

When Justification Started

I. Justification - the righteousness that comes to us

A. His righteousness

"But now the righteousness from God has been manifested apart from the law...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift." (3:21,24)

B. While we are still ungodly

"Coming into a relationship with God doesn't depend on me being godly. God "justifies the ungodly" (v.5) this is what defines God." (TCH)

The essential message of the gospel is not working my way up to God. He has come down to me through Christ.

II. Justification by faith is not a new doctrine

A. Two historic examples of righteousness apart from works

Abraham the Father of All

God came to him when he was not even seeking. He had great faith but lied about Sarah to protect himself, and used human means (with Hagar, Sarah's bondservant) to produce God's promised child.

David the Greatest King

Was a man after God's own heart, yet committed adultery and conspired to commit murder.

III. Justification by Faith has always been the only way of salvation

A. Not justified by works

*"If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. What does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God and it was **counted** to him as righteousness.'" (v.4,)*

1. Righteousness is counted (credited) to us

Proof from scripture

Quoting scripture, Gen 15:6, which was *"acknowledged to be final court of appeal."* (Stott 124)

Credited -to count as

Accounting term -to put something in someone's account that wasn't there before.
"God took Christ's righteousness and wrote it in Abraham's ledger. The only way anyone is saved is by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to our account." (Boice, 435)

Faith does not equal obedience

Paul's logic: If Abraham was saved by his works, he could boast.

But that would make Abraham the author of his salvation. It's ludicrous -how can the unrighteous, presume to establish their own righteousness before God?

Faith is not the same as faithfulness

If the crediting of righteousness is based on Abraham's faithfulness, then it would be a work.

It would mean Abraham was meriting or deserving of God's favor – it's no longer a free gift.

Faith is not a substitute for righteousness

Faith is the means or the channel by which we are declared righteous.

"If God counted Abraham as being righteous, it must have been on the basis of a true righteousness – either his or someone else's." (Boice,434)

What does faith counted as righteousness mean?

*"God **treated** Abraham as though he was living a righteous life. His faith is not righteousness; but God counted it as if it were." (Keller, 96) "The crediting of Abraham's faith as righteousness means 'to account him a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him.'" (Moo, 262)*

2. Sin is not counted against us

*"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not **count** his sin." (v.7, 8 quoting Ps 32)*

Not sinless

David is not saying a man is blessed because he does not sin. He acknowledges his sinfulness yet he is blessed because he knows he is forgiven. God will not count his sins against him.

At the same time both righteous and sinful

Marin Luther said that "Christians are 'simul Justus et peccator.' It is possible to be loved and accepted by God while we ourselves are sinful and imperfect." (Keller, 97)

Covered

Our sins are covered by Jesus who was stretched out on the cross. He was *"delivered up for our sins and raised for our justification."* (v.25) Your sins no longer condemn you or change your status before God. He treats you as though you are righteous.

Double transaction

"Justification involves a double counting, crediting, or reckoning. On the one hand, negatively, God will never count our sins against us. On the other hand, positively God credits our account with righteousness, as a free gift, by faith, altogether apart from our works." (Stott, 127)

B. Not justified by circumcision

Circumcision came after justification

"Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." (v. 10)

It makes no difference

The circumcised and uncircumcised are both children of Abraham by faith. He's the father of all who *believe*.

C. Not justified by the law

History: the promise came before the law

"The law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God...For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (Gal 3:8)

Logic: Law and Grace - two different categories

Law

'you shall'

requires obedience

transgression brings wrath

Grace

'I will'

requires faith

belief brings blessing

"If those who live by the law are heirs, that is, if the inheritance depends on our obedience, then faith has no value and the promise is worthless."(Stott, 131)

The promise is fulfilled in Christ

The promise given to Abraham (that he would be the father of many nations, and through him all the families on earth would be blessed) is fulfilled in Christ. He is the promised offspring or Seed who *"would inherit the world."* (v.13)

IV. What does saving faith look like?

A. Hindrances to Faith

1. The Promises of God are too staggering

Almost unbelievable – too good to be true

God comes to an unknown, old, childless nomad and promises to give him an inheritance and make him the father of many nations.

What promises seem too big for us to believe?

I'm a child of God, a co-heir with Jesus, transformed by God who is restoring and redeeming creation, which includes me. I am promised eternal, resurrected life where there will be no more sorrow, tears or pain. Every circumstance of life will be worked out by God for my good.

2. Human impossibility

Beyond human hope

God backed Sarah and Abraham into a humanly impossible corner. They were promised a future descendent would be a blessing to the whole world when they were beyond childbearing years. Then Abraham was asked to sacrifice the child from whom the promised savior would come; yet it says he did not waver in unbelief. Why?

Believing against impossibility

This isn't blind faith, Abraham faced the fact that his body as good as dead. But he *"didn't let humanly impossible facts control him, he let the fact of God's promise control him."* (TCH)

What human impossibilities require our trust?

A savior was born of a virgin. Death has been defeated. Jesus walked out of grave in a resurrected body. What's true of Him is true of us. The very Spirit of God has been given to us as a guarantee of our eternal inheritance. Are we like Abraham *"fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised?"* (v. 21)

B. The heart of faith

1. The object of our faith

Is the God who speaks things into existence: *"He gives life to the dead and calls into being that which doesn't exist."* (v.17)

2. Believe God

"Saving faith is not believing that God is there. Further, it is not believing in a God who saves. It is believing God when he promises a way of salvation by grace." (Keller, 98)

3. A Trust transfer

"To say saving faith is a 'trust transfer' is consciously to see where your trust is, to remove your hopes and trust from those things, and to place them on God as Savior in particular." (Keller, 98)

C. The Hope of Faith

1. The objective of faith

What does faith produce?

"The gospel is radically God centered. Abraham didn't believe in God because he thought it would promote his power, comfort, wealth, health or pleasure. As he was strengthened in faith, the outcome was to 'give glory to God.'(v. 20) (TCH)

2. Worship

"When we consider that God came to us while we were still ungodly, helpless rebels and out of His great love for us did everything necessary to draw us to him, secure our salvation, and make us stand before Him; vindicated with a clean conscience at no cost to us, but at the cost of His beloved son, the reflexive response is gratitude and worship." (TCH)

Resources

Boice, James M. *Romans, Volume 1, Justification by Faith*. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, MI. 1991.

Hamilton, Ted. Sermon. *Living Against All Hope*. April 22, 2007.

Keller, Timothy. *Romans 1-7 For You*. The Good Book Company. 2014.

Stott, John. *Romans: God's Good News for the World*. Intervarsity Pres, UK, 1994