

## HOW THEN CAN WE BE SAVED?

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- Mankind's future is not good if we are to believe what the Bible says.
- **Isaiah 64:6** "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."
- This is part of a prayer of lament to God, confessing that even the works that most people would consider good (or righteous) were like a filthy garment in the eyes of God.
- We are born sinners. We are born into sin.
- **Romans 3:10** "...as it is written, 'there is none righteous, not even one.'"
- We are born with minds, wills, emotions against God.
- **Genesis 6:5** "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
- We are dead to all things that pertain to God.
- **1 Corinthians 2:14** "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."
- We live according to our darkened minds and personal lusts.
- **1 Corinthians 3:19-20** "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the One who catches the wise in their craftiness'; and again, 'the Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.'"
- Since man has no hope without God, just like the Philippians jailer asked in **Acts 16:30** "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- What did Paul and Silas tell the jailer? **Acts 16:31-32** "They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house."
- Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.
- "What was meant by faith in Jesus as Lord they proceeded to make plain to the whole household, presenting the gospel to them in terms which they could readily grasp."<sup>89</sup>
- Paul and Silas took time and care to make sure that the Philippian jailer and his household knew the truth, believed the truth, and then applied the truth to their own hearts and minds.

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<sup>89</sup> FF Bruce, *Acts*, NICNT, notes on verses 31-32

- What was the outcome of this encounter? **Acts 16:33-34** “And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.”
- All who were in the household who could believe, apparently believed. There was an immediate baptizing which took place after believing and then came the great rejoicing.

For the next several months, we are going to discuss what it means to believe in the Lord Jesus. Why does believing in Him save us? What did Jesus do to save us? What are the outward marks of a true inward conversion?

## IT IS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES

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- Since it has been proven from the Scriptures that man is incapable and completely unable to come to his own senses about his own sinfulness and need for a Savior, there must be an outside source which acts upon him.
- How can we, being totally depraved and full of sin, become right or justified by a holy God?
- “Humanity has a twofold problem as a result of sin and the fall. On the one hand, there is a basic corruption of human nature; our moral character has been polluted through sin. This aspect of the curse is nullified by regeneration, which reverses the direction and general tendencies of human nature. The other problem remains, however: our guilt or liability to punishment for having failed to fulfill God’s expectations. It is to this problem that justification relates. **Justification is God’s action pronouncing sinners righteous in his sight**”<sup>90</sup>
- The question is how...*how can a holy God justify guilty sinners without their payment for their sin?*
- Justification and righteousness go hand in hand. While closely related, they are not completely the same in their meaning and application.
- To the original readers of the Greek New Testament, these two words, righteousness and justification, come from the same root word. To be justified, then, simply means to be declared righteous in the sight of God.

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<sup>90</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (GR, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 883. Emphasis mine.

- “Justification is a restoration of the individual to a state of righteousness.”<sup>91</sup>
- “Then, in justification, God legally declares that we are no longer deemed guilty under the divine law but are forgiven and counted righteous in God’s sight.”<sup>92</sup>
- God, not man, gives the answer to mankind’s most pressing question, *what must I do to be saved.*
- Several important facts about justification are to be noted<sup>93</sup>:
  - Justification comes apart from the law; that is, we cannot earn justification through rule-keeping or our own good works.
  - Justification is made possible in the sacrificial death of Christ; it is based on the shed blood of Christ.
  - Justification is the free and gracious gift of God bestowed on those who receive by faith the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
  - Justification demonstrates the righteousness of God.
- What happens then to the one who puts their faith in Jesus? Like Peter told the jailer and his household to do in Acts 16.<sup>94</sup>
  - The remission of the penalty of sin, which was death (Romans 3:23; 8:1; 1 Peter 2:24).
  - The restoration to God’s favor, which had been lost due to our sin (John 3:36). So, justification is more than an acquittal; it is full acceptance. We are now friends of God (James 2:23) and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).
  - The imputation of righteousness, which is the reckoning of Christ’s righteousness to our account (Romans 4:5–8). We are declared to be righteous *forensically* (legally) because “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- This is why Paul can confidently write in **Romans 8:33** “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies...”
- This really is the heart of the gospel message. It also led 16<sup>th</sup> century reformer John Calvin to say that justification by faith is the *hinge* of the Reformation.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 609.

