

Soteriology
Lesson 18
Justification Part One

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The definition “to declare righteous”—notice it says on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done—not “to make righteous.” Do you know that in statements of faith at evangelical churches, when they discuss justification, you’ll see those words—how we’re *made* righteous that is not true at all, but it sounds so good. Does the Holy Spirit work in us? Absolutely!

The usage of words—and here’s an example.

Justification: Usages Defined

DIKAIOS	Just; righteous (noun, used 81 times)
DIKAIOSUNE	Justice; righteousness (feminine noun, used 94 times)
DIKAIOO	To declare righteous or to justify as a judicial act (verb, used 40 times)
DIKAIOMA	The product or result of being justified by God (neuter noun, used 10 times)
DIKAIOS	Justly; right (adverb, used 5 times)
DIKAIOSIS	The act which declares a right or just person as such (noun, used 2 times – Romans 4:25; 5:18)

You notice that in all of these words (six of them) that there are six letters common to them all, in English D-I-K-A-I-O is in all of them. And it’s speaking of the justice or righteousness issue.

Now, in terms of how serious this issue is, without it, the Bible says we are “not of God” (1 John 3:10). I would say that makes it serious, wouldn’t you? And without it we cannot enter into heaven. Jesus even said, in Matthew 5:20, “If your righteousness doesn’t exceed that of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

If that is true, then a lot of the attitudes of people today as to who is a Christian and who isn’t is even more serious. Isn’t it interesting that we read a verse like, “Unless your righteousness

exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees” and we want to hit the scribes and Pharisees over the head. They’re really legalistic!

First of all, the scribes and Pharisees were very loyal to God’s law. They’re very loyal to the Bible. What did Jesus mean when He said your righteousness has to exceed that or you can’t enter the kingdom? Why, the Jewish people would have been stunned by that statement because if there was anybody that they would have thought would enter right into the kingdom of heaven, it would be a Pharisee! I mean these guys were dedicated.

There was a corrupt priesthood, but the Pharisees were like a sect within Judaism of that corrupt day of Jesus who were *trying* to follow God’s law and trying to do what’s right. That’s why it was so bothersome to people. Why they thought Jesus was a heretic. What in the world does He mean by that? If that’s true of them, then it must be true of a lot of us.

The whole point is a very simple one. As we’ve demonstrated by the test, so it was in the lives of the Pharisees. They were sincere. They were attempting to be godly men, but they believed that external performance produces inward righteousness. Let me repeat that again. What they really believed was that external performance produces inward righteousness. And that is not only the Pharisees doctrine; it’s Catholic doctrine. And Jesus said, your righteousness has to exceed that or you would never enter the kingdom of heaven.

In addition to the seriousness of this matter, look at the source of justification as it’s laid out in the Bible. In Isaiah 64: 6, all of our righteousness is called what? Filthy rags. In Titus 3:5 it says “not by works of righteousness which we have done.” So, justification is not found in ourselves at all, in anything that we do. In Romans 4, beginning in verse 3 it says,

3 What saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Class, let me put this a different way, just maybe this will help some. You don't justify the ungodly by something the ungodly does. You can't do that. That's impossible. It's like a philosophical, nonsensical statement. It's impossible. You can't justify the ungodly by something that the ungodly does. Also, there's no act of any person that stops them from being ungodly. There's nothing that you do that stops you from being ungodly. All of us are unrighteous before God.

What justifies the ungodly is nothing the ungodly does, but it's a fact that Christ when He died on the cross justified the ungodly. In other words what happened to cause us to be declared righteous is totally outside of ourselves. It's not within! So, understand that when you say we are righteous before God, it has nothing to do with what we do. It's not found in ourselves.

It is also not in the law. That's clear from what we read earlier in Romans 3:20. "By the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified." You say, "What about James?" Galatians 2:16 says "We are not justified by the works of the law." But what about James? So, let's go to James.

James chapter 2:14, "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and hath not works? Can faith save him?" Now watch it carefully, class. The last statement is not saying that you can't be saved by faith. What it's referring to is that faith. What kind of faith in the context? A faith that has nothing that's produced by it, in other words, there's something wrong with that faith. That faith is not a real faith.

This may help to explain why a lot of people say they have believed in Jesus but there's no evidence in their life that anything has happened. There's no conviction of sin. There's no war between the flesh and the spirit. They don't care for the things of God. Well I'm sorry. They're not in the Christian camp in my book. That kind of faith is not faith that saves you. The kind of faith that says, "Well, you don't need works. Just need faith alone."

