

GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

by
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Introduction

Centuries ago, a man named Job asked a question that multitudes have since pondered.

*How can a man be righteous before God
(Job 9:2)?¹*

This Old Testament saint was painfully aware of personal imperfection when he asked that question. He had no illusions about himself. The apostle Paul shares Job's perspective and establishes in Romans 1-3 that whether one is immoral, self-righteous, or religious, no man is righteous before God. Not even one!

Sensing that he falls short of a perfect God's standards, man has from the beginning sought ways to bridge the gap between where he is morally and where he should be before God. The vast array of religions past and present is worldwide testimony to man's search—a search that seeks through various kinds of good works to win God's approbation.

According to Romans 3:19-20, however, no person may gain a righteous standing before God through good works. Man has a universal inability to please God through righteous deeds. Romans 3:9-20 stress that sin dominates all men, the evidence of which is that he commits many acts of sin. Man, therefore, before the Lord, is neither righteous

¹ Quotations are from *The New King James Bible* unless otherwise indicated.

nor able to do acceptable deeds of righteousness. He often does good deeds that benefit his fellow man, but *all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags* before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6). Indeed, man's *heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it* (Jeremiah 17:9)?

Now a universal problem requires a universal solution. The news is good. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul reveals God's universal solution.

Justification (Romans 3:21-24)

The basis of justification

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed (Romans 3:21).

After the previous chapters, *But now*² is like a refreshing breeze for a man in a 120° desert. This is because chapters one and two are a terrible court room scene that leaves all men guilty, and condemned—with no help from the law. The law stands as an unrelenting prosecuting attorney saying, "You're guilty! And, your good works will not help. All attempts to keep rules and laws only compound sin, guilt, and condemnation" (cp. Romans 7:5).

² Cranfield argues that the temporal force of *Nun* must be maintained against its logical force. *But now* marks the "contrast between the impossibility of justification by works, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the *fact* that in the recent past a decisive event has taken place, by which a justification which is God's free gift . . . now is [revealed]" (C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Epistle to the Romans," *The International Critical Commentary* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990], 1:201).

Then Paul says *but now*, marking a great transition from man's guilty status to the possibility of an innocent status. In effect, he says, it is true there is no way a man may be justified by doing good works, *but now* he may be justified by faith. *But now* all people may be made right with God through an act of faith in Christ.

What is the universal solution?—*The righteousness of God!*³ The Bible reveals five categories of righteousness: 1. Self-righteousness (Romans 10:1-3; Philippians 3:9). 2. God's attribute of righteousness (Psalm 7:9). 3. The quality of life of a believer walking by the Spirit, being a doer and not just a hearer of the Word (James 5:16). 4. The fruit (righteous production) of a believer walking by the Spirit (Revelation 19:8; cp. Romans 8:4). And 5. imputed righteousness, which Paul now has in view.

What is "imputed righteousness"? To begin it helps to note that the article "the" does not occur in the Greek. He says a *righteousness of God*. Thus, Paul does not specify God's divine attribute. Furthermore, *of God* is a genitive construction that speaks of *kind*, thus Paul speaks of a God-*kind* of righteousness—a righteousness fully compatible with God's character.

This kind of righteousness God gives to all who believe. He only imputes or credits a worthy righteousness to the account of a *believer* (Romans 3:22; Philippians 3:9).

Then the apostle makes very clear how one does not receive imputed righteousness saying it is revealed *apart from the law*. *Apart from* is placed first to emphasize how we do *not* get righteousness credited to our accounts. *Apart*

³ "Righteousness" here denotes, as in 1:17, "a status of righteousness before God which is God's gift" (Cranfield 1:201).

from means to be "separated from, or without making use of, or without connection to" law.

Moreover, there is no article before *law*—it simply reads "apart from law." The absence of the article stresses quality, thus a God-kind of righteousness is different than anything with the quality or characteristic of law. The righteousness God gives is totally unrelated to man's attempts to keep the works of the law.

Accordingly, it is futile to seek an acceptable righteousness before God through good works such as prayer, fasting, giving, repentance, confession, reforming ourselves, submission and, in general, good works.

This wonderful and hope inspiring righteousness—imputed righteousness—"stands revealed" in the historical events of Jesus Christ's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. However, it does not stand silently.

