



Is It Faith or Works That Gets Us to Heaven? (Part I)

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

James 2:24: (NASB) *You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*



I am a Christian. I have been called by God to follow in Jesus' footsteps. I believe that as a sinner, I cannot do anything to earn God's favor. Jesus' sacrifice gave me a standing before God that I could not have had without it. So, what now? Jesus promised that all his true followers would be with him in heaven, but what does that mean for me? Do I just focus on building my faith and not works, as it says in the book of Ephesians? Should I be living my life with ever-greater expectations that God's providence will always come through and answer my heartfelt prayers? Or should I primarily focus on works and not faith, as it says in the book of James? Should I be out and about, always doing things to show that I am a person of faith? How can something that should be so simple be so confusing?

This topic is one that has baffled a lot of Christians. We have had quite a few listeners email us at inspiration@christianquestions.com or message us through the Christian Questions app, regarding the faith vs. works debate. Few topics are as big and important as our salvation - so we need to walk through the concepts methodically so we can all follow along.

This issue of faith and works can be confusing for two reasons. The first reason is the New Testament seems to say three different things about justification and how it comes to be.

God Justifies

Romans 8:33: (NASB) *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;*

Faith Justifies

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

Works Justify

James 2:24: (NASB) *You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

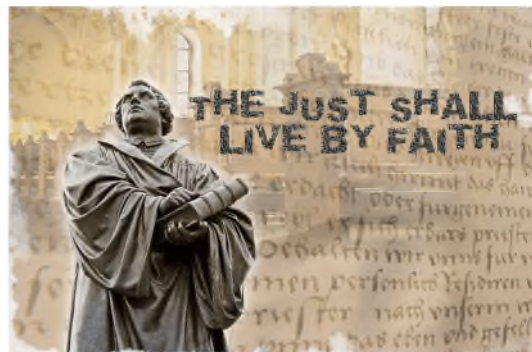
We will work through the first two justifiers in this podcast and focus on the third one in Part II.

The second reason this is a confusing issue is because historically Christianity has wrestled with this doctrine for centuries.

(Audio clips are excerpted, quoted and paraphrased with permission from a sermon by Robert Bennett, October 25, 2020)

Martin Luther Story, Part I

- In northeastern Germany, October 31, 1517, a 34-year-old priest named Martin Luther nailed 95 debate points to his Wittenberg church door. With this posting, Luther unintentionally lit a wildfire that would burn for the next three centuries, the Protestant Reformation. The match that lit this was a single phrase of Scripture: “The just shall live by faith.” How could this cause such a revolution of thought? His theses never directly talked about the just living by faith. Luther was critiquing the Catholic church’s sale of indulgences. Unique to Catholic theology, when certain conditions were met, an indulgence provided the recipient remission from temporal punishment associated with the sin committed. An indulgence did not forgive the sin; it only removed the punishment. An act was required in order to provide some proof of repentance. Forgiveness as a result of that act came to be known as an indulgence.



Although not scriptural, purgatory was incorporated; it was supposed to be a place somewhere between a burning hell and heaven where punishment for sins committed in this life was meted out. Now, an indulgence came to mean you were released from a certain number of days or years of that punishment. These were called “partial indulgences.” They could be earned by an act of charity or by performing certain prayers such as the rosary. A pilgrimage to a holy site would qualify as an act of indulgence, as well as acts like building a bridge or rebuilding a town that had been burnt down.

A “plenary” indulgence allowed you to bypass purgatory and go straight to heaven. Pope Urban II offered this type of indulgence to anyone who participated in the First Crusade in 1095 AD. Anyone who went on that crusade would be offered immediate entrance into heaven when they died. Around the same time, the papacy began to accept money for an indulgence. This meant that you could now buy your way out of purgatory and papacy was the broker you needed to go through.

There were partial indulgences and plenary indulgences which were like a “get out of jail free” cards - it could get you right to heaven. We will take a look at the connection between these indulgences, which allowed people to perform works or pay money, and the phrase *the just shall live by faith*.



Our first and perhaps most foundational question is regarding the expression *the just shall live by faith*.



