

# Justification

God's justification of sinful men and women is at the very heart of the Gospel. At Hunter Bible Church we love this doctrine so much it's worth making clear what we believe about it.

In essence, justification is the work of God's grace which means he acquits guilty people from sin and considers them righteous before him, all because of the righteous life and atoning death of Jesus. Justification becomes effective for us as we become spiritually united to Christ by faith.

There are three important things to understand about the doctrine of justification:

Firstly, justification reminds us that the big problem for us humans is that we are sinners facing the wrath and condemnation of God (Romans chapters 1-3). This is not a problem we can fix through a better life or religious activities.

Secondly, justification is great news because 'God justifies the wicked' (Rom 4:5). That means that even though we are guilty of sin, he considers us to be innocent and righteous. The Bible teaches that this is because at the cross Jesus took upon himself all our sin and guilt and suffered the punishment we deserved (Rom 3:21-26, 2 Cor 5:21). In this Jesus was a *propitiation* (his sacrificial death turned away God's wrath from us). Although it's faith (meaning trust in Jesus) that makes this blessing real for us, our faith is not the reason God justifies. That honour belongs only to Jesus! In fact, even our faith is given to us graciously by God (Eph 2:8).

Finally, justification means that we are now legally and perfectly righteous before God (Romans chapters 4 and 5). This is not because the Spirit works in us to help us to good works (although as Christians we do grow in our obedience). Rather, we are righteous because Jesus' righteousness is reckoned or imputed to us (1 Cor 1:30, 2 Cor 5:21, Phil 3:9). This is why even though we continue to sin as Christians we are always simultaneously righteous before God.

There are at least two great practical blessings of justification. The first is that our justification frees us and inspires us to actually grow in godliness and to do the good things that God would want us to do (Rom 6 and Eph 2:8-10).

The second great blessing is that we can know for certain that we are right with God and will spend an eternity with him. Christians call this *assurance*. As Hebrews 6:19 says, 'we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.'

You can see why justification is so central to the Gospel! Our hope and prayer is that we will always celebrate and proclaim how Jesus has brought us from guilt to righteousness, from death to life.

**The Pastors and Elders of Hunter Bible Church**