

Theology Crucified

Our Justification and Righteousness

Introduction

Christians are regarded by God as holy and perfect, though at the same time they are sinful and imperfect. On the cross Jesus became our merit and our right standing with God. Faith in Jesus means transferring trust from your merit to his and accepting God's love on the basis of Jesus on not you.

Discussion Questions

- Paul explains that justification is based on grace and not on works. Christianity rightly understood leaves no room for boasting (Romans 3:27; 4:2-5). Do you ever find yourself working to gain God's favor? What makes accepting his approval so difficult? Why do we try to earn his love?
- To prove that acceptability is by faith, it is noted that circumcision and the giving of the law came after Abraham trusted God (4:10-12). This means that God accepted Abraham apart from his obeying or keeping any of God's moral or religious requirements. When do you find yourself trying still to make yourself acceptable to God? What sorts of things do you do?
- The promise of God's favor and blessing seems to good to be true. That is why Abraham had to take it by faith. And his trust in the promise of God's favor is an example to us. Yet, we also have the benefit of the death and resurrection of Jesus as signs to help us believe God's promises to us are true (4:20-25). When do you struggle to believe God is for you? How does your faith become strengthened? What does the cross mean to you in those times?

Think About It

Faith is not simply an optimism about life in general, nor is it faith in oneself. It is the opposite. Faith begins with a kind of death to self-trust. Faith is going on something despite our weakness, despite our feelings and perceptions.

What Will You Do?

To believe God is to look at what God has said and to let that define reality for you. Do not be led astray by feelings or appearances. Focus on facts about God and trust the his word. You are accepted because Christ was rejected. Have faith in God's favor and faithfulness and not your own merit.

Renewing Your Mind

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith... It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26)

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)

He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. (Luke 16:15)

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:27-28)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

Prayer Requests