Let's start with a scriptural basis and some definitions regarding justification:

Habakkuk 2:2-4: (KJV) ²And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. ³For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. ⁴Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him (referring to the Chaldeans of that time and represents unbelievers in general): but the **just <6662>** shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:4 is the only time the phrase, *the just shall live by faith*, appears in the Old Testament.

What was the Old Testament meaning of *just*?

Just: Strongs #6662 *tsaddiyq*; from #6663; just

King James Version translates this word: just, lawful, righteous (man)

This is the adjective form of the word implying that those who act in a godly, righteous manner (for Israel this meant following the Law and clinging to its sacrifices) are considered “just”:

Genesis 6:9: (NASB) *These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a **righteous <6662>** man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.*

This word *just* or *justification* is used interchangeably with *righteous* or *righteousness*. So, who are the *just*? Here Noah was one of the *just* (a *righteous man*). Using Strong's Concordance, we see he is described with the word for *just* that was translated into English as *righteous*.

Righteousness is not doing what WE think is right, but what GOD thinks is right.

The following are the noun form of the same word:

Genesis 15:3-6: (KJV) ³And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. ⁵And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. ⁶And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for **righteousness <6666>**.

Righteousness: Strongs #6666 *tsedaqah*; from Strongs #6663; rightness (abstractly), subjectively (rectitude), objectively (justice), morally (virtue) or figuratively (prosperity)

King James Version translates this word: justice, moderately, right (-eous) (act, -ly, -ness)

Ezekiel 14:14: (KJV) *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their **righteousness <6666>**, saith the Lord GOD.*



Observations:

- Very few are described individually with this word for “just/righteous” in the Old Testament
- Noah, Abraham, Daniel and Job specifically had righteousness attributed to them
- Their “just/righteous” standing is described in the context of walking with and believing God



In the Old Testament they were those individuals who had a deep faith; they listened to and walked with God. They served Him with their might, no matter what the cost.



Clarity Question

**Does this mean these
righteous men went to heaven?**



**No, they did not
go to heaven.
We will develop this
answer as we continue.**

Looking at the Old Testament shows us a lot of inspirational faithfulness. Many stepped up and followed.

**What about the Law given to Israel?
Didn't that give the whole nation righteousness before God?**

It is interesting that of the four individuals mentioned earlier, only Daniel was singled out in that category of righteousness after the Law was established. Perhaps we can take this as a lesson regarding the power and importance of personal faith. In any case, we cannot discount the role that the Law played in bringing Israel to a place where they could righteously stand before God.

In the Old Testament there was a “reckoned” justification achieved through animal sacrifices. Reckoned means they were not *actually* justified. The righteous ones we discussed - Noah, Abraham, Job and Daniel - all had reckoned justification. God counted it *as if they were* justified, but their sins were not actually taken away.

This atonement (reparation for sin) was conditional as the sacrifices needed to be continually made year after year:

Hebrews 10:1-4: (NASB) *¹For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*



They were temporarily considered right (reckoned) before God, but their sins were not actually removed - it just bought them more time to have a standing with God.



In the Old Testament, we can see how God's Law was a "justifier" of the people, though it was a temporary righteousness. Animal sacrifices were reminders of their inherent sinfulness and inability to be righteous on their own.

The atoning sacrifices covered them for the upcoming year, as opposed to granting forgiveness for all the sins committed in the prior year. They "paid it forward."

An analogy might be a one-year warranty on parts and labor. You buy a widget, and if anything goes wrong with parts or labor, it is covered for free.



The sacrifices provided a type of metaphorical covering over the sins of Israel so that God could deal with them.

Martin Luther Story, Part II

- In Martin Luther's world, this doctrine of indulgence was a common, accepted belief. People actually thought this was the way God's grace worked. Notice what this belief was actually saying: The works these indulgences represented were really an attempt to earn justification. By the time Luther nailed the 95 theses to the church at Wittenberg, trafficking in the sale of indulgences had become incredibly obnoxious and corrupt.*

Prior to the invention of the printing press, when papacy wanted to grant an indulgence, they needed to write out the certificates by hand, and then the Pope had to sign them. It was tedious and limited the number of indulgences that could be granted. But the printing press changed everything. They could make the certificates by the thousands. When an agent of the Vatican sold one to the public, he just filled in the blank with the name of the purchaser.