It is *being witnessed by the law and the prophets*. The thought may be expressed by translating: "Being witnessed to by the law and the prophets." The law and the prophets speak of the entire the Old Testament, showing that the OT writers spoke of God's righteousness, which one acquires by faith in Christ.

The "law" (Torah or Pentateuch) points to Christ especially through the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle, then Temple. The "prophets" pointed to Jesus in many ways. For example:

[To Christ] all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

Isaiah 53:11 says

*By knowledge of [Christ], My righteous
Servant shall justify [impute righteousness to]
many, for He shall bear their iniquities.*

Therefore, the first thing we see is that God's solution for man's sin problem is "imputed righteousness," which He gives apart from the law

How one receives righteousness

*Even the righteousness of God which is
through faith (3:22a).*

"Even" (de⁴) introduces a phrase that clarifies how man receives "the righteousness of God," the only kind of righteousness acceptable to the Lord. Here the apostle reveals the only righteousness that satisfies God's holy standards.

Imputed righteousness is exactly what God demands from all those who will enter heaven—nothing more, nothing less. God is a perfect God and cannot accept one with imperfect righteousness. His holiness demands perfection, a radical and uncompromising demand.

Verse 21 implies that law-keeping, or doing good works, is how *not* to become acceptable. Disastrously, some imply that good works are a necessary or inevitable consequence of genuine faith, mixing good works with faith. Thus, neither maintains its distinctive nature. Folks who believe such a doctrine have a nagging question in the back of their mind, "Am I righteous enough yet?"

⁴ de;"introduces a closer definition" (Cranfield 1:203).

Now the next five words explain exactly how one receives the God-kind of righteousness that prepares him to spend eternity with God: *Through faith in Jesus Christ,*" which is in sharp contrast to "through the law."⁵

The law opens a person's eyes to his sinfulness and need for a Savior (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24); then it is by faith that a sinner takes refuge in Christ who at that time forgives.⁶ When we say that God gives us righteousness *through* our faith, we mean that faith is an instrument to appropriate Christ's work and merit. Our being declared righteous God *bases* on Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

The righteousness a man needs is totally outside of himself, not within himself, leaving him with the need to reach out of himself to receive the free gift God offers. What is the gift: A God-kind of righteousness. How do we reach out to receive it? *Through faith in Jesus Christ* alone.

It is like a man with a wheelbarrow moving between his gold mine and bank. The bank is not impressed with his wheelbarrow, but very impressed with his gold. So it is with

⁵ This sharp distinction between faith and good works is consistent with Paul's ministry in Antioch of Pisidia. The apostle preached that *by [Christ] everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the laws of Moses* (Acts 13:14 & 39).

⁶ "Through justification we acquire the very *righteousness* of God, which is credited to us on the basis of faith alone (Ro 3:21, 2). Through regeneration we acquire the very *life* of God, which is imparted to us likewise on the basis of faith alone. Therefore, in a moment of time we obtain both perfect acceptance before the bar of God's justice as well as full membership in His family" (Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1989; Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989), 64.

the person who looks for spiritual wealth. Your wheelbarrow is your faith; it is fine for digging, but not impressive or meritorious in itself. Your gold is imputed righteousness, received by the wheelbarrow of your faith. The heavenly bank will one day admit you—not because you have a wheelbarrow (faith)—but because you have gold, the gold of imputed righteousness.

Paul then adds that the bank, as it were, in which the believer finds the gold of imputed righteousness is *Jesus Christ*.⁷ This identifies who the Object of saving faith is. It is Christ alone. *There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12). Man is not saved by random or imprecise faith, but by specific faith—not merely faith in God, but by faith in Jesus Christ.⁸ God grants forgiveness and eternal life to those who believe in Him. Imputed righteousness never has nor will come to those who attempt to do good works, or who without exception rest in good works along with their faith in Christ.

In effect, those who seek to be righteous through good works say "We cannot manage with Christ only, we must—even if afterwards—add our good works to what He did at Calvary." This is tantamount to saying Christ's work on the Cross was deficient. Those who imply that good works are necessary for imputed righteousness either before, during, or after the first act of faith in Christ, terribly distort the gospel.

