

**“JUSTIFICATION”-- DEATH SENTENCE COMMUTED**  
**Rom.5:1,2**  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Justification is one of the grandest, and perhaps one of the most talked about, themes of scripture.
  - a. The verb, “justified,” is from the Gr. (DIKAI00, dik-ah-yo-o) term which is mostly used in the passive voice, suggestive that such is a state decreed on behalf of man: to declare to be righteous; to pronounce righteous by God concerning men, who are declared to be righteous before him on certain conditions laid down by him. Vine, II, 285.
  - b. In Rom.5;1, “being justified” is in the aorist, or point, tense, indicating the definite time at which each person, upon the exercise of faith, was justified. Vine, II, 285. See Rom.6:17,18.
2. The theme of justification is grossly misunderstood and often times perverted by many professed Bible believers.
  - a. Justification is not, as many believe and preach, a “righteousness” of Jesus Christ that is “imputed” to the sinner, or “infused” in him, or “transferred” to him, so that the Lord’s own personal perfect righteousness becomes the sinners, intrinsically and subjectively.
  - b. Justification of the sinner does not effect some supernatural transformation of one’s basic nature.
3. Justification is a **legal declaration** that one’s sins are no longer held against him.
  - a. His spiritual condition is stamped, “Pardoned.”
  - b. The term is not the equivalent of “not guilty”, or “never having been guilty,” for the sinner is guilty, Rom.3:23; Gal.3:22.
  - c. Rather, the sense is this: “Even though you are guilty, the sentence (eternal death) has been commuted!” You’re acquitted.
4. One of the richest N.T. passages dealing with the theme of justification is set forth by the Apostle Paul in his Roman letter in Ch.5:1,2.
5. There are at least seven (7) crucial truths, either stated or necessarily implied, in Rom.5:1,2 that we shall consider and develop in this study of “Justification” – Death Sentence Commuted.

**II. DISCUSSION**

**A. FIRST NOTICE THE FACT OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT IMPLIED IN OUR TEXT.**

1. The term “justification” is from the Gr. term (DIKAIOSIS, dik-ah-yo-sis) which “denotes the act of acquittal...used twice in the Epistle of Romans (4:25; 5:18), and these alone in the N.T., signifying the establishment of a person as just by acquittal from guilt” Vine, II, 284. Or acquittal in the sense of “even though guilty, the sentence of death is commuted.”
2. Therefore, we observe that justification or acquittal from guilt of which Rom.5:1 speaks implies criminal activity or criminal conduct, or, as we are required to identify it in biblical parlance, conversation or discourse, SIN – a violation of law – God’s law (Rom.5:13; 1Jno.3:4), of which both Jew and Gentile are guilty (Rom.3:19-23; Gal.3:22), and in need of forgiveness.
3. To sin is to be guilty of CAPITAL crime.
  - a. Sin is so heinous, so very antagonistic to the very nature of God and his law, that it is worthy of death, which is its wages, Rom.6:23. Cf. Gen.2:17; Eph.2:1; Col.3:5,6; 2Th.1:6-10.
  - b. The seriousness of sin is seen in the fact that from the moment of the commission of sin in one’s life, that one is on the way to the death chamber!
  - c. And unless there is a plan of means of pardon offered by the Judge of all the earth (who is God Almighty, Gen.18:25; Psa.58:11; 94:1,2), whereby divine justice is satisfied, that execution assuredly will be carried out.
  - d. That divine, righteous execution is “Hell,” eternal punishment in hell!

**B. FORTUNATELY, OUR TEXT REVEALS NOT ONLY THAT THERE IS A DIVINE SOLUTION, BUT DECLARES THAT IT IS JESUS CHRIST, V.1.**

1. Take note of the term “therefore” in the opening phrase of V.1.
  - a. It has been said that when you see a “therefore” in a biblical text, then you need to determine what it is **there for**.
  - b. The word “therefore” in V.1 renders a conclusion drawn from previous promises in Ch.4:25, which were that Jesus our Lord who was raised up from the dead:
    - (1) “Was delivered for our offences,”

- (2) “and was raised again for our justification.”
  - c. In Rom.5:8-11 Paul again emphasizes the same fact.
- 2. The divine solution to the sin/death problem – the capital crime problem – lies in the redemptive or reconciliation work of Jesus Christ.
  - a. He, as a wholly righteous person – one without sin – functioning as a sin-offering for us – stepped into ***OUR*** place, paying the price and suffering the penalty for sin, the capital crime, that we might have the opportunity to have our death-sentence commuted!
  - b. Isa.53:10,11 expresses it in a perfectly marvelous and scriptural way.