<sup>93</sup> List taken from <https://www.gotquestions.org/justification.html>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

- Martin Luther, the leader of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, said that it is justification by faith alone that the church will either stand or fall.
- To recap, justification “does not refer to this renewing and sanctifying grace of God.”<sup>95</sup>
- When someone is justified, they are not made into a new person, they are not going to be good.
- When one is justified, “He simply declares that in his judgment the person is not guilty of the accusation but is upright in terms of the law relevant to the case. In a word, justification is simply a declaration or pronouncement respecting the relation of the person to the law which he, the judge, is required to administer.”<sup>96</sup>
- When one is justified, they are now able to act rightly or walk in righteousness.
- We have to get this right...this is the once off declaration of being just and then following that the progression of living out that declaration.
- In other words, we have justification and then sanctification.
- “The justification with which we are now concerned, however, is God’s justification of the ungodly. It is not the justification of persons who are righteous but of persons who are wicked and, therefore, of persons who are under God’s condemnation and curse. How can this be? God’s judgment is always according to truth; it is not only one of equity but one of perfect equity. How then can he justify those who are unrighteous and totally unrighteous at that?”<sup>97</sup>

## THE ORDER OF SALVATION

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- That final question is where we are going to continue our journey through the doctrine of salvation. “How then can he justify those who are unrighteous and totally unrighteous at that?”
- In the study of theology and the specifically that of salvation, there is an order that is usually studied.
- When thinking of ordering something, especially the topic of salvation, it is more about organizing how the specific events show up in the life of the believer than a chronological order.
- In other words, one cannot experience peace with God without being declared righteous by God. One cannot grow in their faith through the process of sanctification without expressing the initial act of repentance and faith.

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<sup>95</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 118.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 122.

- When we don't understand or communicate the right order of salvation, it will not only bring shame to God but will also either condemn someone or give someone a false sense of salvation.

## Typical Order of Salvation (ordo salutis)

- Foreknowledge
- Election
- Predestination
- Effectual call
- Regeneration
- Conversion (faith and Repentance)
- Justification
- Adoption
- Sanctification
- Perseverance
- Glorification

God's work prior to salvation

How one becomes a Christian in their life.

What a Christian sees in their life.

What a Christian goes home

- While we can't fit everything into specific places, we do know that "the Bible indicates clearly in different ways that God's plan for the lives of his children has certain fixed points."<sup>98</sup>
- Romans 8:28-30 is often times called the *The Golden Chain of Redemption*.
- Ephesians 1:3-14, whereas Romans 8 is a chain linked, in Ephesians "they are spokes in a wheel which centres [sic] on Christ."<sup>99</sup>
- John 1:12-13, "What John adds to Paul's outline is that faith brings the privilege of adoption, and paradoxically, that same faith is the fruit of a birth which comes from God!"<sup>100</sup>
- "We can now see the wide range of doctrines which go to make up the doctrine of the Christian life. the eternal choice of God's love in election touches our lives in his calling. He gives new birth which enables us to enter the kingdom of God by faith and repentance. When we believe and repent, God

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<sup>98</sup> Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 22.

justifies us. Adoption is a further gift, so that as assured children we may live lives of sanctification until the day of our glorification comes. In general terms this is the plan of salvation.”<sup>101</sup>

- We know that God is a God of order.
  - **1 Corinthians 14:33** “...for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”
  - **1 Corinthians 14:40** “But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.”
  - This is also reflected in the creation order in **Genesis 1**, how God defines what true worship is to Him in **John 4:24**.
  - God has established order in the government, the family, and the church.
  - Since we are created in the image of God, we too will look for order in things.
- The importance of knowing that there is an order, as was stated before, is so that we can know for sure that we have been saved.
  - We can look back and see our calling and response to the gospel. We can see our understanding of spiritual truths and an awakening to God that wasn’t there before.
- We can know for sure that others have been saved.
- We can simply rejoice, knowing that God has shown us truth and that we can know for sure that we are in His family.
- How does knowing this give us more cause for worship?
- We must keep these truths in the forefront of our minds. As JI Packer explains,
- “Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God.”<sup>102</sup>
- Let our minds be filled with the truth of God so that our actions show the joy, peace, and love that we have come to know from a true and living God.
- Once again, it is not about just knowing these theological truths. It is not just knowing about all that God has done for you, but allowing those amazing truths to sink deep into your hearts and come out in your interactions with others.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>102</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 23.

## Why start with justification?

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- If you were paying attention to the order of salvation, *justification* is number 7, not number 1.
- Why did I start there? Because I started with the question that was posed in Acts 16, *what must I do to be saved*.
- In order to be saved, you **must** be declared just before God. you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven without being perfect.
  - You cannot work or earn your way though those gates. Try as you may, without justification from God, you are standing condemned.
- There are no sinners allowed through the gates of the eternal kingdom of Christ. Only those who have the robes of the Righteous One are allowed to enter Paradise with the King.
  - **Galatians 3:27** “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”
- Now, knowing that one must be justified **and** they are not able to justify themselves...how does this process take place? How does one go from a dead sinner to an alive saint. What is the process which takes us from enemies of God to those who are in His family and have an inheritance?
- It starts before it all started. Before you or me anyone else was ever put on this earth, God had a plan in place to rescue sinners and bring His people back to Him.