Did those in the Old Testament who offered animal sacrifices go to heaven?



No, it was a "warranty" that bought them time but did not erase their sins.

The Apostle Paul explains this, but let's first define justification as it is described in the New Testament.

It comes from three primary words:

Justification: Strong's #1344 *dikaioo*; from Strong's #1342; to render (i.e., show or regard as) just or innocent
King James Version translates this word: free, justify (-ier), be righteous

Notice the two shades of meaning: to *make* as just or innocent vs. to *regard* as just or innocent.

Justification: Strong's #1342 *dikaioo*; equitable (in character or act); by implication, innocent



Justification: Strong's #1347 *dikaiosis*; acquittal (for Christ's sake)

Justification is an event. It is the acquitting, the making right of an individual who was previously in the wrong. The person does not earn justification, but it is given to them.

Being “just” or righteous gives one the opportunity to have a relationship with God. Without that standing, God is not dealing with the sinful person.



There are four basic questions whose answers separate the Christian denominations on this faith versus works topic. We have just hit on the first question: *Is justification a process or an event?* We are saying it is an event. So, something happens where I was not justified and now suddenly I am. How does that acquittal work? More on this soon.

Who or what makes us right? It begins (just like in the Old Testament) with God:

Romans 8:33: (NASB) *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies <1344>.*

How does God do this? Can we in this sinful world ever EARN acquittal from the sin of Adam? No! There are no works that any of us could ever do to earn true justification.



If acquittal/justification is from the sins of Adam we inherit, what about our intentional sins?



Justification releases us from the penalty of Adamic sin. Now we are not destined to death, but to life instead. When we sin while in this condition we must ask for forgiveness.

1 John 2:1-2: (NASB) *¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

We need Jesus, our Advocate, because we would be on shaky ground without him. Our full inheritance is dependent upon our works of faith, which include bringing our sins before God.

Ephesians 1:13-14: (WEY) *¹³And in him you Gentiles also, after listening to the Message of the truth, the Good News of your salvation - having believed in him - were sealed with the promised holy spirit; ¹⁴that spirit being a pledge and foretaste of our inheritance, in anticipation of its full redemption - the inheritance which he has purchased to be specially his for the extolling of His glory.*

There is only one path:

Romans 3:20,24-28: (KJV) *²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²⁴Being justified <1344> freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (satisfaction) through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*



Justification is an undeserved gift from God that comes through Jesus' sacrifice:

²⁶To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the **justifier** <1344> of him which believeth in Jesus. ²⁷Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified** <1344> by faith without the deeds of the law.



A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law - because it comes from God through Jesus. Faith is built upon Jesus. It does not involve works at this point.

God is clearly justifying us by faith. This faith is in the unmerited favor God exhibited by sending His son to "cover," or make good for our sins. It IS faith in the salvation Jesus brought that brings this actual acquittal, not just reckoned justification to light.



Is baptism the event that must occur in order for us to be justified?



No, but more on the event is coming soon.

Then Paul brings Abraham into the picture:

Romans 4:1-3: (KJV) ¹What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ²For if Abraham were **justified** <1344> by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. ³For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was **counted** <3049> unto him for **righteousness** <1343>.

This quotes the Genesis 15:6 text we read in the first segment where because of Abraham's faith that he would have a son, God *counted it to him for righteousness*.

Counted: Strong's #3049 *logizomai*; to take an inventory, i.e., estimate (literally or figuratively)

Was Abraham acquitted from Adam's sin? No! The Old Testament never spoke of acquittal, as there was no ransom yet - Jesus had not yet died to take the place of Adam - 1 Corinthians 15:22 - *as in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive*. God did the most He could for man prior to Jesus' sacrifice that would secure man's acquittal from Adamic sin. God found ways to give humanity access to Him in the Old Testament that were within the confines of the legal penalty for sin. That is how merciful He is!

Heaven was only available after Jesus provided the ransom and was resurrected.



In the New Testament and now, it is those to whom salvation has been applied, as they have been called and chosen to follow Jesus.



