

GROW IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

Volume 44b, No. 38, October 1, 2019 / Southside Baptist Church / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter is a WEEKLY Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Savior JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever.

TRUE or FALSE! GOD ACQUITS THE GUILTY!

Years ago, Dr. R. C. Sproul, asked a room full of seminary 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 Sproul replied, ***"The answer is FALSE. God does not acquit the guilty! God justifies the guilty!"***

Yes, there are theologians, teachers, pastors, Study Bible notes, and even some Bible translations and/or paraphrases of the Bible who/which use the word, 'acquit, acquitted, or acquittal.' **Sincerely they will make statements like:** *"To be justified means that we have already **secured a verdict of acquittal** in God's courtroom..." "We have already been **declared not guilty** by the blood of the cross thus we are saved from the wrath of God."* **So, they believe** that the essence of the Biblical doctrine of justification in the 'Courtroom of God' is that the Christian is acquitted— found, not guilty! **OK... let's dig deeper!**

Words have meanings and usage. The words ***acquit, acquitted, and/or acquittal*** are commonly used and clearly understood in our court system. Here is a quote from a Law Website: ***"A verdict of not guilty constitutes an acquittal."*** **In other words, to find a defendant not guilty is to acquit.**

At trial, an acquittal occurs when the jury (or the judge if it's a judge trial) determines that **the prosecution has NOT proved the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.**" Due to their meaning and usage, **there are at the very least 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 being tried in court before a jury and judge for the alleged crime of stealing \$19 TRILLION which had been printed to pay off the Government's debt!

However, after all the evidence was in place, accusations/arguments made, and the dust had settled—thankfully, the jury was unanimous, ***"This man is NOT GUILTY; HE IS INNOCENT ON ALL COUNTS!"*** THUS, the judge slams his gavel and cries out, "I hereby declare Mr. Bell to be **ACQUITTED** of all charges. You are free to go!"

SO, I HAD BEEN (1) falsely accused, (2) found innocent of all charges; and, thus, (3) acquitted! And I fully deserved acquittal! **This illustration shows a common and proper use of the concept of 'acquittal'... THUS, it should be obvious that the word 'ACQUIT or ACQUITTED' does NOT accurately 'fit' the gospel of Christ. WHY?**

AT the judgment bar of God, no one is EVER falsely or mistakenly accused; AND then **acquitted due to being innocent of all charges!** **Rather,** the ENTIRE human race is guilty and deserves only the just sentence of God's holy justice and wrath! It is incorrect to equate acquitted with justified!

RATHER, all GUILTY, WRATH DESERVING SOULS, (who by amazing grace FLEE TO CHRIST), are regenerated, redeemed, forgiven, and **JUSTIFIED— that is, we are given DIVINE LIFE by the Holy Spirit; and credited with the righteousness of Christ!**

JUSTIFIED— we are declared, made righteous in the sight of God. 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.**

HERE IS NOW SIGNIFICANT THE ISSUE IS: The greatest question in the universe is this— *HOW CAN GOD BE JUST and at the same time 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!

JUSTIFICATION: God declares the repenting, believing sinner to be righteous *solely* on the basis of Christ's perfect obedience to the law and on the basis of Christ paying our sin debt on the cross. We are NOT righteous in our selves. **Rather, we are JUSTIFIED, 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!'**

Martin Luther like to explain JUSTIFICATION, in Latin words, this way: ***"Simul Justus et peccator!"***

1. *Simul* is the word from which we get the English word simultaneously. Or, it means 'at the same time.' **2. *Justus*** is the Latin word for just or righteous.

3. *Et* means and.

4. *Peccator* means sinner. And so Luther was rightly saying, that in our justification we are **(1)** At one and the same time righteous or just (clothed in the righteousness of Christ!), and **(2)** Sinners. IN CHRIST, we are now JUSTIFIED; but at the same time we still have sin; we are still sinners.

At the heart of the gospel of God's justifying sinners is double imputation:

1. My/our sin is imputed/ CHARGED to, laid on Jesus— this took place, once and for all, on the cross: Isaiah 53:6.

2. His righteousness is imputed/ CHARGED to me/us: Isaiah 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9. (Experienced at new birth.)

STRONG REALITY: God does not pretend that sin does not matter or that sin never happened. God does not compromise His holiness nor His justice in order to save sinners. **At no point does God say to any sinner, "You ARE NOT GUILTY."**

Moreover, the 'IN HEAVEN saints' do not *sing a song of, 'Not guilty!'... or of, "Praise God, we were and are acquitted!"* RATHER: The glorious song in heaven is about REDEMPTION: ***JESUS... YOU "HAVE REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD!" (Rev. 5:9)***

➔ REDEEMED! HOW I LOVE TO PROCLAIM IT! <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/301>

AGAIN: 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:

(1) Jesus receives the sinner's sin; and (2) the believing sinner is GIVEN the perfect righteousness of Christ. This is a one time, once and for all time ACT OF GOD, justifying a sinner.

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. **I am justified, declared righteous in God's sight; accepted in the Beloved!**

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 already 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)

AGAIN, IN CHRIST, we do not find New Testament Christians going around proclaiming— "Praise God, I am acquitted!" ***Nor do we have***

them claiming that justification means that “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, and we are accepted in the Beloved.**

The BAD, “I am just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned!” explanation has been illustrated this way: A respected Bible teacher tells the story about a man who purchased a Rolls Royce and decided to tour through Europe. As he was enjoying his drive looking at the sights, suddenly his Rolls Royce broke down with no one around who could fix it. He sent a cable to the company in England and they flew a man over who did the repairs. The man thought to himself, *“This is going to cost me a ton of money.”* He waited for a bill but it never came, so he sent a letter to the company telling what had happened, how the mechanic had fixed his car, and wondered what the charge would be.

