

# How can Man be Just with God?



The ancient book of Job poses the question, "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of woman?" (Job 25:4). From the beginning of time man has been haunted by this question.

Creation tells man there is a God. Creation calls for a Creator. Design demands a designer. Conscience tells man there is a God. Conscience, which witnesses of a Creator, has been called "the voice of God within the soul of man."

"In a world of doubt and uncertainty here are two certain facts: (1) you were created by God, and (2) you will give account to God. The honest man, the intelligent man, the sincere man who has not seared his conscience asks the questions, "How can I be just with God?" This is the most important question in a man's life is, "How can I be clean before God?" The question asked in Job is answered by four loud shouts from the New Testament. Man can be justified: (1) "by grace" (2) "by blood" (3) "by faith" and (4) "by works." Rather than being contradictory, these four declarations provide four distinct aspects of the multi-faceted gem called justification.

## **JUSTIFIED BY GRACE (The Source of Justification)**

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Pascal said, "To make a man a saint, grace is absolutely necessary and whoever doubts it, does not know what a saint is or what a man is!"

"The Law thunders, "Stand afar off." Grace invites us, "Draw near to God." The reason men must be justified by grace is because that is the only way man can be justified! The justice of God demands that sinners be punished--because the soul that sins shall die.

When a man is justified, God treats him just as if he had kept the whole law. To be justified means that a person is righteous in the eyes of God. It's just-as-if he never sinned!

The word "Grace" and its derivatives are mentioned 200 times in Scripture. The first reference is found in Genesis 6:8, where "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The final mention of grace is Revelation 22:21, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Grace has been defined as God's Riches at Christ's Expense. It is the unmerited, undeserved favor of God.

God does not love us because of our inherent worth. There is nothing in man that could possibly merit the favor of God. I believe we'd hear less about the doctrine of self-worth if we knew more of the grace of God. God doesn't love me because I'm worth anything. He loves me despite what I was! You say, "How do you hope to get to heaven?" There's only one way--GRACE! But what is the basis for God's offer of grace?

## **JUSTIFIED BY BLOOD (The Grounds of Justification)**

"Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9). An offended God and a broken law demand blood sacrifice, for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). No sin has ever been forgiven apart from the shedding of blood. Because of the holy and just nature of God, sin must be recompensed. The songwriter said it

well: Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned he stood- Sealed my pardon with His blood: Hallelujah, What a Savior!

Spurgeon summarized his theology in four words, "He died for me." One of the great mysteries of the Bible is the incarnation. God could not forgive man's sin debt apart from the price of blood. Someone had to pay! If there was to be blood shed, there must be a body containing blood. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). Christ took our nature and became as we are, yet without sin. Jesus Christ was perfect God and perfect man. Wesley's hymn says it all. Veiled in flesh the God-head see; Hail th' incarnate Deity, Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel!

But Christ not only took our nature, He took our place. He not only died for us, He died as us. Christ became a man in order to take our place. Jesus did not die of old age or a heart attack. They nailed Him to a cross and there He who knew no sin became sin for us! There He bore the wrath of a holy God against unholy sin.

In creation God breathed the breath of life into man. At Calvary Christ shed His blood. Creation cost God His breath. Calvary cost Christ His blood!

When the Bible speaks of Christ as a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), it means the Cross has been in the heart of God from eternity past. It is a transcending cross because it transcends time and eternity. Second, it is a descending cross because God humbled Himself and became a man. Third, it is an ascending cross because the lowliest can now ascend into the holiest by that new and living way! The hymnwriter described its effects: Blood has a voice to pierce the skies, Revenge the blood of Abel cries, But the dear stream when Christ was slain, Speaks peace as loud from every vein!

Christ "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Let the water and the blood, From thy wounded side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save from wrath and make me pure.

Blood is the grounds of justification.

### **JUSTIFIED BY FAITH (The Means of Justification)**

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). "Therefore we conclude a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28). When Abraham believed God, it was imputed to him for righteousness. Yes, faith is the means of justification, for without faith it is impossible to please God! Perhaps you've seen the acrostic: Forsaking All I Trust Him!

It is not enough just to have the Word. Hebrews 4:2 speaking of Israel says, "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Neither is it the blood alone that saves. It's the blood applied by faith! There was blood available during the Passover in Egypt, but not all had the blood applied to the doorposts of their homes. While blood was the grounds on which judgment would pass over, faith was necessary to apply the blood. Even so, faith lays hold on the atoning blood of the Lamb of God.

I believe a man is justified the moment he places his trust in the shed blood of Jesus alone for his salvation! Faith is absolutely essential for "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:36). Do you believe God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world? Do you believe

Christ died for your sins on the cross of Calvary? All who are justified before God are justified by faith alone as the means of justification. Yet, we find that genuine faith is never alone.

### **JUSTIFIED BY WORKS (Proof of Justification)**

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Issac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (James 2:21). Read James 2 and you will clearly see there is no contradiction between this text and the other aspects of justification. Verse 23 reads, "Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." His extraordinary obedience in offering Issac proved his faith was genuine. His faith led him to obedience.

Abraham's faith was not a cold, abstract, cerebral type of faith. His was genuine saving faith. The point in James 2 is that "Faith without works is dead" (vs. 17, 20, 26). Works are not the grounds of our acceptance before God, but the evidence we have been accepted by God. Abraham's works did not merit favor from God, they merely confirmed he had been justified by faith."

What a wonderful change in my heart hath been wrought, since Jesus came into my heart." When there's been the infusion of a new principle, a changed life (works) will follow. Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them." Works are a proof a man is justified, not for God, of course, but a testimony to the watching world. Faith is the means of justification, but works are the proof. The only evidence of saving faith is a holy life. How can man be just with God? How can he that is born of woman be clean?" It's not by what you know, it's Who you know! It's not by what you do, it's what Christ did! When it comes to the all important question of justification before God: Grace is the Source, Blood is the Grounds, Faith is the Means, and Works are the Proof. There is no greater news, no greater thought, no more profound truth, no loftier idea than this. It answers the unanswerable question, and with the answer the soul cries out in praise and wonder. *My sin--oh, the bliss of this glorious thought My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the Cross and I bear it no more! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

—Harold Vaughan  
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