

Question #14: What Are Justification and Adoption?*

- I. Justification is a Legal Declaration by God
 - A. Definition of Justification -- An instantaneous legal act by God in which he 1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us and therefore 2) declares us to be "just" or morally righteous in his sight.
 - B. Justification comes after our response of faith to the Gospel (Rom. 5:1; Gal 2:16).
 - C. Justification is God's response and action to our faith (Rom. 3:26).

- II. A Declaration that We are Righteous before God
 - A. While the definition section may make it sound as if we do something in obtaining our justification, the truth is that God is the one taking action in justification.
 1. In justification, God serves as judge and makes a legal declaration.
 2. He acts as a judge and declares that the individual believer is righteous before Him (Rom. 3:21-26; note that the words for "justification, right, just, and righteous(ness)" possess the same root word in Greek).
 - B. As a result of this declaration of righteous/just by God, we as believers no longer have to pay the penalty for our past, present, or future sins (Rom. 8:1; 8:33).
 - C. 1 Corinthians 5:21 teaches that in His declaration of "justified," God considers ...
 1. our sins as belonging to Christ
 - Christ already paid the penalty on the cross, thus we don't have to pay that penalty again. His wrath toward us has already been poured out on Christ (Rom. 3:25 -- Christ as the sacrifice that makes atonement). This is the beauty and wonder of the cross.
 2. and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us.
 - Christ's action makes our acceptance by God possible. Because of Christ's work of living a perfect life and becoming a perfect sacrifice, God can consider our sins as fully forgiven and accept us as righteous in His sight.

* The material in this handout is a summary of chapter thirteen, "What Are Justification and Adoption?" in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. by Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 95-98.

Question #14: What Are Justification and Adoption?*

III. Justification by Faith Alone

A. God's Doing, Not Ours

1. Like the other aspects of salvation, justification is made possible as a result of God's grace towards us (Rom. 3:24). As Ephesians 2:8-9 makes clear, the great plan of salvation ("By grace you have been saved through faith") is God's gift to us.
 - a) We don't deserve it.
 - b) It comes as God's response to our faith -- the opposite of depending on ourselves or our works.
2. While justification comes about as God's act in response to our faith, this does not mean that our faith has any merit before God.
 - a) Our works do not gain us any favor before God. Rather, our favor before God is gained solely by Christ's work on our behalf (Rom. 3:24).
 - b) This works out better for us because we don't have to worry about whether our works are enough to gain God's favor or outweigh our sins. We can look to God, through Christ, to freely give us that which we could never attain on our own merits (Rom. 3:21-26).

B. A Protestant and Evangelical Hallmark

1. The understanding of justification that we have just described became the central difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics during the Reformation.
2. Luther and all other Protestants who followed his lead insisted that justification was by "faith alone." Roman Catholics maintained and still maintain that justification is made possible by faith plus other "means of grace" (sacraments) such as baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, and penance.
3. The Protestant and Evangelical position is that Scripture clearly teaches that we are fully justified by God at the moment of our salvation (Rom. 8:1). The Catholic position is that one is not fully justified until his/her sins are completely cleansed, which does not occur until after death and the purification of purgatory.

* The material in this handout is a summary of chapter thirteen, "What Are Justification and Adoption?" in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. by Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 95-98.

Question #14: What Are Justification and Adoption?*

IV. Adoption

A. Definition -- God makes us as believers members of his family

1. Before the believer is saved, he/she is a child of disobedience and wrath (Eph. 2:2-3).
2. Yet, those who receive Jesus Christ, who believe in his name, He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

B. As God's children, we experience many of the benefits of adoption now (Rom. 8:15-17).

1. We can live in intimate relationship with God, our Father (v. 15).
2. We are free to experience the joy of living as heirs to all the blessings God desires to lavish on his children (vv. 15, 17).

C. While we do experience many blessings now, we will not experience them in their fullness until Christ's return. We groan inwardly as we await the day when we will fully experience the benefits of adoption (Rom. 8:23).

D. While we await the day of Christ's return, our lives will be marked by both blessing and suffering (Rom. 8:17), but the sufferings can't compare to the glory that is to be revealed at Christ's return (Rom. 8:18). God will eventually wipe every tear from his children's eyes, and death, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more (Rev. 21:4).

* The material in this handout is a summary of chapter thirteen, "What Are Justification and Adoption?" in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. by Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 95-98.