He got a letter back from the Rolls Royce Company which said, ***“Dear Sir, Thank you so much for your letter. You need to know that we have no record in our files that any Rolls Royce has ever broken down at any place, at any time, for any reason.”***

AND AFTER THIS NEAT STORY, the famous Bible teacher proclaimed: “That’s what justification has done in the life of the Christian. You may fail, you may break down and run yourself into a ditch, but God Almighty looks down at you and says, ***“There is no record that my child has ever broken down at all.”***

NOTE: You may love the illustration... but it is false, NOT TRUE!

THE TRUTH IS THAT GOD DOES SOMETHING FAR BETTER: (1) HE REMEMBERS all the sin which we have ever committed. **(2) However,** all our sin is under THE BLOOD OF JESUS! HE REMEMBERS them AGAINST US no more! **(3) IF THAT WERE NOT TRUE,** the Holy Spirit could have never given PSALM 32, PSALM 51, and other Scriptures which reveal sins which saints have committed.

2. YES, there are those who say that justification means '*just as if we had never sinned!*' However, as forgiven, justified people we still sin. **I must never lose sight of the fact I am NOT an innocent person; RATHER, I AM 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!

3. As a Christian I have been GIVEN God's own righteousness! Since it is GOD WHO has justified me (Romans 8:33!) — No charge, no condemnation can stand against me! IT IS INSTRUCTIVE, that we shall never forget redemption— for in heaven JESUS is still THE LAMB; in heaven the redeemed are not singing a song of ACQUITTAL— they are singing a song of REDEMPTION! (Rev. 5:9-10)

4. I came into this world a sinner by nature and quickly became a sinner by choice! **IN JUSTIFICATION** God declares me RIGHTEOUS. Henceforth, 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 places the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ on his account** (see Romans 4:3-5 and compare Genesis 15:6).

THERE IS POWERFUL, PRACTICAL VALUE in accurately understanding and applying four giant salvation words: **Propitiation, Redemption, Justification, and Reconciliation.** (Rom 3:21-28)

***** 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' to their expectations.

***** Many are 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; and JUSTIFIED— accepted in Christ, clothed with His own righteousness. I will always be accepted and beloved.

THUS, I am not looking for a way to be popular or accepted by any “IN GROUP” of the world. I AM IN CHRIST. I am an Ambassador for Christ. I AM HAPPY TO BE FRIENDLY WITH YOU. However, I am not dependent upon any so called “In group or person” for significance!

***** 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 ‘stresses or ‘their nerves’... or whatever! In all 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 are 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 REDEEMED, loved, forgiven, accepted, and pleasing to God because of JESUS!

***** 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, clothed in God’s own righteousness, and 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.

NO WONDER THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN SING OF GLORIOUS REDEMPTION — Redeemed! Redeemed by the blood of the LAMB!

CHRISTIAN— PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF! **ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER** WITH THESE GLORIOUS REALITIES OF THE GOSPEL! **LIVE GOSPEL LIVES** BEFORE A WATCHING WORLD! **UNASAMEDLY TELL FORTH** THE GOSPEL!

(As is common, a number of resources used in developing this article)

ABOUNDING Mercy, Grace, Love, and PEACE to all in Christ!

James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org

**** **SHARE** the Preaching of the Word of God!

<http://www.southsidegallatin.org/>

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SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care Nursing Home. Meet at the front door at **5:15PM**.

WEDNESDAYS: → **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE**

→ Enter via **IRON STEPS**, side door.

WEDNESDAYS: → **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— enter, side double doors.

WEDNESDAYS: → **6:30pm— Young Family Prayer Time!** THIS IS a time of Bible study and prayer geared toward **families with children in the nursery and pre-K class**. Enter at double doors, under AWNING.

***** LADIES BIBLE STUDY: NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON OCTOBER 8, 2019 @ 11:00am; Continuing in LUKE.** ENTER at the back of the church building, [*DOUBLE Doors, under AWNING, open at 10:30am... re-locked at 11:10am*]

***** MEN's Fellowship/Bible Study: EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: (STUDY: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN!) ENTER AT THE** back of Church building... DOUBLE DOORS, under the drive-thru awning. **[DOORS OPEN FOR FELLOWSHIP, Juice, coffee, Hardee's biscuits, & Donuts at 7:30am!]**

SUNDAY SERVICES, OCTOBER 6, 13, 20, 27

9:30am— Sunday School Classes for All Ages

10:45am— Sunday Morning Worship Service

SPECIAL EVENTS ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAYS:

*** October 6 — NOON Covered Dish Fellowship Meal**

**** October 13 — FAITHFUL MEN, 5:30PM... (1689 Confession of Faith)**

***** October 20 — LORD'S SUPPER, at the end of the Morning Worship**

HOME GROUPS... some at 5pm

****** October 27 — 6:00pm - 7:00pm, Church-wide EQUIPPING DISCIPLES by developing Christ-honoring Marriages: Paul David Tripp's 'WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? (Redeeming the Realities of Marriage)**



