

I. What is Justification?

A. Definition of Justification:

1. Justification is that instantaneous act of God whereby, as a gift of His grace, He imputes to a believing sinner the full and perfect righteousness of Christ through faith alone and legally declares him perfectly righteous in His sight, forgiving the sinner of all unrighteousness and thus delivering him from all condemnation.
2. Justification is a legal declaration. We are legally declared to be righteous and therefore right with God. This is not an impartation or infusion of righteousness. It is an imputation, it describes what God declares about true believers and not what He does to change believers. Justification itself effects no change in the sinner's nature or character. It is a change of status before God and not a gradual transformation that takes place within us as we believe.

B. God Promised it Beforehand in the Law and Prophets - The Old Testament points toward the time when God would save his people from their sin

1. Through shadows and figures (e.g., animal sacrifices) - He 10:1-4
 - a) The need for animal sacrifices showed that man's perfect obedience was inadequate
 - b) animal sacrifices themselves were not adequate, but a shadow
2. Through prophetic utterances -
 - a) Genesis 15:6; that Abraham's faith was reckoned for righteousness
 - b) Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12; that suffering Servant would bear our iniquities
 - c) Habakkuk 2:4; that the just would live by faith

II. The Source of our Justification: We are justified by God's grace, his unmerited favor toward us. (3:24a)

- A. "righteousness of God" = "righteousness from God"
- B. The righteousness we desperately need comes from outside of us,
- C. It is a gift and not something we achieve or accomplish

"No other place offers this. Outside of the gospel, we must develop a righteousness, and offer it to God, and say (hopefully and anxiously): Accept me. The gospel says that God has developed a perfect righteousness, and he offers it to us, and by it we are accepted. This is the uniqueness of the Christian gospel; and it reverses what every other religion and worldview, and even every human heart, believes." (Keller)

III. The Basis of Justification: We are justified through the cross of Christ (3:24b – 25)

- A. God's Redemption: Jesus has bought us out of slavery to sin and death with the ransom-price of his own blood– He is our kinsman- redeemer.
 1. Redemption is the purchasing of the sinner and then setting him free.
 2. Redemption has the idea of buying back something, and involves cost. However, God pays the cost and so we are justified freely.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. ”

- B. The Double Transfer - Jesus is the perfect sacrifice who turns away the righteous wrath of God from us and our sin (3:25)

1 Thessalonians 1:10 “... whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. ”

1. Expiation
 - a) refers to the cleansing of sin and removal of sin's guilt by the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross and applied by the Spirit to those who trust in Him
 - b) it is the act that results in the change of God's disposition toward us.
 - c) The result of Christ's work of expiation is propitiation
2. Propitiation
 - a) the act of gaining or regaining the favor or goodwill of someone or something
 - b) Propitiation is satisfying God's holy law by meeting its just demands so that God can freely forgive those who come to Christ

1 Timothy 2:5-6” For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Hebrews 10:10 “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

- c) Propitiation is also the same word used for the mercy seat, the lid that covered the ark of the covenant, upon which sacrificial blood was sprinkled as an atonement for sin. Inside the ark of the covenant were the evidence of man's great sin: the tablets of law; the manna received ungratefully; the budded rod of Aaron, showing man's rejection of God's leadership. Up over the ark of the covenant were the symbols of the holy presence of the enthroned God in the beautiful gold cherubim. In between the two stood the mercy seat, and as sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement (*Leviticus 16*), God's wrath was averted because a substitute had been slain on behalf of sinners coming by faith.
- C. God's Demonstration: Jesus' death demonstrates the justice of God in passing over sins (3:25)
 1. God, in His forbearance, had passed over the sins of those Old Testament saints who trusted in the coming Messiah. At the cross, those sins were no longer passed over, they were paid for.
 2. The work of Jesus on the cross freed God from the charge that He passed over sin committed before the cross lightly. They were passed over for a time, but they were finally paid for.

God does not set his justice aside; he turns it onto himself. The cross does not represent a compromise between God's wrath and his love; it does not satisfy each halfway. Rather, it satisfies each fully and in the very same action. On the cross, the wrath and love of God were both vindicated, both demonstrated, and both expressed perfectly. They both shine out, and are utterly fulfilled. The cross is a demonstration both of God's justice, and of his justifying love. (Keller)

IV. The Means of Justification: We are justified by faith in the cross of Christ by the grace of God (3:22, 25-26)

- A. We are saved *through* faith, not *because* of faith
- B. The value of faith is always in the *object* of faith, not the faith itself.
 - 1. Righteousness receiving faith has one object: Christ.

It is not faith that saves; it is not even faith in God that saves: it is faith in Jesus Christ. (Keller)

- 2. And not just faith in Christ as a man but His work on the cross.

1 Corinthians 2:2 "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

- C. It is not by works of righteousness that we do

Titus 3:4-7 "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. "

- D. It is a gift, freely given – faith is not a work, it is given to us by God in regeneration

Philippians 1:29 "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake..."

