

5. Regeneration Is Not a Human Work

John 1 ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Titus 3 ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. . . .

C. The Results of Regeneration

See p. 454a, Salvation Provides Benefits for Believers; 510b, We Are Renewed in Christ

X Justification

A. The Source of Justification: God

Isa 45 ²⁵But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.

Isa 50 ⁸He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! ⁹It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

Rom 3 ¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. ²⁹Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Rom 4 ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. . . . ¹⁷As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. . . . ²³The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Rom 8 ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who

died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

1 Cor 6 ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

B. The Means of Justification

1. Justification Is Not by Human Effort

a) Justification Is Not by Circumcision

Rom 2 ²⁵Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Rom 3 ²⁹Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Rom 4 ⁹Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹²And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Gal 5 ²Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. . . . ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Gal 6 ¹²Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. ¹⁴May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. ¹⁶Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

b) Justification Is Not by the Law

Job 9 ²Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God? ³Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand. . . . ²⁰Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty."

Ps 130 ³If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

Ps 143 ²Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

Acts 13 ³⁹Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."

Rom 3 ¹⁰As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one. . . ."

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law;

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ing the law.

Rom 4 ¹⁴For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no
value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because law brings wrath.
And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Rom 8 ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was
weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own
Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he
condemned sin in sinful man. . . .

Gal 2 ¹⁶. . . know that a man is not justified by observing the
law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith
in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and
not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one
will be justified."

Gal 3 ¹⁰All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for
it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do
everything written in the Book of the Law." ¹¹Clearly no one is
justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will
live by faith." ¹²The law is not based on faith; on the contrary,
"The man who does these things will live by them."

Gal 5 ⁴You who are trying to be justified by law have been
alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

James 2 ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles
at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

c) Justification Is Not by Works

Isa 64 ⁶All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all
our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a
leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Rom 4 ⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to
him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the man who
does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith
is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when
he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits
righteousness apart from works: ⁷"Blessed are they whose
transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is
the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

Rom 9 ³¹But Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has
not attained it. ³²Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith
but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling
stone."

Rom 11 ¹I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I
am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the
tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not reject his people, whom he
foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the pas-
sage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel:
³"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your
altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me?"
⁴And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for
myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."
⁵So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.
⁶And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace
would no longer be grace.

Eph 2 ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through
faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not
by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 3 ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior
appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had
done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the wash-
ing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. . . .

2. Justification Is by Faith

a) Justification Is in God

Gen 15 ⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as
righteousness.

Rom 4 ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts
God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteous-
ness.

b) Justification Is in Christ

Isa 53 ¹¹After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of
life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant
will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Acts 13 ³⁸"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that
through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

³⁹Through him everyone who believes is justified from every-
thing you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."

Rom 3 ²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law,
has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets tes-
tify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in
Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all
have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justi-
fied freely by his grace through the redemption that came by
Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,
through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his jus-
tice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed
beforehand unpunished—²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice
at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies
those who have faith in Jesus.

Rom 4 ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteous-
ness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord
from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins
and was raised to life for our justification.

Rom 5 ¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace
in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory
of God. . . . ⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood,
how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through
him! . . .

¹⁶Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one
man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought con-
demnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought
justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death
reigned through that one man, how much more will those who
receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of
righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was con-
demnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righ-
teousness was justification that brings life for all men. ¹⁹For
just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were
made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man
the many will be made righteous.

²⁰The law was added so that the trespass might increase.
But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹so that,
just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through
righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

Rom 8 ¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those
who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law
of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Rom 10 ³Since they did not know the righteousness that comes
from God and sought to establish their own, they did not sub-
mit to God's righteousness. ⁴Christ is the end of the law so that
there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

1 Cor 6 ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were
washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of
the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Cor 15 ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is
futile; you are still in your sins.

2 Cor 1 ²¹Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm
in Christ. He anointed us. . . . ²⁴Not that we lord it over your
faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith
you stand firm.

Gal 2 ¹⁶. . . know that a man is not justified by observing the
law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith
in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and
not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one
will be justified.

¹⁷If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evi-
dent that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ
promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸If I rebuild what I destroyed, I
prove that I am a lawbreaker. ¹⁹For through the law I died to
the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰I have been crucified
with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life
I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved
me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of
God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law,
Christ died for nothing!"

Gal 3 ⁸The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the
Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to

Salvation

Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." . . .
¹¹Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ¹²The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. . . .

²¹Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²²But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

²³Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Gal 5 ⁴You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Phil 3 ⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. . . .

c) Justification Is by Grace

Rom 3 ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Rom 4 ¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Rom 5 ¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. . . .

²⁰The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gal 2 ²¹"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Gal 5 ⁴You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Titus 3 ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

d) Justification Is Freely Given

Isa 53 ¹¹After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of

life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Rom 3 ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

e) Justification Excludes Boasting

Rom 3 ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

Rom 4 ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.

1 Cor 1 ²⁸He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Eph 2 ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

C. The Results of Justification

See p. 454a, Salvation Provides Benefits for Believers

XI Union with Christ

See chap. 11, Sanctification

XII Adoption

A. Adoption and God

1. God Is Our Father

1 Chron 22 ⁹"But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. ¹⁰He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever."

Isa 63 ¹⁶But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Matt 6 ⁹"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. . . .'"

Matt 23 ⁹"And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven."

John 20 ¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Rom 8 ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Gal 4 ⁶Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Eph 3 ¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Heb 12 ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!