How do people receive a God-kind of righteousness? It is *to all and on all who believe*. The point is that the "righteousness of God" is for *everyone* who believes—no

⁷ Bruce identifies Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as an objective genitive (F. F. Bruce, "The Epistle of Paul to the Romans," *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963], 102).

⁸ Chester McCalley, *Romans* (Kansas City: Word of Life Publications, n.d.), 69.

exceptions (cp. 1:16). There is not a word here of good works *inevitably* to follow, which serve as proof of the genuineness of one's salvation! Nor is there a word that good works *of necessity* flow from saving faith. What *is* said is that God gives "righteousness" to all who believe, period.⁹ The notion of belief alone is not new in Paul's argument. Note how many times the term "believe" or "faith" has occurred in Romans: (a) The tone setter: 1:16-17 and (b) the essential passage: 3:22, 25-28, 30.

Calvin was not hesitant to lay great stress upon the doctrine of "justification by faith alone." While he admits that the qualifying term ["alone"] is never employed specifically in the Bible, he insists that the concept or idea is implicit in such passages as Romans 4:2ff; 1:17; 3:21; Galatians 3:10ff. The editor of the most recent English edition of the Institutes points out in a footnote how often in 3:17:7,8,10 the term "faith alone" is repeated. . . . Thus since faith alone is the means by which one receives justification and reconciliation to God, the merit of every work "falls to the ground." Therefore, if justification by faith alone is a specifically

⁹ Though the apostle could not be clearer, some modern Reformed writers turn upside down Paul's statement regarding faith apart from works. For example, "Jesus is the only Savior from this judgment and hell, and He gives righteousness to the one who will confess his sins, turn away from all his sins to Jesus, and cast himself solely on the mercy of Jesus (Rom. 3:21-4:11)" (Curtis Crenshaw, *Lordship Salvation: The Only Kind there Is* [Memphis: Footstool Publications, 1994], 53). Imputed righteousness, he supposes, comes not to one who believes alone, but who believes *and* confesses *and* turns from all (not some, or most) his sin.

Lutheran doctrine, we must put Calvin in the Lutheran rather than in the Reformed camp.¹⁰

Why man needs righteousness through faith (3:22b-23)

For there is no difference (3:22b).

"For" (gar) explains why the offer of salvation is for "all" who believe—it is because *all* need it! All are without merit in God's eyes. "There is no difference" between the immoral, self-righteous, and religious person. A penitentiary may have murderers, rapists, embezzlers, and petty thieves. Though their crimes differ as to how heinous they were, they share one thing—all are lawbreakers.¹¹

Something that impresses me when I fly at 32,000 feet is that every building looks the same height. In addition, if your 747 were to become a space ship and hover at 5000 feet, no one could jump up to it. Some would jump a few inches. Others would jump up a couple of feet. World-class athletes could jump up seven feet. However, there is no distinction in that none would reach the hovering 747. Regardless of whether one jumps inches or feet, all fall short of the mark.

The apostle goes on to elaborate saying *for all have sinned* (3:23). *For* introduces an explanation as to why there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, or between the immoral, self-righteous and religious. Why? Because *all* have sinned. The *all* continues the notion of universal sin that began at 1:18 and that became especially prominent in 3:9-20.

¹⁰ W. Stanford Reid, "Justification by Faith according to John Calvin," *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. 42, #2 (Spring 1980), 296.

¹¹ McCalley, 71.

However, what does Paul mean by all "*have sinned*"? *Sinned* is a Greek tense summarizing what he says about personal sin in 1:18-3:19. Why conclude that? Let us ask ourselves this: What kind of sin has Paul revealed? Note:

- For the immoral person there is sexual immorality, envy, pride, and untrustworthiness, to bring up a few sins from 1:29-31.
- For the self-righteous person: hypocrisy (2:1-16).
- Moreover, for the religious person: external display that is devoid of internal spiritual reality (2:17-29).

Preceding context has talked about personal acts of sin.¹² Thus, personal sin is the issue of context and is the evidence that man does not measure up to the righteousness of God. Consequently, the apostle concludes that *all . . . fall short of the glory of God*,¹³ where *fall short* denotes that everyone lacks or goes without¹⁴ *the glory of God*.¹⁵ Luther said the

¹² Bruce, 102, says that "The two words (*pantes hemarton*) are identical with those at the end of Romans v. 12, but whereas there the context suggests that the reference is to the participation of all in 'man's first disobedience', here we have rather a statement of the fact that all men, as individuals, have sinned."