**C. A THIRD CRUCIAL TRUTH TAUGHT IN OUR TEXT IS THAT THIS JUSTIFICATION IS UNMERITED, UNEARNED, SINCE IT IS BY GRACE.**

- 1. In V.2 Paul equates being “justified” (acquitted) with being in that realm call “this grace”: “Therefore being justified (V.1)...we have access by faith into ***this grace*** wherein we stand” (V.2).
- 2. “Grace” in this case is divine favor; the grace of God.
  - a. With reference to Divine favor or grace there is stress on its freeness, its spontaneous character, as in the case of God’s redemptive mercy.
  - b. In Rom.5:2, it speaks of “a state of grace”; that is, the effect of grace, the spiritual state of those who have experienced the exercise of God’s grace in the salvation process. Cf. 1Pet.5:12; 2Pet.3:18; 1Pet.1:2-4.
  - c. We do not and cannot merit God’s grace because we have marred ourselves with our own sins. Cf. Eph.2:1 (ASV): “...when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins.”
    - (1) God owes us nothing! There is no way we can make him indebted to us!
    - (2) There is no sacrifice or sin-offering of our own we can make to remove the death penalty for the capital offence of our sin.
- 3. Additionally, observe the fact that Jesus Christ is described as the one through whom and by whom our “access” into “this grace” (i.e., justification as an expression of God’s favor or grace) is provided: “We have peace with God ***through*** our Lord Jesus Christ: ***By whom*** also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...”

- a. “Access” is an interesting word from the Gr. term (PROSAGOGE, pros-ag-ogue-ay), literally meaning to “lead to”.
    - (1) “A leading or bringing into the presence of; it denotes access, with which is associated the thought of freedom to enter through the assistance or favor of another,” Vine, I, 21.
    - (2) “The act of bringing to; a moving to; access; approach to God,” Thayer, 544.
    - (3) It is only through our Lord Jesus Christ that one may be “introduced” to, or “led into,” this state of grace and justification.
    - (4) IN 1Pet.3:18 we have the verb form of the same Gr. term translated “bring” as used of Christ ***bringing*** us to God, (Vine, I, 152), where it means “to render one acceptable to God and assured of his grace,” Thayer, 543.
  - b. One thing is certain – taught throughout the N.T. – Jesus is our ***one and only*** access to God’s grace and justification by faith. Cf. Jno.14:6; Ac.4:12; Rom.3:24-26; Heb.9:14-17,22-28; 1Pet.3:18-22.
4. Being by grace, not of debt (Rom.3:23-4:8; 5:1,2), does not imply that God’s gift of grace is ***UNCONDITIONAL***, as clearly seen when we consider the next crucial truth taught in our text, which is: --

**D. THE “FAITH” FACTOR AS PAUL AND ALL N.T. WRITERS USE THE TERM “FAITH” WITH REFERENCE TO BEING JUSTIFIED.**

- 1. Twice in Rom.5:1,2 in both the KJV and ASV “faith” is emphasized as the necessary ***human*** response to the ***divine*** provision of justification or acquittal.
  - a. “Faith,” as some contend, is not merely “mental assent,” or perhaps, with slightly greater intensity, a “willingness to trust” the Lord.
  - b. Faith, in the biblical sense, has ***never*** been simply or merely a ***mental*** process separate and apart from faith acting in obedience to God’s commands or requirements in either the O.T. or N.T.
  - c. This is made obvious by any proper consideration of the inspired records found in Heb.11; Jas.2:14-26; 1Pet.1:22-25; 4:17; 2Th.1:6-10; Heb.5:8,9; Mt.7:21-27; Lk.6:46.

2. Moreover, Paul's use of the term "faith" or the expression "by faith" within the larger framework of the book of Romans as a whole explains his meaning of its use in Rom.5:1,2.
  - a. Like two guardian sentinels, at the beginning and the conclusion of the book of Romans, the phrase "obedience of faith" sets the tone of the document and explains what he means when he says something is obtained "by faith," Rom.1:5; 16:25,26.
  - b. This "obedience-of-faith" declaration is a divine affirmation that belief, or faith, or trust, is the *guiding principle*, the foundation principle, the underlying motive, the basis, for all subsequent acts of obedience to the Lord's commands whatever they be.
  - c. The "obedience of faith" is an obedience that results from faith; that is inseparably connected with true faith; neither the faith, nor the obedience is independent of the other in the matter of justification.
  - d. Prof. Robert Mounce, The New American Commentary, Romans, p.62 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman): "Faith is not intellectual assent to a series of propositions but surrender to the one who asks us to trust him. To surrender is to obey."
  - e. Thayer called it an "obedience rendered to faith" , p.513.
3. Paul brings the issue clearly into focus in Rom.6:16-18.
  - a. In V.16 he raises a pertinent question about service rendered and its results depending on whether it is obedience to the proper or the improper source.
    - (1) His necessary implication is that one is either a servant of sin or a servant of righteous.
    - (2) Then he affirms that the one leads to death, spiritual death; the other, unto justification or acquittal and life.
  - b. In Vv.17,18 he thanks God that though these Roman Christians had been in time past "servants of sin" and, of course, dead in sin (cf. Eph.2:1); they had subsequently "obeyed from the heart (i.e. with understanding and sincerity) that form (or pattern, model) of doctrine (i.e., the gospel of Christ) which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
    - (1) Thus confirming what he had taught in V.16.
    - (2) As to what Paul always "delivered" to sinners to turn them from sin to righteousness, or to deliver them from one master to another in their service, see 1Cor.15:1-3; 4:17; 2:1,2; Rom.15:15,16; Rom.1:1-5; Cf. Mk.16:15,16.

