

## **Title: Justified or Terrified?**

### **What is justification?**

**It is being included in the family of God and being declared forgiven and righteous by the court of God.**

It's relational.

It's judicial.

It means you belong!

It means your record is clean!

Even those who are not "religious" are seeking for justification (even though they may not call it that). Even those who say that God is not an important part of their lives are looking for justification.

- They are seeking to justify their existence, in other words- they are searching for significance.
  - They are longing for security.
  - They are wanting some confirmation or evidence, that they are OK.
  - They want to know that nothing is wrong with me.
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- One of the big reasons for addictions is that we want to silence the voice of accusation, we want to numb the shame, we want to shut down the voice that says that there is something wrong with you. It's tragic because the addiction ends up being on more thing that we know is wrong with us.

That's why everyone needs the good news that we are justified in Jesus.

Justification is not a side dish in Christianity, but the heart.

It may be what distinguishes Christianity from all other religions in the world.

**Other religions teach that either:**

- 1) You never know if you are justified.**
- 2) If it's going to be, it's up to me.**

**Yet, Christianity teaches:**

- 1) **You can and should know that you are justified.**
- 2) **It is not up to you, it's from and by Jesus.**

**1) By the Spirit and the Scriptures we can know that we are justified.**

- You can know because the Spirit of God provides that deep confirmation in your heart that you are in the family of God (Romans 8:16)(Romans 5:5).

“The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God...” (Romans 8:16)

“The love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit...” (Romans 5:5)

“I was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death...” - John Wesley

You can know because that’s what the Scriptures teach, that we are justified by Jesus (Romans 3:24).

**"and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24)**

**2) Our justification is based on Jesus and what He did for us.**

Another reason you can know that you are justified is because justification is not a final exam, where you take the test and find out the results later, if your scores is a pass or a fail.

- To get your license, you have to pass some tests (permit and behind-the-wheel).
- To practice in certain professions, you have to pass some tests. You either pass or fail based on how well YOU DID.

- That's why when you are taking a big test, you can't sleep the night before. I remember when the teacher would pass tests down the row, my heart would drop, and I would take a deep breath.
- But justification is not a test you have to take or pass. Jesus took the test. He passed with a perfect score. He says, "what's mine is yours...."

Justification is not an Olympic competition- where you get the results of your performance - and based upon the results, you qualify or are disqualified.

**Justification is not a game we have to compete in, it's a gift that we have been given.**

Imagine being in the shoes of these Olympians, they have been prepping just about their entire life for this. They can either win a medal or go home utterly dejected. It's all based on how they do for the next ten seconds of the 100 yard dash. Ten seconds determines their life-long identity. Talk about performance anxiety.

Justification is that the medal has already been given to you, freely- not because you earned it, not because you competed for it, but Jesus won it, and gave it to you. He says, "I made you a winner, so stop thinking, feeling, and acting like a loser..."

You may be thinking, "Well I rather compete for it myself...I don't need a hand-me-down anything!" The truth is that all of us disqualified our selves long time ago, in the race for justification. When it comes to earning the medal of righteousness, you can't just be better than Hitler, you had to be perfect. There is no other justification than the hand-me-down kind.

Since our justification is not based upon your performance- there is no legitimate reason for performance anxiety. Rather, it's a free gift that is designed to deliver us from anxiety.

**Free justification frees us from FEAR, and frees us to LOVE.**

The reason it's extremely liberating and life-enhancing to subscribe to "free justification", is because it actually liberates us to live a life of love.

**4 WAYS "Free Justification" Liberates Our Hearts:**

1. **We do not see people as competition.** Justification is not a race or a contest. You are not finding your worth by comparison.
  1. Pointing out someone else's sinfulness doesn't make me more righteous.
  2. If God graded on the curb- the moral failure of others should be counted worthy of our celebration.
  3. If I'm an Olympic gymnast and my number one competition slips and eats the ground, I'll play it cool on the outside, but I'm dancing on the inside.
  4. **I wonder if we can truly love people we are competing with?** Well, when we aren't competing with anyone for a sense of personal significance, perhaps we can love others better.
  
2. **We don't see our failures as the end of the world.** If our justification is performance based, our sin can mean our condemnation.
  1. Going back to the olympics, our mistakes leads to our disqualification (disqualified from going to the next round).
  2. But if our justification can't be gained through our performance, it can't be lost through our performance, or lack of.
  3. Have you ever heard the phrase: "hurting people, hurt people"? It's also true that: "condemned people, condemn people". "Insecure people, make people insecure..." Yet on the flip side, loved people, love people." And, "forgiven people, forgive people." And secure people make others feel more secure.
  4. If Justification was by our performance we can become condemned and condemning, insecure and making others insecure. Hurting and hurting others.
  5. Free justification declares over us that we are loved, forgiven, and secure, and Jesus said, "As you freely received, freely give..." We begin to heal others, not hurt them.
  