How is salvation applied?



Answer coming soon.

There is both complexity and a wisdom here as we unfold and absorb the Bible's justification teachings.

**We now see justification before God in the Old and New Testaments.
Is it different or the same?**

There are several similarities:

- ➡ Faith has been proven to be of paramount importance whether you lived before or after Jesus.
- ➡ Some of the same words are used to describe both Old and New Testament justification.
- ➡ In both Testaments, the focus seems to be on individuals.

🔊 Martin Luther Story, Part III

- In 1517, Pope Leo X wanted to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and needed money. He authorized the sale of plenary indulgences to fund his project - the "get out of jail free" cards. There was one particular Dominican monk who was good at selling them named Johann Tetzel. He had several jingles he used quite effectively, one of which was the subject of a few of Luther's 95 theses and probably the most famous: "As soon as the coin in the coffer clinks, a soul from purgatory springs." Tetzel made his way across northern Germany selling these certificates of indulgence. Some of Luther's parishioners bought them, which upset Luther.



There are two main differences of justification by faith between the Old and New Testaments:



Old Testament justification by faith was based on faithful obedience and resulted in earthly blessing:

Hebrews 11:39-40: (NASB) ³⁹And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

New Testament justification by faith is based on the sacrifice of Jesus, and following him even unto death. This has a heavenly destiny.



Are the Old Testament
righteous ones in heaven?



No one from the Old Testament (even those special righteous/justified ones) was promised or given a heavenly reward. There are other Scriptures that show they will be resurrected back on earth in the kingdom, but that is a different subject.

Jesus spoke these words the night before his crucifixion:

John 14:1-3: (NASB) ¹*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*



We see the depth of personal connection. Jesus was letting his apostles know he was about to die, would be raised and would no longer be with them. He told them he would *prepare a place for you* in heaven. This was never promised before. *This was a personal invitation to Jesus' footstep followers to be with him in heaven.* Justification in this context gets much deeper than ever before. The faithful ones in the Old Testament were given the opportunity to be blessed but not with a heavenly reward.



Adam had the distinct designation of being the ONLY Old Testament person to be a SON of God:

Luke 3:38: (NASB) *the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

Sin cost him (and the world) that special relationship.

Abraham was called a friend of God. This shows how lofty his relationship was with the Creator:

James 2:23: (NASB) *and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.*

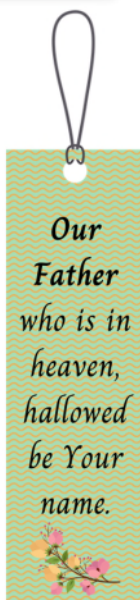
Abraham's reckoned righteousness earned him the designation as *the friend of God*, not a son of God.

The Law focused Israel on that service by the requirement to keep it and do the works it required:

Hebrews 3:1-2,5-6: (NASB) ¹*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; ²He was faithful to Him who appointed him, as Moses also was in all his house. ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; ⁶but Christ was faithful as a son over his house - whose house we are, **if we hold fast our confidence** and the boast of our hope firm until the end.*



Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant and God blessed them. But *Christ was faithful as a son, whose house we are* - notice the difference in how Jesus teaches us to identify with God. Sonship is back!



Adam was a *son* - he was family to God. That intimate privilege was lost in the Garden of Eden because of his sin. Now the faithful have the opportunity to be called *sons* - not *friends* or *servants*.

This is Jesus speaking the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:44-45: (NASB) ⁴⁴*But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven...*

Jesus taught his footstep followers how to pray:

Matthew 6:8-9: (NASB) ⁸*So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. ⁹Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

How many times have we heard this prayer and never realized that instead of praying to our “Almighty God,” suddenly Jesus says, *Our Father*, indicating that we are sons! This is a complete paradigm shift that we are even able to call Him *our Father*.

After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, he first speaks to Mary:

John 20:16-18: (NASB) ¹⁶*Jesus said to her, Mary! She turned and said to him in Hebrew, Rabboni! (which means, Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and **your** Father, and my God and **your** God. ¹⁸Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her.*

Sonship breaks wide open because Jesus was raised from the dead! Acquittal is now in place because the payment for Adam has been made. This changes everything about justification. Not since Adam had sonship been available.

