

MILILANI COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES
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LESSON 6: THE ORDER OF SALVATION (Part 2): JUSTIFICATION and ADOPTION

In Lesson 6 we are considering how the salvation that Christ ACCOMPLISHED on the Cross is APPLIED to us as individuals.

In Romans 8:29-30 the Apostle Paul points to a definite ORDER in which the blessings of salvation come to us: "For those God **foreknew** he also **predestined** to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also **called**; those he called, he also **justified**; and those he justified, he also **glorified**."

Our topic for this lesson is the important doctrines of Justification by faith alone (*Sola fide*) and Adoption. For further study see Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, chapter 36; and Justified by Faith Alone by R. C. Sproul.

JUSTIFICATION

A right understanding justification is absolutely crucial to the whole Christian faith. The primary issue in the Protestant Reformation was a dispute with the Roman Catholic Church over justification. A true view of justification is the dividing line between the biblical gospel of salvation by faith alone and all false gospels of salvation based on good works. Justification comes after our faith and as God's response to our faith (Romans 3:26; 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16).

DEFINITION OF JUSTIFICATION

"Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight."

JUSTIFICATION INCLUDES A LEGAL DECLARATION BY GOD

God declares the ungodly to be righteous in his sight, not on the basis of their good works, but in response to their faith.

TWO ASPECTS OF JUSTIFICATION

1. First, this means that he declares that we have no penalty to pay for sin, including past, present, and future sins (Romans 8:1)
2. Second, this means that God declares us to actually be positively righteous in His sight.

GOD CAN DECLARE US TO BE RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE HE IMPUTES CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS TO US

To say God imputes Christ's righteousness to us means that God thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, or regards it as belonging to us.

It is essential to the heart of the gospel to insist that God declares us to be just of righteous not on the basis of our actual condition of righteousness or holiness, but rather on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness, which he thinks of as belonging to us.

This was the heart of the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism at the Reformation. Protestants insisted that justification does not change us internally and is not a declaration based in any way on any goodness that we have in ourselves.

If justification changed us internally and then declared us to be righteous based on how good we actually were, then:

- (1) We could never be declared perfectly righteous in this life, because there is always sin that remains in our lives.
- (2) There would be no provision for forgiveness of past sins (committed before we were changed internally), and therefore we could never have confidence that we are right before God.

The Roman Catholic view of justification is not based on imputed righteousness but on infused righteousness—that is, righteousness that God actually puts into us and that changes us internally and makes us more holy within. The result is that we cannot be sure if we are experiencing God's complete acceptance and favor.

JUSTIFICATION COMES TO US ENTIRELY BY GOD'S GRACE, NOT ON ACCOUNT OF ANY MERIT IN OURSELVES

Romans 1:18-3:20 – no one can make himself righteous before God

Romans 3:23-24 – we are justified by His grace as a gift

In contrast, Roman Catholic teaching is that we are justified by God's grace PLUS some merit of our own, as we make ourselves fit to receive the grace of justification and as we grow in this state of grace through our good works. But the Reformers insisted that justification comes by grace alone, not by grace plus some merit on our part.

GOD JUSTIFIES US THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

Galatians 2:16. The Reformers were firm in their insistence that justification comes not through faith PLUS some merit or good work on our part, but only through faith alone in the finished work of Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).

ADOPTION

In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life within. In justification God gives us right legal standing before him. But in adoption God makes us members of his family.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR ADOPTION

Definition: "Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family"

John 1:12; Eph. 2:3; 2:2; 5:6; 8:44; Rom. 8:14-17

ADOPTION FOLLOWS CONVERSION AND IS AN OUTCOME OF SAVING FAITH

"But to all who received him, who believed in his name he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Although we are right now God's children, we won't receive the full benefits of adoption until Christ returns and we have our new resurrection bodies. "...as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23).

ADOPTION IS DISTINCT FROM JUSTIFICATION

"Regeneration has to do with our spiritual life within. Justification has to do with our standing before God's law. But adoption has to do with our relationship with God as our Father" (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 739). "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God,, and so we are" (I John 3:1).

THE PRIVILEGES OF ADOPTION

1. We can now relate to God as our loving heavenly Father. Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9)
2. We have the privilege of being led by the Holy Spirit. "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:14).
3. God disciplines us as His children. "...For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12:5-6).
4. We are joint heirs with Christ and have the privilege of sharing both in his sufferings and in his future glory. (Romans 8:17)
5. We are God's children and all members of one family as brothers and sisters in Christ (I Timothy 5:1-2).
6. We are to imitate our Father in our conduct. "Be imitators of God as beloved children" (Ephesians 5:1)