¹³ Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W. [BAGD], *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Logos 2.1e CD-ROM] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1979.

¹⁴ BAGD.

¹⁵ Cranfield says the reference is to that share in the divine glory man possessed before he fall away from his true relationship to God and which will be restored in the eschatological future. Even believers lack this glory in its ultimate sense, not to be had until the resurrection (Cranfield 1:204).

thrust is that "Men are altogether without any virtue in which they may glory (*before God*)."¹⁶

All men universally fall short of God's glory. The aspect of God's glory in view is the quality of divine righteousness, which all men lack, thus need imputed to their accounts. Thankfully, the Lord does not desire any one to remain in this "fall short" condition. Therefore, we have what follows.

How God justifies a person (3:24)

Being justified freely by His grace (3:24a).

This must be one of the most animating and hopeful statements in Scripture! *Being justified* looks at a series of points in history—each point speaking of those moments in time that one believes—modifying those who have sinned and fall short of God's glory. This greatly encourages because it shows that God is not in the business of justifying good people, self-righteous, and religious people. He justifies bad people—sinners. The Lord justifies people who fall short of His glory, of His standards for righteousness!

Justified means to "declare one righteous," not to make one righteous. It is like a judge who declares someone innocent. The judge does not make that person innocent, but simply declares him to be. Note three usages:

- **Deuteronomy 25:1.** *If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may*

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, translated by J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 77.

judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

It is a principle in most Western courts of law, as in Moses' code of law, that a sentence in any case must be in accordance with the facts presented. No judge has the right to clear the guilty or to condemn the innocent; and if justice is to be served, the judgment by the judge must be in keeping with this principle.¹⁷ Accordingly, a judge does not *make* a man righteous; he *declares* him to be so.

- **Luke 7:29.** Certain tax collectors are said to justify God. They did not make God righteous because He is eternally righteous. They justified Him in the sense they declared Him to be what He is.
- **1 Timothy 3:16.** Here we see that Jesus Christ's life justified Him in the sense that His perfect life declared Him what He always was. His perfect life did not make Him what He is, but gave evidence to what He is: the perfect Son of God.

Now those whom God justifies, He *freely* declares righteous, or innocent. *Freely* (dwrean) is a crucial word that denotes the method of one's justification *as a gift, without payment, or gratis*.¹⁸ The last invitation of the Bible says:

¹⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 102.

¹⁸ Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W. [BAGD], *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Logos 2.1e CD-ROM] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1979.

Come! Let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

The most eloquent of the Old Testament prophets said:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

Imputed righteousness is free to us because it is *by His grace*, pointing to the origin of our justification.¹⁹ *Grace* speaks of how God is *for* us, not against us, capturing in a word how the Lord does all the doing on our behalf. There is a memo on a bookmark that says:

Dear Friend--

I'm working on all of your problems.

Please get out of the way.

--God

That is it, folks. The Lord does *all* the work. By action from the source of His matchless grace, He pronounces righteous all who believe—referring to their first act of faith alone in Christ alone. Moreover, He declares them righteous at the *beginning* of their entrance into God's family.²⁰ The Lord does not wait until the end of our lives to see how we turn out, then pronounce us “not guilty.” In addition, if He declares us righteous up front, imputed righteousness has nothing to do with works that follow. It is quite reassuring to know that God justified us freely through faith at the beginning of our spiritual pilgrimage, than to

¹⁹ Cranfield 1:2-6.

²⁰ Comments suggested by Bruce, 102-03.

“hope”—without full assurance—that in the end our works will justify us, supposing they are the necessary and inevitable evidence of saving faith.

Now other passages add to our understanding of grace and justification and do so without augmenting what man must do to receive the free gift of righteousness and eternal life.

An eternal result of justification

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

“Therefore” transitions us from Paul’s teaching in 1:18-4:25 to the results of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. It serves as a door, which as we go through, we leave our past without justification and enter the believer’s present justified status before God.

Having been justified by faith is the background to what follows. Our part is simply stated with two words: *by faith*. Faith is a non-meritorious act that reaches out to Jesus Christ who is infinite in merit before heaven’s tribunal.