New Testament justification by faith is specifically based on God’s call, our acceptance of that call and the application of Jesus’ ransom to us. Remember, the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus provide *actual* acquittal for our sins!



Do all Christians go to heaven because of the acquittal?



No. Only TRUE Christians go to heaven. There is a difference we will discuss next.

God’s grace is astounding! The opportunity to be elevated to being His sons is hard to even comprehend.

**Justification is very different in the New Testament.
How does this all tie in with salvation?**

Salvation is the big message of the New Testament. Because it is a message that is for Jesus’ followers as well as the whole world, we will focus on how it applies to Jesus’ disciples. In Christianity, this is another topic of debate. Let’s uncover where justification fits within salvation.



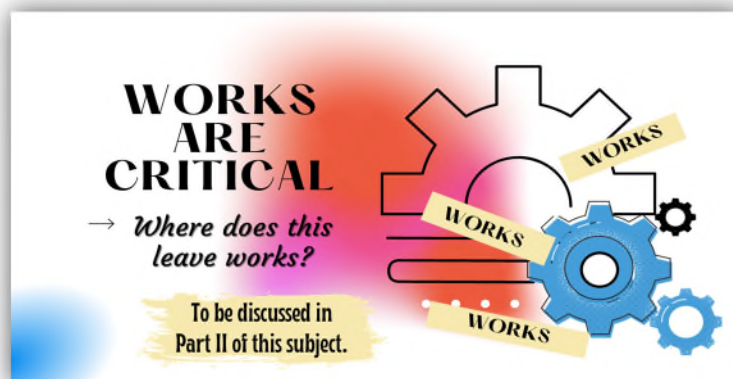
**1108:
What Three Steps Will Get
Us to Heaven? (Part I)**



Martin Luther Story, Part IV

- Luther struggled for a long time trying to make himself acceptable to God, but he came to realize his inability to do anything or offer anything that could be acceptable to the Creator of the Universe. This struggle tormented him greatly until, in the course of time, he became a Professor of Theology and was allowed to study the Bible for himself. Then came that lightbulb moment. He came across the phrase: The just shall live by faith. What an eye-opener that was! As Luther continued to study the Bible, he eventually came to understand justification by faith just as we know it today. Luther's protest was that indulgences should not exist. His argument was that they did not and could not justify anyone before God. Within weeks, copies of what he nailed to the door were all over Europe. The reformation had begun, and its banner cry was: The just shall live by faith.*

Here we can see how it all ties in. These indulgences were all works. The church said that if someone paid enough money, he could stand righteous before God and be released from purgatory after death. The teaching was that when people died in a state of grace, they went to purgatory to work out their punishments for various sins. Once complete, they were released to heaven. The paying of indulgences released people from purgatory immediately upon dying. Luther disagreed with this monetary release from purgatory, a place he pointed out is never mentioned in the Bible. He said that justification came through *faith*, not by the doing of works like paying for indulgences.



Salvation: The BIG PICTURE of the entire Bible. Humanity lost harmony with God by Adam's disobedience. The Bible is about reconciling all of mankind back to God - Paradise Lost/Paradise Found, as well as Sonship Lost/Sonship Found.

Justification: We already said justification is being made righteous. It is either reckoned (counted as though righteous), or actually acquitted - making right an individual who was previously wrong.

The APPLICATION of the ransom price of Jesus allows for the acquittal type of justification - a complete justification. We are *released* from the sin of Adam. In the Old Testament, the Law provided reckoned justification by following the Law's precepts and animal sacrifices for sins. Prior to the Law, a handful of individuals were able to have a relationship with God because of their extreme faith.



People tend to use the thought of a personal salvation interchangeably with justification. Justification is part of personal salvation. We are going to see exactly how that fits together. Remember, justification is an event, not a process. Salvation is a process. Justification is the key event within the salvation process.

What causes salvation?

1. Some say, *faith* is the cause of salvation; *works* are the evidence of it.
2. Others say, faith *receives* the gift of salvation rather than being the cause.
3. The Bible says, for salvation to be engaged in this age of the gospel (from the time of Jesus until now), four things had to happen to set the stage. The fifth thing is the engagement of salvation.



