

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum *"Justification"*

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction “Why Justification?”

The salvific work of grace encompasses several interrelated aspects of our salvation. When sinners are convicted by the Holy Ghost and repent of sin, they are spiritually prepared to be justified by the grace of God (Ro. 3:24). While justification is a big word, its basic meaning resides in a much smaller word, **JUST**. The essential meaning of just is “right.” Through justification, individuals who repent of their sins are made right before God. This lesson will explain why justification is a necessary part of salvation.

Key Verse

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Ro. 3:19).

Lesson Summary

Why is our justification necessary for our salvation? How does justification fit into the order of salvation? What is the importance of justification in the life of the believer? The law of God confirms that the whole world is guilty before God through disobedience (Ro. 3:19). In Romans chapter two, Paul renders humanity inexcusable in its sinful practices (v. 1). He develops the inescapable reality of God’s righteous judgment against sin (vv. 2-6; 2 Pe. 2:9). Paul declares “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil” (vv. 8-9). Ultimately, he places all of humanity in the same standing before God, quoting from the psalmist David, “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Ro. 3:10). The apostle Peter concurs with Paul’s understanding of humanity’s judgment when he speaks of the judgment of the unjust who are reserved for punishment (2 Pe. 2:9). Justification is God’s remedy for humanity’s guilt. Because we have committed sin, we stand condemned in the sight of God, and our standing must be made right or just before him. In Romans 4, Paul specifically explains how we are made right before God. We are not right because of “works of righteousness which we have done,” but rather God imputes righteousness to us (vv. 6, 11, 22-24). To impute means to count (vv. 3, 5). Though we were not righteous, righteousness is now counted toward us by God. Therefore, in Christ, righteousness is not something to be worked for, but it is imputed to those who believe in Jesus Christ. In other words, God declares us righteous before him without works (Ro. 4:6). Nevertheless, he justifies us in order to bring forth good works in and through us (Ep. 2:8-10).

Scripture Study

God’ righteous judgment against humanity’s sin – Ro. 2:1-12

Justification is imputed righteousness – Ro. 4:5-8, 20-25; Ps. 32:1-2

Conclusion

Reasonably, one cannot be made righteous before God without first experiencing conviction by the Holy Ghost. Why? Conviction of sin is necessary because justification presupposes the knowledge and repentance of sin. Clearly, one cannot be made righteous while continuing to live unjustly (Ga. 2:17-18). This being the case, conviction and repentance are concurrent with justification. Quoting from the *Abstract of Faith* on page four, “Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God” (see Ac. 24:16). Thus, a true convert can never justifiably live in sin.

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“The Basis of Justification”

Introduction

How is justification made possible? What is the basis of our righteousness before God? Paul declares, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Ro. 5:19). Through Adam’s disobedience, all are made sinners, but through Christ’s obedience, believers are made righteous. What obedience is Paul talking about? Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, saying, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Ph. 2:8). In this lesson, let us consider what the death of Christ accomplished on our behalf.

Key Verse

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Ro. 5:9).

Lesson Summary

Although Jesus’ disciples understood that he came to bring salvation, they could not fathom that his death would be a necessity for our salvation (Mt. 26:51-54; Jn. 18:10-11). His sufferings and death were predicted by the prophets (Is. 53). As the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, his death was evident through the type and shadow of the sacrificial system under the Old Covenant. Even Jesus himself foretold his suffering and death (Lu. 9:22). Yet, God’s purpose in the Lord of glory was hidden from the princes of this world (1 Co. 2:8). When Jesus kept the Passover with his disciples, he instituted the Lord’s Supper. He symbolized and memorialized the significance of his death through this observance, identifying the bread with his body and the cup (juice) with his blood. Jesus said, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt. 26:26-28). Being superior to the sacrificial practices of the Old Covenant, in Hebrews nine the Bible explains how the single sacrifice of Jesus Christ with the shedding of his blood has cleansed us from sin and unrighteousness. Moreover, the apostle Paul explains our justification by the blood of Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus’ blood satisfies God’s righteous judgment against humanity’s sinful deeds (Ro. 3:23-26). Being justified by his blood, believers are saved from God’s wrath and judgment against sin (Ro. 5:9). John explains the blood of Christ as the basis of our justification, saying, “the blood . . . cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). Thus, we see how God is both just and the justifier of all believers who repent, confessing their sins (Ro. 3:26, 1 Jn. 1:9). Through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, we truly are made righteous before God (1 Pe. 1:19; Re. 7:9-17; 19:6-8).

Scripture Study

The shedding of blood – Mt. 26:26-28; He. 9:7-14, 22-26

Justified by the blood – Ro. 3:23-26; 5:9; 1 Jn. 1:7

Conclusion

The Bible offers no substitute for the blood of Christ. The righteousness of the saints is made possible only through faith in his shed blood. His blood is the basis of God’s plan of salvation from the foundation of the world (Re. 13:8). For this reason, the blood and the preaching of the cross is the central message and theme of the church of God (1 Co. 2:2). To remove the blood from our message or even to minimize its importance is to deny the source and hope of our salvation!