- c. From Rom.6:1-11 we learn that one is dead indeed unto sin and walking in newness of life with Jesus Christ when and only when one is by faith buried with Jesus in baptism, baptized into his death, and then raised from that watery grave.
- 4. From a collective consideration of these complementary texts, we learn the following truths.
  - a. The faith by which one is justified (acquitted) is an obedient faith
  - b. The formal justification or acquittal or having the death sentence commuted takes place with one is led by faith to “die to sin” (in repentance), and be buried with Christ (in baptism), thus being raised to a new existence in the Lord. Cf. 2Cor.5:17; Gal.5:6; 6:15.

**E. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IS THE NEXT CRUCIAL TRUTH FOUND IN OUR TEXT.**

- 1. That immediate effect is “peace with God,” V.1a.
- 2. Negatively, peace with God is the absence of hostility.
  - a. The Bible plainly declares that when one plunges himself into the darkness of sin, he becomes alienated from the absolutely holy God, Isa.59:1,2; Hab.1:3; Rom.5:10; Eph.2:1,2,12; Jas.4:4.
  - b. But when one is “justified,” i.e., when pardon occurs, acquittal is granted, and the death penalty is lifted, one’s spirit is thoroughly refreshed with the knowledge that he now is reconciled to the “God of peace” (Rom.15:33; 16:20). See 2Cor.5:17-20; Eph.2:11-22.
  - c. This is the main thrust of “peace” in this text.
- 3. But to have “peace with God” is more than just the cessation of hostility
  - a. There is the idea of well-being, contentment with self.
  - b. Phil.4:7 declares that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
  - c. This in turn leads one to do what is urged upon that one by Phil. 4:8,9 that guarantees the continued presence of the God of peace with that one.
  - d. Moreover, to be at peace with God furnishes considerable motivation for striving to be at peace even with those who do not embrace the faith of Jesus Christ, Rom.12:18; Heb.12:14.
  - e. It will certainly move us to do this with those of like precious faith in Christ, 1Th.5:13; 2Tim.2:22; Eph.4:1-3.

**F. STILL ANOTHER TRUTH SUGGESTED IN OUR TEXT IS OUR NEED TO STAND FAST IN THIS STATE OF GRACE.**

1. V.2 says, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope...”
2. The promises of accessing this grace, receiving a reprieve from the death-sentence and continued peace with God—if it is to be enjoyed eternally – are conditioned upon our standing firm in our hope.
3. Grammatically, the verb “stand” (HISTEMI, his-tay-mee) suggests the idea of a sustained position.
  - a. Thayer gives it this flavor, “to persist, continue, persevere,” 1Pet.5:12.
  - b. Other passages cited by Paul regarding those who “stand” in the gospel is this: salvation is theirs “if” they “hold fast” the message preached; otherwise, they have believed “in vain,” 1Cor.15:1,2; Cf. Rom.11:20; Eph.6:11,13,14; Col.1:21-23; 4:12; See also 1Pet.5:12.
4. The doctrine that one who has once accessed “grace” can never lose that relationship with God is absolutely false, Ac.13:43; 1Cor.9:27; Gal.5:4; Heb.12:14,15; 2Pet.2:20,21.

**G. FINALLY, THERE IS THE ULTIMATE HOPE MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT.**

1. V.2b: “...and (we) rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” – the ultimate end of our faith. Cf. Rom.8:16-18; 2Cor.4:16-18; Col.3:1-4; 1Pet.1:3-5,9; 2Pet.1:10,11.
2. This aspect of the sacred promise represents a summation of all the wonderful blessings that are to be received at the final consummation of God’s great plan of human redemption.
3. This ultimate blessing is a promise for which the faithful hope and patiently wait, Tit.1:2; 1Jno.2:24,25; Mk.10:29,30; Rom.8:24,25; 1Jno.5:11,12,20; Jno.17:3; Mt.25:46; 2Th.1:6-10.

**III. CONCLUSION**

1. In this great passage on the theme of justification we have noticed seven crucial truths concerning the subject, the last of which is the ultimate hope of the justified one: hope of the glory of God in the world to come.

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