First, God's salvation plan had to be in place:

1 Peter 1:20: (NASB) *For he was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.*

This is a big point! God foreknew the direction sin would take as He was developing this world. He knew that sin would be tried by His creation and the best thing to help man learn the evilness and futility of sin would be to let it develop. He also knew that in time He would need to cut it off. He had a specific plan in place long before sin happened. The fall of man into sin was not something that went awry in God's plan; it was expected! He put the fix in place so that a lesson for eternity could be learned and man could be brought back into harmony with God. This is what salvation really is.



Second, Jesus had to do his part:

Philippians 2:8-9: (NASB) *⁸Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,*

Jesus had to become the man Christ Jesus. He had to become obedient to the point of death, even by crucifixion. God highly exalted Jesus for this obedience. Jesus' death was the payment that had to be made so that acquittal justification could be put in place to bring man back to a standing with the Father. Jesus had to do his part and he did.



Third, God has to call out followers of Jesus:

John 6:44: (NASB) *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Here is where personal salvation comes alive. This states *no one comes to Jesus for sonship unless the Father...draws him*. This indicates a calling from the Father inviting us to follow in Jesus' footsteps. God is picking and choosing those who will be able to manage the call of great difficulty and great sacrifice. The call has to come from God to follow Jesus.



Fourth, the prospective followers must, by faith, answer that call:

Luke 9:23-24: (NASB) ²³*And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it.*

It is not just good enough for God to call us; that is just a beginning process. We are working up to the point of actual justification. There has to be an answer to that call. We have to be willing to *take up our cross daily* and say that this is the way we will live. The daily sacrifice of our wills to do the will of God is not easy! Not on Sundays and Wednesdays, but every day of our lives.



Fifth, God must accept that answer - His acceptance is salvation in action. Here is the event where justification takes place:

1 John 3:2: (KJV) *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

God calls and we answer the call; at this point, God accepts our willingness to sacrifice our will to His. He agrees to work with us and provide a measure of the holy spirit (His power and influence) to help us live our life. This is the event of justification, and we become justified at this point. God calls, we answer, then God has to say, "Yes." When He accepts our response to His call, He applies Jesus' ransom sacrifice to our personal, individual life.

Romans 12:1-2 talks about being a living sacrifice that is acceptable to God. We will develop this further in Part II.

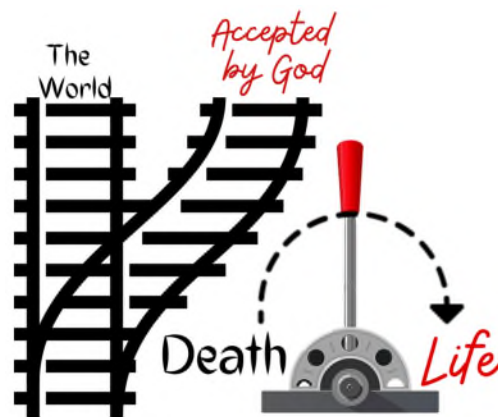


Remember when we said there are four questions whose answers vary by Christian denomination?

1. Is justification an event or a process? We said it was an event.
2. Is justification put into effect by divine action alone, by divine and human action together or by human action alone? By divine action. It is God's acceptance of our willingness to walk in Jesus' footsteps.



Here is an analogy to consider: A railroad track has a switch to change which track a train travels on, which changes its destination. As a result of Adam's sin, the default track that each human is on is sinful and leads to death. There is no hope for eternal life without changing tracks. In His foresight and mercy, God designed each and every human track to have one switch built into it. This switch is the gracious and justice-satisfying merit of Jesus' death and resurrection. It was installed when Jesus died and became operational when he was raised. In this present age, the switch is only engaged when an individual is called by God to follow Jesus. We answer the call and God accepts us and flips the switch, changing our destination from death to life. We are secure on this new track and can only be derailed by our own blatant disobedience. For the rest of the world, they stay on the original track of sin and death until their resurrection.