V. The Implications of Justification—How Should We Respond to Having a Righteous Status? (v.27-31)

- A. We do not Boast

- 1. Justification by faith alone takes away all grounds for boasting about
 - a) keeping the Law
 - b) religious rituals or ceremonies
 - c) national or cultural superiority

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

- 2. Boasting and believing are opposites; you can't do both.

Philippians 3:8-9 "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith."

Praising, not boasting, is the characteristic activity of justified believers, and will be throughout eternity. (Stott)

- B. We uphold the Law - Justification by faith alone does not nullify the Law, but rather establishes it.
 - 1. The gospel frees us to uphold the law.

2. Whether it was the Law of Moses under the Old Covenant, or the will of Christ under the New Covenant, God calls for obedience!

Matthew 28:20 “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Titus 2:11–12 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”

3. The gospel believer, who is saved apart from the law, understands and loves the law more than someone who is seeking to be saved by it.

Only the gospel allows us to recognize and uphold the perfect standards of the law, because we know that the law matters enough to God for it to bring death; but we also know that it no longer means our death. (Keller)

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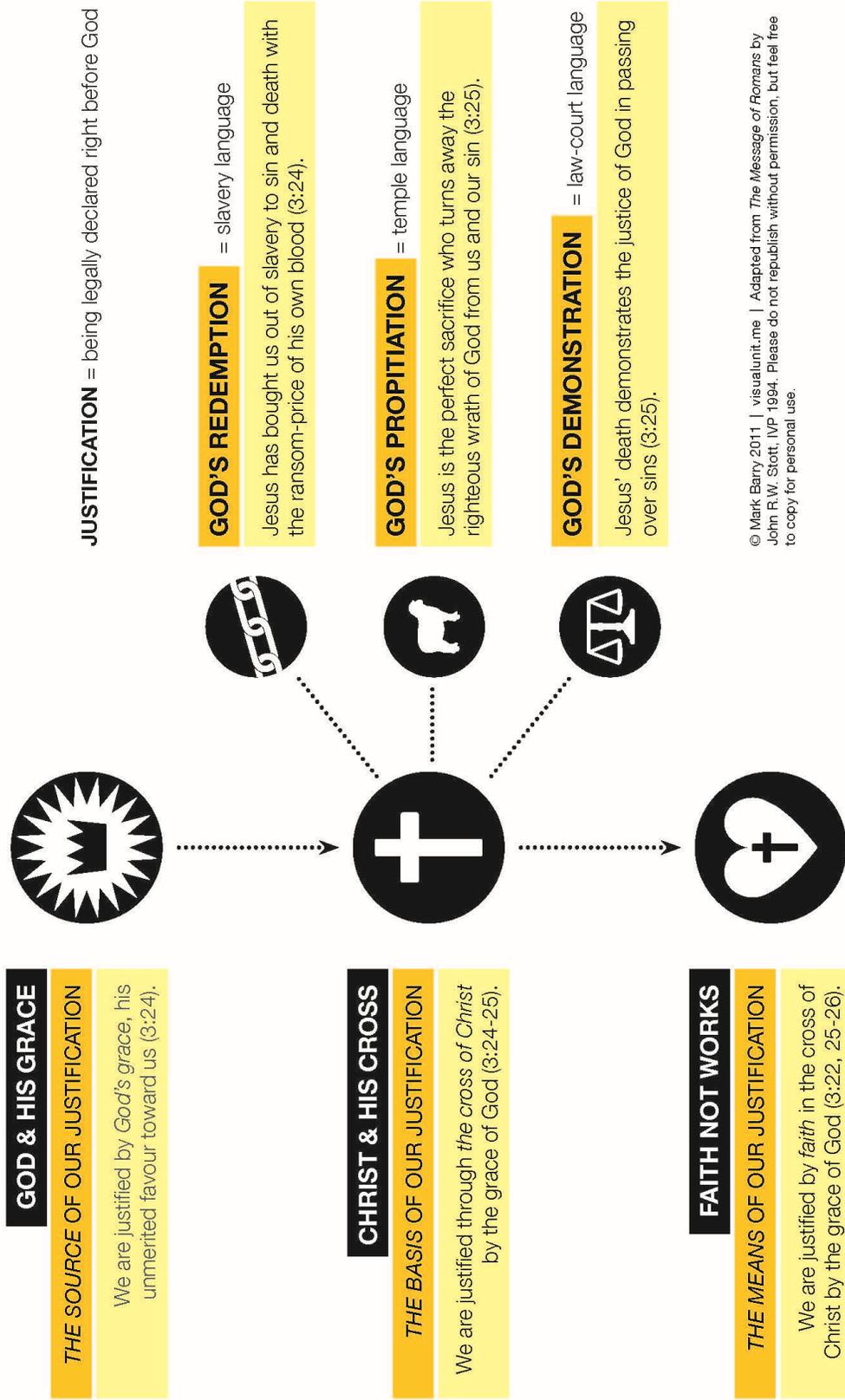
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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ROMANS 3:21-26



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