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Introduction

“Justified by Faith”

In Romans 4:20-22, Paul speaks of Abraham, saying, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” As we have already studied, justification can be defined as being made righteous before God. By what means was Abraham made righteous? Abraham’s faith was counted toward him for righteousness. In other words, Abraham was justified by faith. Let us examine justification by faith.

Key Verse

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Ga. 3:11).

Lesson Summary

We are the spiritual children of Abraham. Abraham was justified by faith before the law was given by God. His justification came not by keeping the law but rather by placing his faith in the Word of God (Ro. 3:20-23). Abraham believed that God would deliver on his promise (Ro. 4:21). Because he believed God, the Lord counted his faith in him for righteousness. Paul uses Abraham’s righteousness by faith to illustrate our justification by faith (Ga. 3:6-11). He quotes from the prophet Habakkuk, saying, “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4). Paul teaches faith unto righteousness as the foundational principle of the gospel of salvation (Ro. 1:16-17). Abraham was justified righteous before God without the works of the law. That is, Abraham had done nothing meritorious other than to believe the Word of God when his faith was counted to him for righteousness. Justification says, “We cannot work our way to heaven.” Nevertheless, how is our faith established or validated as the real thing? The doctrine of justification insists that we are not made righteous by works, but by continuing in the faith of Jesus Christ (Ga. 2:16-17). Though righteousness comes by faith and not by the works of the law, we should understand that righteousness by faith always produces obedience. Faith and obedience go hand-in-hand. Our faith in Christ unto righteousness is only made perfect or complete through righteous works (Ja. 2:22-24). The Hebrew writer says, “By faith Abraham, when he was called . . . obeyed” (He. 11:8). In other words, we know Abraham believed the Word of God because he obeyed the Word. True faith in Jesus Christ is faithful to God’s Word; but unbelief produces disobedience (He. 3:12-14). For this reason, we must “continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:21-23).

Scripture Study

Justified by faith – Ga. 3:6-11; Ro. 1:16-17; Hab. 2:4; Ro. 3:20-23;
Continue in the faith of Christ – Ga. 2:16-17; Col. 1:21-23; He. 3:12-14

Conclusion

Certainly, we are made righteous by faith. Moreover, our justification depends on an ongoing relationship with faith in Jesus Christ. Those who are justified will continue in the faith. While works cannot save us, true faith in Jesus Christ works righteousness. Like faithful Abraham, the just who live by faith will be faithful and obedient to God’s Word!

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“The Results of Justification”

Introduction

Justification is a necessary part of our salvation because of past sins we have committed. We are guilty before God, and therefore, we must be justified or made right in the sight of God. Our justification is made possible through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ: “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2). Through faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice, we are made righteous. Justification accomplishes two definite results in the believer: 1) pardon from past sins committed, and 2) peace with God (reconciliation).

Key Verse

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5).

Lesson Summary

Justification defines God’s merciful act of forgiving (pardoning) a sinner who repents, confessing his/her sin. (Ps. 32:1-5, 103:8-13; Is. 55:7). In justification, God does not excuse sin or overlook it; rather past sins are pardoned. For Christ’s sake, the sins of those who repent are forgiven by God. In Isaiah fifty-three, the prophet describes Jesus Christ as the sacrificial offering for sins. The language of Isaiah depicts Christ as the sin-bearer, taking away transgressions and iniquities (vv. 4-6, 10-12). Through faith in his blood sacrifice, our sins are forgiven (Ep. 1:7; Col. 1:14). The extent of our forgiveness is a full pardon: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12). When the Lord forgives, he does not call to remembrance our past sins (Jer. 31:33-34, He. 10:17-19). Moreover, the absolution of sin and guilt produces peace with God through Jesus Christ (Ro. 5:1-2). Faith and imputed righteousness yields peace with God (Is. 32:17). In Isaiah 59:2, the prophet cries, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Sin causes a separation between God and humanity. When walking in sin we are enemies of God, but through faith in Jesus Christ we are reconciled to him – we are brought into fellowship (a relationship of peace) with God (Ro. 5:1, 9-10; 2 Co. 5:19-21; Ep. 2:12-17; Col. 1:20-21). Briefly, in the experience of justification, when repentant sinners place their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God imputes righteousness to them, forgiving their sins (pardon) and reconciling them to himself (peace). This experience in the believer is the flip-side of regeneration or the new birth. Regeneration will be the theme for our next study.

Scripture Study

Pardon from past sins – Is. 53:4-6, 10-12; Ep. 1:7; Col. 1:14; He. 10:17-19

Peace with God – Is. 32:17; Ro. 5:1-2, 9-10; 2 Co. 5:19-21; Ep. 2:12-17; Col. 1:20-21

Conclusion

By now, the student should understand that justification is more than a judicial act of God in clearing the guilty. Rather, God actually forgives our past sins and removes our guilt in order to reconcile us to himself. Justification restores a right relationship with God. But our right standing before God depends on continued fellowship with him through walking (abiding, living) in the light of God’s Word (1 Jn. 1:5-7)!