The verb *justified* looks at that event in the past when you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It was an event when God justified you *en toto*, not partially. He did a perfect job and does not now require you to add anything to what He has done completely. You do not have to get busy doing good works to improve upon God’s justification.

“Having justified” also denotes that believers were the recipients of God’s justifying activity. We believed; God did all required to give us a righteous standing in the eyes of

Heaven's Court. Moreover, the verb "justified," being a participle that here—in view of the eternity of what God has done for our justification—denotes contemporary action with the main verb, *we have peace*. That is, being justified and establishing peace with God are co-eternal concepts in the plan of God, taking place the moment you believe on Jesus Christ.

Having been justified by faith, *we have*²¹ *peace with God*. *Peace with God* is a result of justification by faith and is tantamount to being reconciled to God (cp. 5:10-11). This "peace" is not subjective peace, or a feeling of peace and contentment,²² but the objective state of being at peace with God instead of at war with God.²³

Now the condition in which we found ourselves before the Lord justified us was not a happy one:

- God revealed His wrath against us (1:18), and we treasured up wrath for the day of wrath (2:5; cp. 3:5-7).
- God had given us up to self-destruct (1:24, 26, 28).
- We were worthy of the second death (1:32).
- We were inexcusable (2:1)
- We were all under sin (3:9, 23; 5:8)

²¹ The textual debate over whether εἰσενεμειν is indicative or subjunctive is decided in favor of the indicative, though external evidence favors the subjunctive because of the strong internal/contextual flow. See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 511.

²² Luther, 89, takes "peace" in a subjective sense saying, "This peace consists properly in an appeased conscience and in confidence in God, just as conversely the lack of peace means spiritual anxiety, a disturbed conscience and mistrust over against God."

²³ Cranfield 1:258.

- We were guilty in the eyes of the divine courtroom (3:19).

The point is that we were God's enemies (5:10). There existed a state of hostility—not because God wanted it that way, but because man pursued his own rebellious way. Yet, God invites sinners—His enemies—to:

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest (Matthew 11:28).

Where before the moment of justification man was hostile toward God, now after justification a truce is declared so that peace exists. God and believers are reconciled, no longer enemies. Where there had been war, as it were, there is now a state of peace—regardless of how one may *feel*.

The very nature of God's justification—since He is a personal God intimately concerned about us, so much so that he has numbered the hairs on our head—the very nature of God's being is to replace wrath with peace and hostility with friendship.

The personal nature of our peace *with God* comes out of the preposition *with* that includes the idea of *contact*. In addition, that peaceful contact with the Almighty is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Luther says “That is, through our

Mediator, and not through ourselves, we are justified by faith.”²⁴

We possess justification because one perfectly qualified man stands between each person and God: *The Man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5). No pastor, no evangelist, no saint, no virgin stands between a believer and peace with God. Jesus Christ alone holds that unique position. F. F. Bruce well says that

Men and women who were formerly in a state of rebellion against [God] have now been reconciled to Him by the death of Christ. It was the purpose of God . . . to ‘reconcile all things unto himself’ by Christ, but pre-eminently to reconcile those who were formerly ‘alienated and enemies’ to Him at heart (Col. i. 20-22).²⁵

To have peace with God is a wonderful possession because it means to be no longer the object of divine wrath, but to be reconciled to the Lord.

Justification in the perspective of eternity

Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:29-30).

²⁴ Luther, 89.

²⁵ Bruce, 119.

Justification is part of God's eternal plan that extends from eternity past to eternity future. To be justified "is that divine gift of a status of righteousness before God with which so much of the epistle has been concerned."²⁶ What a basis for hope that is. Justified! Declared innocent or forgiven of all charges of wrong-doing forever. It does not get any better than that.

And whom He justified, these He also glorified. This is the climax for "those whom God did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son" (v. 29)."²⁷ This is the decisive factor for genuine hope. What God has done for us not only included eternity past (foreknew and predestined) and time and history (called and justified), but *also* eternity future: glorification.

"Glorified" is a proleptic aorist tense denoting that a future event is certain, absolutely fixed and unchangeable. In fact, it is so certain Paul pictures it as a *present* reality—which is especially true from the standpoint of God who is not subject to the limitations of time and space.

