puts the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ on his account** (see Romans 4:3-5 and compare Genesis 15:6).

In Romans 3:21-28 there are four giant salvation words:

Propitiation, Redemption, Justification, and Reconciliation.

1. Many live under the bondage of the PERFORMANCE TRAP— always trying to be good enough but never succeeding! Or they seek to hold others under the bondage of performance; but they are never pleased with what others do.

BECAUSE OF GOD'S JUSTIFICATION— redeemed sinners are **fully forgiven** and **fully accepted** in Christ and **fully CLOTHED** with the perfect righteousness of Christ. WE ARE FREE! WE ARE LOVED. NOTHING can change that reality! And those who are FREE do not attempt to hold others in the bondage of 'control' or of their expectations.

2. Many are living under the bondage of being APPROVAL ADDICTS. They live in fear of rejection. They will often do anything to have approval.

BECAUSE OF RECONCILIATION the believer is now a full member of the Body of Christ. I once was hostile and alienated from God; but now I am forgiven, reconciled— I am in Christ and in the family of God! I will always be accepted and beloved because Jesus is my Saviour, Lord, Friend, Advocate, etc!

3. Still others spend their lives playing THE BLAME GAME. Trying to escape their own failures and/or to explain away their failures— they point the finger of accusation at others or at 'stress' or 'their nerves'... or whatever! In all FOUR of these categories— folks do not feel they are worthy to be forgiven; and they struggle with forgiving others.

BECAUSE OF PROPITIATION the redeemed *sinner-saint, child of God* knows what it is to be deeply loved and deeply forgiven. The holy wrath of God against you the sinner is now totally satisfied and now you LOVED and ADOPTED with full family honors! DRINK DEEPLY of the good Biblical theology of Justification, Reconciliation, and

Propitiation and you will be at peace and at rest— KNOWING you are loved, forgiven, accepted, and pleasing to God because of JESUS!

4. IN THE DEPTH of despair and filled with SHAME there are many who cannot change. They are hopeless; and thus, they are dangerous to themselves and to others. They are on roads of destruction. HOWEVER,

BECAUSE OF REGENERATION even the deepest, worse case sinner who FLEES to Christ for mercy and grace WILL NOT ONLY BE JUSTIFIED (completely forgiven, made totally pleasing to God); **RECONCILED** (be totally accepted by God); **PROPITIATED** (Holy wrath satisfied and now totally loved by God)— but **BECAUSE OF REGENERATION** he/she/you will be (Or you have been!) made brand new. You will be or you are already a new creation in Christ.

CHRISTIAN— PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF!

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE GLORIOUS REALITIES OF THE GOSPEL!

What is justification? Justification is a declaration that the believing sinner is considered just, righteous in God's sight, due to the merits of the precious blood of Christ! In justification the justified sinner is now clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

God subtracts and adds in order to save us!

He subtracts from us our sin; then He adds to us, in sin's place, the righteousness of Christ.

In the redeeming grace of God— He justifies the ungodly who believe on Him! (Rom 4:5)

How can God treat unrighteous people as being righteous?

What is the Source of Justification?

Paul tells us when he says we are "justified freely by his grace" (Rom 3:24). **Being justified by grace means that we are justified by God.** No one can justify themselves. Sinners can't declare other sinners to be righteous, pure and holy. Self-justification is a sheer impossibility. Therefore, says Paul, "**it is God who justifies**" (Rom 8:33). **Being justified by grace also means that we are justified "freely" (Rom 3:24). It is a free gift.**

It is not something we earn, or deserve, or merit. It means we do not get what we deserve. In fact, we get exactly the opposite of what we deserve. Don't forget, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10). We - all of us - deserve condemnation

and everlasting hell-fire! Yet, amazingly, all who flee to Christ are justified freely by His grace.

What is the BASIS, the Ground, for God Justifying Guilty People?

How can He do this without contradicting His own justice? After all, God's justice says sin must be punished. The Bible answer: God justifies by Christ's blood (Rom 5:9); we are justified by Christ's "sacrifice of atonement (Rom 3:25) and by the "redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). What does this mean? This means justice is still carried out, sin is punished, guilt is dealt with.