Questions that separate Christian denominations on this topic that will be discussed in Part II:

3. Can justification be lost? Yes, this is where works will come into play.
4. What is the relationship between justification and sanctification, the process whereby sinners become righteous and are enabled by the holy spirit to live lives pleasing to God?

How do we know what New Testament justification consists of?

It makes sense to give Jesus' followers the same "tools" to overcome a sinful world as he had:

Matthew 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on him, ¹⁷and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.



The *spirit of God descended like a dove* on Jesus at his baptism. After that, he went into the wilderness for 40 days and had the spirit of God working in him to help prepare him for his ministry. God's influence was working with him and through him. That is the tool Jesus was given to be able to do the will of the Father. That is the tool that enabled him to perform miracles and gave him the gift of teaching with such clarity. Jesus assured his followers that they also would have appropriate help.

Justification means the ransom would have been applied to them and they, like him, were now on trial for life.



Here is what Jesus told his followers right before his death:

John 14:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, that he may be with you forever; ¹⁷that is the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him or know him, but you know him because he abides with you and will be in you.

He tells us this just like he told his disciples on that night. *The spirit of truth*, the same power and influence of God, is given to Jesus' followers. This is when the "switch" gets flipped! God accepts our sacrifice, as shown by granting us a measure of His holy spirit.

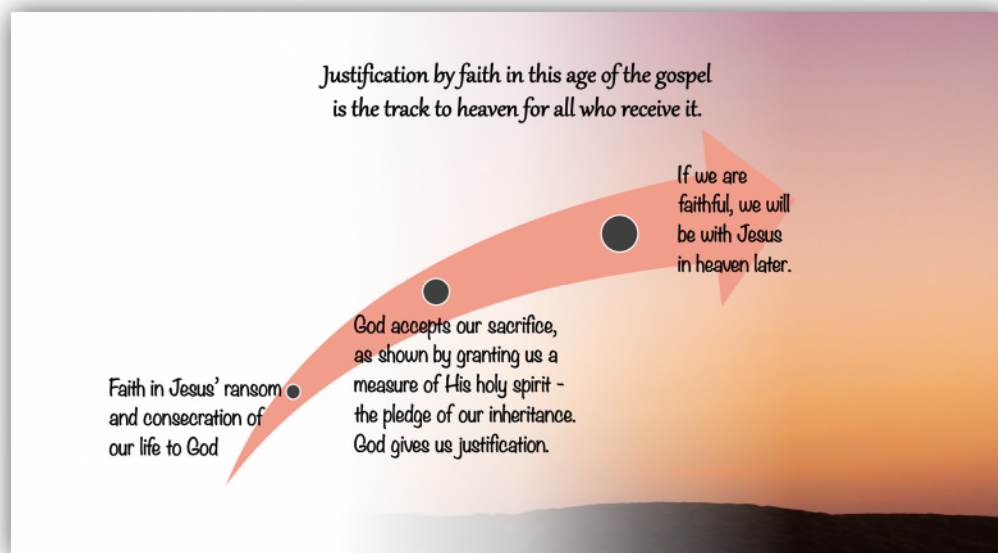
Where does this justification by faith lead? To the gift of the spirit which seals the justified state:

Ephesians 1:13-14: (WEY) ¹³And in him you Gentiles also, after listening to the Message of the truth, the Good News of your salvation - having believed in him - were sealed with the promised holy spirit; ¹⁴that spirit being a pledge and foretaste of our inheritance, in anticipation of its full redemption - the inheritance which he has purchased to be specially his for the extolling of His glory.

Here we see the depth of what happens, and the power and the mercy and the grace of God in this whole plan for us. No other influence in heaven or earth can take us off this path except ourselves! This spirit is the pledge and foretaste of our inheritance. Remember when Jesus said he goes to prepare a place for us? This was the first time a place in heaven was offered to any human being. The gift of the spirit is a pledge where if we are faithful, we get to be with Jesus later. This is justification. When we ask if it is faith or works that gets us to heaven, the answer is yes! We focused specifically on faith in Part I.

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

We are something new! This did not happen in the Old Testament; it did not happen with John the Baptist. This only happened after Jesus was crucified and raised. Only after Jesus ascended into heaven (and after Pentecost) could the spirit come to the true followers of Christ. It is a beautiful picture.





