

As the Scripture describes this act, it also clearly describes it as flowing from God's gracious character and identifies it as a free gift (at no cost) given to the beneficiary. Justification in the Bible is always free and always associated with God's grace.

Romans 3:24-26 - 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 **whom God displayed** publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that **He might be just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus. NASB

Romans 5:16-17 - 16 And **the gift** is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand **the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification**. 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive **the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. NASB

Titus 3:5-7 - 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, **but according to His mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 **that being justified by His grace** we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. NASB

wherein he pardons all our sins – Justification consists first in God pardoning our sins. It is a legal (forensic) term dealing with Law and God is pictured as the Judge, for sin is transgression of the Law. One of God's attributes is Justice as He is seen as holy and just, ruling over the world with justice! Throughout the Scripture God is seen as the only Lawgiver and Judge.

Genesis 18:25 - 25 "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"** NASB

Isaiah 33:20 - 2 For **the Lord is our judge, The Lord is our lawgiver**, The Lord is our king; He will save us NASB

James 4:12 - 12 **There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One** who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? NASB

In this sense, our sins are brought ultimately and finally to the authority of the Judge of all the earth to be dealt with in finality. Justification concerning our sins before God then is a legal or forensic proceeding in God's tribunal. It is here where we receive a **pardon from God** which means a release from the *penalty* of our offenses, a free remission of the penalty or consequences of sin. We are therefore set free from the bondage or power of sin, because the consequences of the Law have been foregone by the Lawgiver and Judge.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Romans 8:1-2 - 1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For **the law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has set you free from **the law of sin and of death**. NASB

This does not mean we are not guilty, but that the consequences of our guilt have been foregone or remitted, paid in full by our Redeemer. This is called **expiation**. Our guilt then can remain no longer, it is removed by way of its penalties and consequences being pardoned by the Judge, having been actually paid by our Substitute. This pardon of justification is a *declarative act* on the part of God. It is a *final* pronouncement of the commuting of the sentence of death and right-standing before Him.

John 8:36 - 36 "If therefore the Son shall make you free, **you shall be free indeed**. NASB

and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us – In addition to the removal of the consequences and subsequently our guilt, we are also credited with a positive righteousness in this Justification. We are said to now possess the righteousness of God. This righteousness means, **right-standing** with God or acceptable in His sight. Because the penalties of sin have been satisfied by Christ's payment at Calvary, we are free from any accusation or blemish of any kind, but also credited with the righteousness of God.

Colossians 1:21-22 - 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to **present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-** NASB

Romans 3:21-22 - 21 But now apart from the Law **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;** for there is no distinction; NASB

Now this righteousness is the righteousness that God both *requires* and *provides* in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 - 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,** 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

Romans 5:19 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so **through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.** NASB

2 Corinthians 5:21 - 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** NASB

Because of Christ's obedience and fulfillment of the Law, we are now *reckoned* or counted as righteous in God's sight. Our righteousness is "*in Him*" (2 Cor 5:21) and "*through Him*" (Rom 5:19). Christ is counted as our Righteousness (1 Cor 1:30), and it is therefore a **foreign** or **alien** righteousness that we possess and is **not** our own, but the real righteousness of Christ Himself.

Philippians 3:9-10 - 9 and may be found **in Him, not having a righteousness of my own** derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in **Christ, the righteousness which comes from God** on the basis of faith, NASB

and received by faith alone – This righteousness then becomes ours by simply trusting in or looking to Christ for it. This believing or trusting is what the Bible calls faith. It is through this faith that this righteousness is imputed or reckoned to us.

Romans 4:5 - 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is reckoned as righteousness,** NASB

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;** for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a **gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

This very simple concept is portrayed very clearly in Scripture and provides for us, through the merits of Christ, both righteousness (right-standing with God) and justification (declared righteous in His sight).

Romans 10:4 - 4 For Christ is the end of the law **for righteousness to everyone who believes.** NASB

Romans 3:28 - 28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith** apart from works of the Law. NASB

Now this treatment of Justification is not to minimize the importance of the other aspects of redemption such as Regeneration, Union with Christ, Election, Adoption, Sanctification or Glorification, to name a few. But **Justification by Faith is in fact the very heart of the Gospel** message and the center of what we preach when we tell people HOW to be reconciled to God. Therefore it is imperative that we rightly understand and tell others that salvation is wholly the work of God, in and through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and that by His life and death we can be saved through faith. After all is said and done, people who are trusting in their own ability to please God and be accepted by Him at the final judgment because they think that they are good people and that God is pleased with their life so as to justify them, and that their own righteousness will be sufficient to save them from God's wrath are believing a terrible lie, and they will be woefully shocked at the judgment when God weighs their life in the balance with His holy Law. They will be found wanting, and it will be a tragic and final day of Judgment and wrath from which they cannot be saved.

Let us and everyone therefore look to **Christ Alone** for righteousness before God, whom He has put forth as both Savior and Lord for people to be saved from death and justified in His sight.

For a bit more insight, consider the profound wording of some statements of Justification from both the **Westminster** and the **1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith**. Both the Westminster and 1689 Baptist Confession read identically. These confessions provide a rich learning experience and are excellent fodder for family Bible study and discussion;

Chapter 11. Of Justification.

1. Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth;^a not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; ⁽⁴⁹⁾ nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them,^b they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.^c

a. Rom 3:24; 8:30. • *b.* Jer 23:6; Rom 3:22, 24-25, 27-28; 4:5-8; 5:17-19; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 5:19, 21; Eph 1:7; Titus 3:5, 7. • *c.* Acts 10:44; 13:38-39; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:7-8; Phil 3:9.

2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification;^a yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.^b

a. John 1:12; Rom 3:28; 5:1. • *b.* Gal 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26.

3. Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.^a Yet inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them,^b and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead,^c and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace;^d that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.^e

a. Isa 53:4-6, 10-12; Dan 9:24, 26; Rom 5:8-10, 19; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 10:10, 14. • *b.* Rom 8:32. • *c.* Mat 3:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:2. • *d.* Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7. • *e.* Rom 3:26; Eph 2:7.

4. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect,^a and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification;^b nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.^c

a. Rom 8:30; Gal 3:8; 1 Pet 1:2, 19-20. • *b.* Rom 4:25; Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 2:6. • *c.* Gal 2:16; Col 1:21-22; Titus 3:4-7.

5. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified;^a and although they can never fall from the state of justification,^b yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.^c

a. Mat 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2. • *b.* Luke 22:32; John 10:28; Heb 10:14. • *c.* Psa 32:5; 51:7-12; 89:31-33; Mat 26:75; Luke 1:20; 1 Cor 11:30, 32.

6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.^a