How? **JESUS CHRIST took our place. God's justice was experienced by Him, our sin was punished in Him, our guilt was borne by Him. "Justified by his blood" means that Jesus has borne the penalty of our law-breaking.**

What is the MEANS of Justification?

Paul answers this when he tells us we are "**justified by faith**" (Rom 5:1; cf Rom 3:22). **We need to understand this correctly. Faith never saves us. We are not justified because we believe. God's grace is the source, Christ's blood is the ground, and faith is only the means of justification.**

Faith is the means by which we are united to Christ. Furthermore, faith is the **only means. Without faith, in other words, we cannot be justified. And how gracious God is in giving faith: Ephesians 2:8-10—**

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

THE LOST SINNER who owns his inbred poison of sin

and who looks to Jesus for salvation— **THAT SINNER LIVES!**

Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST and you shall be saved, justified— FORGIVEN and GIVEN the very righteousness of JESUS CHRIST! **In order to be justified, we must receive what God, out of grace, has done for us by the blood of Christ.** (John 1:10-13)

What is the EFFECT of justification?

The first is acceptance. When God justifies us God accepts us. Yes, He knows we are miserable sinners. Yes, He knows we are not worthy to be called His children. Yes, He knows there is nothing pure and holy about us. Yet, He accepts us anyway. He accepts us as His children. He accepts us as true descendants of Abraham. He accepts us as part of His church. He accepts us into the Kingdom.

Why? Because we are now ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED! As believing sinners, we are now IN CHRIST and CHRIST is in us! We are clothed in HIS righteousness! Therefore, “COME BOLDLY to the Throne of Grace to find help in time of need!” (Heb. 4:16)

The second effect of justification is holiness, or godliness, or sanctification. People who are justified are not only pronounced holy, they now have new hearts and want to become holy. Justified people have their character and conduct changed so that in all things they strive to please God.

Why is this true? Because every BORN AGAIN child of God is INDWELT by the Holy Spirit! **God’s gracious JUSTIFICATION never gives a license to sin!**

A third effect of justification is confidence. Paul puts it best later on in Romans when he says (Rom 8:33-34) ***Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is he that condemns?*** The point is that justified people can look with humble confidence in the daily battles of life, to the future, the Kingdom, the coming again of Jesus Christ, and even the Final Judgment. We have nothing to fear even though we are sinful and fallen.

O GLORIOUS REDEMPTION! MIRACULOUS JUSTIFICATION— the source is God's amazing grace! **The ground** is Christ's precious blood! **The means** is the gift of faith; **And the effects** are acceptance, holiness, and confidence.

JUSTIFICATION: “... In our justification we are one and the same time righteous or just, and sinners... From one perspective, in one sense, we are just. In another sense, from a different perspective, we are sinners... **In and of ourselves**, under the analysis of God’s scrutiny, we still have sin; we’re still sinners. **But, by imputation and by faith in Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is now transferred to our account, then we are considered just or righteous.** This is the very heart of the gospel ...

At the heart of the gospel is a double-imputation. My sin is imputed [charged/credited] to Jesus. His righteousness is imputed [charged/credited] to me. And in this two-fold transaction we see that God, Who does not negotiate sin, Who doesn’t compromise His own integrity with our salvation, but rather punishes sin fully and really after it has been imputed to Jesus, retains His own righteousness, and so He is both just and the justifier, as the apostle tells us here. **So my sin goes to Jesus, His righteousness comes to me in the sight of God.”** (Quote from R. C. Sproul)

Grace to all in Christ! James Bell

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES for March!

1. Ladies Bible Study— ‘LORD, HEAL MY HURTS!’— Tuesdays @ 10:30AM! Call— 615-452-5951

2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Southside Church building!

3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH VISITATION 4. EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men's Fellowship and Bible Study

Sunday Schedule for March 17, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School
2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. Noon Fellowship Meal {Covered Dish}
4. 1:00pm— LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE

Sunday Schedule for March 24, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School
2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. Noon Fellowship Meal {Covered Dish}
4. 1:00pm Early Afternoon Service

Sunday Schedule for March 31, 2013— RESURRECTION SUNDAY

1. 9:30am- CHURCHWIDE BRUNCH!_2. 10:45am- Morning Worship/Children's Church / LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE
3. NO Noon Fellowship Meal or afternoon service