New Testament justification is from God and *comes to us by faith*. It is an actual acquittal from sin and therefore far beyond the reckoned righteousness of the Old Testament. This justification by faith in this age of the gospel is the track to heaven for all who receive it. What is this faith that grants us justification? It is faith in the ransom of Jesus Christ that allows us to be sons in harmony with our Father's will and His way.

This subject has a lot of details. We see the difference between the Old Testament justification and the New Testament arrangement. It is easier to see what is required of the call and God's acceptance when we choose to be part of it. We can see that justification really is about faith, but it does not mean it is not about works, too! Works are such a massive part of this - do not forget to come back for Part II. We will put this together and define what a real, true Christian life actually looks like, justified by faith AND by works.

*So, is it faith or works that gets us to heaven?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on December 14, 2020
Ep. 1156: Is It Faith or Works That Gets Us to Heaven? (Part II)

Bonus Material and Study Questions

If fear is cultivated it will become stronger; if faith is cultivated it will achieve mastery. — John Paul Jones

Habakkuk 2:2-4: (KJV) ²And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. ³For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. ⁴Behold, his soul which is lifted up (referring to the Chaldeans of that time and represents unbelievers in general) is not upright in him: but the **just <6662>** shall live by his faith.

Verse 4 is referenced three times in the New Testament:

Romans 1:16-17: (KJV) ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Galatians 3:10-11: (KJV) ¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.



Hebrews 10:38-39: (KJV) ³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ³⁹But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Various Scriptures regarding justification by faith:

Romans 8:31-35: (NASB) ³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not spare His own son, but delivered him over for us all, how will He not also with him freely give us all things? ³³Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Romans 5:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:6-13: (NASB) ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. ⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ¹³All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Hebrews 11:17-19: (NASB) ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸it was he to whom it was said, in Isaac your descendants shall be called. ¹⁹He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Matthew 12:50: (KJV) For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

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to **22828** to get started.



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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1155: Is It Faith or Works That Gets Us to Heaven? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1155-faith-works/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What are the three ways the New Testament talks about justification? (See Romans 5:1, 8:33, James 2:24) How can they all be true? (James 2:24 discussed in Part II.)
2. How does the Old Testament define justification? Who are the “just” in the Old Testament? What privileges with God did this give them? How are Abram’s, Job’s and Noah’s circumstances different from Daniel’s? (See Genesis 6:9, 15:3-6, Ezekiel 14:14, Habakkuk 2:2-4)
3. What kind of justification did the Law offer Israel? Why were the sacrifices repeated year after year? How did this secure Israel’s relationship with God? (Hebrews 10:1-4)
4. How is justification explained in the New Testament? (See Romans 3:30, 4:5, 25, 5:1, 8-11, 18:33) What is required for this justification to happen? This justification is not “reckoned” but “acquits” us of what? Why? (See Romans 3:20, 24-28, Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 John 2:1-2)
5. Does justification have different outcomes in the Old and New Testaments? What are the similarities and the two main differences? (See Matthew 5:44-45, 6:8-9, Luke 3:38, John 14:1-3, 20:16-18, Hebrews 3:1-2, 5-6, 11:39-40, James 2:23)
6. Was Moses considered a son of God? What was Moses’ house called? What is Jesus’ house called? What is our inheritance in Jesus? How did the relationship between God and believers change after Jesus’ sacrifice? (Luke 3:38, James 2:23, Hebrews 3:1-2, 5-6, Matthew 5:44-45, 6:8-9, John 20:16-18)
7. What is the relationship between justification and salvation? (CQ Rewind Show Notes) What four steps are required before salvation can take place? What is the fifth step? (See 1 Peter 1:20, Philippians 2:8-9, John 6:44, 1 John 3:2)
8. Why do we need the same “tool” that Jesus was given after his baptism? Where does justification by God, through Jesus, lead? If this is justification by faith, in what do we need to have faith? (Matthew 3:16-17, John 14:16-17, Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 5:17)
9. Who do the Scriptures teach goes to heaven? Do they get there through their faith or by their works? What is necessary on our part for our personal salvation?