3. **We don't have reason to boast or brag.** We get to forfeit our self-righteous ammo, but we cultivate a thankful heart. In a system of free justification, we can only boast in what's been done for you, not in what you have accomplished.
  1. **"For by grace we have been saved, through faith, and this not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not the result of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).**

2. **“God forbid that I should glory (boast) except in the cross, where the world has been crucified to me and me to the world...” (Galatians 6:14)**
3. Paul was convinced that what gave him value, was not that he was a circumcised Jew, or his education and credentials, or even his passion and zeal, or even his church planting- but the cross! He found his significance and identity in the reality that Jesus loved him and gave himself for him on the cross (Galatians 2:20).
  1. I want to boast less in all other things, and boast more in the cross!
  2. Maybe you are going through a very difficult and discouraging time, and you feel like you have nothing to boast about or be proud of- you can still boast in the cross, and be proud of took place on your behalf on calvary’s hill.
  3. The cross was designed to cross out our pride and humble people seem to love better.

4. **We are not serving God out of fear of rejection and punishment.**  
But rather, out of love.

Those who only do what is right, because they are scared of roasting in hell, are doing what’s right out because they are looking out for themselves, not because they are genuinely wanting to bless others. If I’m doing good works primarily to save my own butt, how can I say that I’m doing good works because I love you.

For example, if someone is proselytizing for their own salvation (as some religious groups teach)- I don’t feel they truly love me- they love themselves, they are trying to save themselves, not me. Yet, when I know I’m justified and I experienced God’s saving grace in my heart and life- I genuinely want others to come into that same experience- for no selfish reason, but I love them.

When I was a kid, I did OK at school, but a big reason was I was scared of my parents. I didn’t want to bring home the report card and get yelled at. That’s different than getting As because I just can’t get enough of the subject matters.

The kind of heart God is after, is that we live a life of excellently (A means excellent) keeping His 2 commandments: loving Him and loving others, not

because we are motivated by fear, but because we are motivated by love- we love to love and we can't get enough of loving others.

If God wanted fear-driven obedience, he would have made us work for our own justification. But God is saying, "I'm giving you straight As (The As of Jesus), I'm also putting in you a hunger to learn the subject matters- now go learn all you can!"

Let's look at this from an employee standpoint. An employee can be working his job because he is so fearful of being fired. He knows that there would be great consequences for getting fired: he will lose his house, his car, and won't be able to provide for his family.

Every day he shows up, he does his work, he does the best he could, when he does something wrong, he is utterly terrified. He may throw other employees under the bus to get ahead or protect his own butt.

That's different than someone who has all the money he needs on passive income, and just does a job He's passionate about.

- One works out of insecurity.
- The other works from a place of security.
- Which arrangement would you rather have?
- What kind of co-workers would you rather have around you?

God doesn't want us to do good works out of insecurity, but from security. Not out of reluctant terror, but from true passion.

"<sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love." (1 John 4:18)

God wants His love, expressed through free justification, to purge our hearts of fear, so we live from pure hearts of love.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher, who was also a Pastor's Kid, said that what disgusted him about Christians was that he perceived that we had an underlying resentment (a chip on our shoulder). He was probably one of the most influential thinkers of the last 200 years.

#### **4 Observations about Christians being Resentful People:**

- (1) A denied resentment toward God for demanding sacrifice.**
- (2) A resentment toward others for not appreciating our sacrifice.**
- (3) A resentment for sacrificing as much as we sacrifice**
- (4) A resentment toward others for not having to do it!**

So what Nietzsche observed was that when our obedience is fear-driven, when we don't understand FREE JUSTIFICATION:

- We may obey God but we resent Him.
- We are trying to gain personal validation from others through serving others.
- We may give out a lot, but we aren't cheerful about it.
- We may be covetous of those who don't believe in God or follow Him.

**“Love begets love...(love responds to love alone)” - St. Francis**

John the Apostle didn't write, “We love because He first scares us...”

But rather, “we love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:18)

Fear doesn't beget love. Justification in Jesus, by Jesus, is a profound revelation of God's love.

Justification by grace declares that you are you are met with God's love and mercy. It means you are accepted into the family of God. It means that the courts of heaven have declared you to be “forgiven”.

It means that you are loved, and God's love for us begets our love for Him and others.

It's hearing the good news of how we are justified in Jesus, that now faith comes alive in our hearts.

When you know that you are met with love and mercy by God, it's easy to trust Him.

It's easy to surrender to someone who you know you are SAFE with and SAFE in.

When you know you are fully accepted by God that's when we can fully surrender to God.

So when we know that justification comes from Jesus - it begets love and faith. The message that we are justified in Jesus is what continues to fuel our love and faith.