Christians live between the historical event of justification and future glorification. In the meantime—between our present experience and future but certain glorification—we must continue to be more-and-more conformed to the way Christ thinks and acts. As Bruce points out

the difference between sanctification
and glory is one of degree only, not one
of kind. Sanctification is progressive

²⁶ Cranfield 1:433.

²⁷ Luther, 133.

conformity to the image of Christ here and now (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10); glory is perfect conformity to the image of Christ there and then. Sanctification is glory begun; glory is sanctification completed.²⁸

Our justification by grace through faith, in the perspective of eternity, adds to our assurance of future glorification.

An eternal result of justification

*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?
It is God who justifies* (Romans 8:33).

Who or what kind of person? Paul uses courtroom terminology in context, thus we may paraphrase this: "What sort of prosecuting attorney shall bring a charge?"

Bring a charge is a legal technical term meaning to accuse, to bring legal charges against.²⁹ The scene is the Supreme Court of heaven. Those pictured as on trial are believers, or "God's elect," linking back to 8:28-29, especially "to those who are the called according to His purpose" (8:28b). The elect are people who have become a part of God's eternal plan and purpose through faith alone in Christ alone. To bring a charge *against* an elect person is to put him on trial and to seek a verdict of "guilty" against him. It is impossible to succeed at this in heaven's court.

Now who is the prosecuting attorney in the divine courtroom? It is Satan (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; 1 Kings 22:19-

²⁸ Bruce, 178.

²⁹ BAGD.

23; Zechariah 3:1-2). Revelation 12:10 shows Satan functioning in heaven's tribunal and John calls him the "accuser of the brethren."

Yet who, including the devil himself, may bring a successful charge against God's elect when *it is God who justifies?* The Greek places "God" first in the clause, stressing who He is and then what He does: justifies. It is God Himself who justifies, who declares that we stand acquitted.

It is the Lord who has foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and even glorified us. It is God Himself who alone has a purpose and plan that is sovereign over men and angels and that includes the believer's justification. Accordingly, every Christian the devil brings legal charges against in God's courtroom stands justified. There are no legitimate grounds upon which Satan can make an accusation stick.

Christ died and rose again for any and every sin a Christian commits. The moment one believes that Jesus Christ died for his sins, God forgives every sin. He is justified; God imputes the righteousness of Christ to his account.

The New English Bible translates "It is God who pronounces acquittal." That is good as far as it goes. Nevertheless, justification involves more than a mere pronouncement of innocence. It includes imputed righteousness. God credits to our accounts perfect righteousness and pronounces believers to be acquitted, forgiven, forever made right in His eyes.

On the one hand, then, God does a negative thing: He takes away our sin. On the other hand, He does a positive

thing: He adds righteousness to our accounts in the bookkeeping system of heaven. Thus, every accusation Satan brings against us in court, the Lord throws out. Satan's prosecuting efforts are futile. He has not won even one case against God's elect and never will.

The point is that if God—who is the greatest—justifies us, then no one in or out of this world can usurp His declaration that we are justified. The lessor cannot topple the judgments and sentences of the greater, in the same way a Federal court cannot topple a decision made by the US Supreme Court.

In the Supreme Courtroom of creation, where Revelation 12 says Satan accuses us before God, our eternal status stands secure. Our status of declared innocence no one can turn upside down because no one is greater than God is. No one can undo what God has done, not even God Himself because He is immutable. No heavenly or earthly prosecutor can overthrow God's justification.

CONCLUSION

A God-kind of righteousness is the righteousness God imputes to the account of every believer. It is as though the Lord deposited an unearned sum into your bank account. The righteousness God credits to your account leaves you forever justified before the court of heaven.

One's justification has nothing to do with keeping rules, the law, or doing good works. It has everything to do with his non-meritorious faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Being justified by grace through faith alone is to be declared righteous in the divine courtroom. Justification is

the “not guilty” verdict the Supreme Judge freely gives to every one who believes.

Moreover, since *God* justifies, your justification stands forever. No man can neutralize your justification; the devil cannot nullify your justification. God Himself cannot reverse His once-for-all sentence that through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone you are forever declared *innocent*.

--End--

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