

Justification: Part 1 — The Righteousness of Christ for the Guilty

Scripture Focus: Romans 3:21–4:8

Theme: Justification by grace through faith is the heart of the gospel Paul preached. It is God’s declaration that the guilty are righteous through Christ alone—not by works but by faith.

Reflection

Read Romans 3:21–26.

- According to verse 21, what is “the righteousness of God” and how is it revealed?
- Why do you think Martyn Lloyd-Jones called the phrase “But now...” some of the most wonderful words in Scripture?

1. What Is Justification?

Justification is God’s legal declaration that a sinner is now righteous—not because of their good works, but because of Christ’s perfect obedience and sacrifice. This includes both the forgiveness of sin and the imputation (crediting) of Christ’s righteousness to the believer.

Ask:

- Read Romans 3:24. What does Paul say about how we are justified?
- How would you explain “redemption” and “propitiation” in your own words (v. 24–25)?
- Why is it essential that justification is a declaration and not a process?

“Justified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith...” – John Calvin

2. How Does This Righteousness Become Ours?

Paul insists that justification comes through **faith alone**. This righteousness is **imputed**—credited to us—through no merit of our own. Faith does not earn it but simply receives what God freely gives.

Ask:

- Read Romans 4:4–5. What does Paul say about the person who does not work, but believes?

- Why is it good news that justification is apart from the law (Romans 3:28)?
- How does this challenge the common belief that God rewards those who “do the best they can”? (Consider Romans 3:23 in your response.)

3. Faith Alone, Not Works

Faith looks away from self and clings to Christ. It doesn’t bring righteousness but embraces the Righteous One. Even the faith we exercise is a gift from God (Philippians 1:29).

Ask:

- What does it mean that “faith lays hold of Christ”?
- How can we discern the difference between trusting in Christ and trusting in our religious performance?

4. Why This Doctrine Divides

Paul makes it clear: justification by faith alone is not one option among many. It is **the dividing line** between the gospel and every other religious system. Other faiths teach “do”—earn your way to God. The gospel says “done”—Christ has accomplished it for you.

Ask:

- In what ways do we sometimes drift back into “works-based” thinking in the Christian life?
- How does understanding justification bring assurance and peace in your daily walk?

Application Questions

- What does it look like to live as someone justified by faith in Christ?
- How should this truth shape our prayer life, our response to sin, and our approach to others?
- Who in your life needs to hear this message of grace—not performance?

Justification: Part 2 — The Blessings of Being in Christ, the Second Adam

Scripture Focus: Romans 5:12–21

Theme: Our justification rests on the sure foundation of Christ's obedience, who as the Second Adam, reverses the curse of sin and brings us new life and hope.

Reflection

Begin by reading Romans 5:12–21.

Ask:

- What contrast does Paul draw between Adam and Christ in this passage?
- Why is it important to understand Jesus as the “Second Adam”?

1. The Problem: Our Sin in Adam

Paul explains that sin and death entered the world through Adam's disobedience, and as his descendants, we share in this condemnation (Romans 5:12). This is why no one can save themselves by their own efforts.

Ask:

- How does Romans 5:12 explain why “doing your best” isn't enough to be right with God?
- What does it mean that Adam is our “federal head” or representative?

2. The Solution: Righteousness in Christ

Jesus, the Second Adam, brings the free gift of righteousness through His perfect obedience and sacrificial death. This righteousness is imputed to us by faith, giving us a new standing before God (Romans 5:15–19).

Ask:

- How does Paul show the connection between Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness being “credited” to us? (See verses 15, 16, 18, 19)
- What does this teach us about grace and God's generosity?

3. The Results: Peace, Life, and Hope

Justification brings more than a clean slate—it brings peace with God, access to Him, and the hope of eternal life. We are no longer under the dominion of sin but alive in Christ.

Ask:

- What are some of the blessings that come with justification mentioned or implied in Romans 5?
- How does this hope help us in the midst of suffering and trials? (Consider Romans 5:1–5)

4. The Dividing Line: In Adam or In Christ

Paul shows that humanity is divided into two groups: those “in Adam” and those “in Christ.” This is the ultimate spiritual divide beyond race, culture, or religion.

Ask:

- What does it mean practically to be “in Christ”?
- How should this truth influence how we view unity in the church and relate to other believers?

Application Questions

- How does knowing you are justified by Christ alone change the way you live daily?
- What false hopes or “works” do you need to surrender and trust Christ for?
- How can this teaching encourage you or someone else struggling with assurance of salvation?

Prayer

Thank God for Christ, the Second Adam, who has undone the damage of sin and given us new life. Pray for grace to trust fully in His righteousness and to live with the hope of glory even amid trials.