When Martin Luther said you are justified by faith alone, did he mean that there was no evidence in the believer's life that anything had happened? On the contrary, he wrote volumes about what had happened when he finally understood justification by faith. One of the biggest things he got was right out of Romans 5:1—peace. It's one of the first things that happens to you. When you really understand that there's peace. The insecurity is gone. Your trust is in Christ alone. Real peace! I don't need to worry every night whether I'm a Christian.

But look at what we have in evangelicalism today, people wondering whether they are in or out. So then they say, on the basis of James, well you know, your works will show it, and because no one takes the time to identify what we're talking about, they decide they're going to be an usher and a Sunday School teacher and do all the church asks them to do, and then maybe they will feel saved. And if they stop doing that then they are not saved.

A guy came up to me in Salt Lake City. He used to be a worship leader and his life's really messed up. And he said, "I need help. I'm not sure I believe any of this stuff."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "I got messed up in some immorality, [started taking drugs and all that and] and I lost it, man. A good four years. Then I came back and I got it back again. And I was there for a couple of years and you know, singing all the praise songs and all of that, but I lost it again. I'm here today because a friend told me that you were kind of radical and that you might be able to help me."

I said, "Let me ask you a question. Are you a believer or an unbeliever?"

He said, "Well right now, I'm leaning towards believer again."

"Oh I think God would be wonderfully pleased. I'll bet He's really happy that you can say that."

He looked at me and said, "Boy you are radical. Is that all you've got to say?"

I said, "Look man, if you're trying to snow job me, forget it. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to deal" (Hebrews 4:13). You've given no evidence in your life that you know the Lord at all. What are you making deals with God to get

out of your drug problem? What's the deal here? Did you have a broken relationship so you thought you'd come back to the Lord, only to fall into another one? What's going on here?" And I read him James chapter two.

"Oh yeah, I see what you mean, man. I used to play. I played the guitar and all that, man. I need to get back doing that."

I said, "No, you didn't hear what I said at all. That isn't the works I'm talking about."

"It's not?"

I said, "No. That's just your own righteousness. That's all it is. You're trying by your own efforts to make yourself feel saved? Give me a break. Who ever told you this?"

Now the good part of this story is this guy really received Christ and trusted in the Lord. And the peace that came into his heart was an unbelievable. He said he felt like a cloud that's been on his life for twenty years was gone. And he went away and said, "It really is all of Jesus isn't it?"

I said, "Yeah it really is. We've heard enough of your story, by the way."

He kind of smiled and said, "I guess I'd better not tell it anymore."

I said, "Just talk about Jesus. It will be a lot better."

It's interesting, isn't it? You see that humanism in there. But on the other side, were there any works or evidence in any fruit, any product, anything that showed that he was a believer? No, he had nothing. He had no peace. He even told me. He said, "When I sinned, I didn't feel bad about it."

Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you people? It's easy, isn't it to just kind of fall through this, just kind of walk through this, not understanding that your righteousness is in Christ.

When James said, "Can that faith save him?" Of course it can't! Did you think that true faith in the Lord would not have any effect on you? If it hasn't, then check into whether you're saved or not. First of all, there should be a real peace in your heart. There should be a joy that comes to you. There should be a new attitude towards God, towards others. Yes, we struggle and

yes, we make mistakes. But the very struggle often reveals we're believers when we have that war inside and it hurts us when we sin and we're miserable and we want to get right with God. That's all the work of the Holy Spirit. That's the evidence. That's the works of James that something is real.

As a matter of fact, what he's talking about here are situations like that. Loving one another was the immediate situation before the discussion that we just read. Don't show partiality. Wow. Even listed the things of the law, whether you're obedient to it or not.

Does the work save you? No. Now when he gets down to James 2:21 it says: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" What works are you talking about? That he prayed more? Went to Sunday school often? Or what? Got his pin for faithful attendance? What is it talking about? It's talking about when he offered Isaac on the altar. It showed that he believed God's promise to him when He said, "In Isaac thy seed will be called" (Genesis 21:12). And he had full confidence that even if he killed him, He would raise him from the dead. That was his works.

But when you read this in James 2:24, "You see then how by works a man is justified not by faith only." Is there any evidence? Yes! And when Rahab the harlot put the scarlet thread out of her house and when she hid the spies and all of that, she demonstrated that she believed what she said she did. She believed the Lord God of Israel is the only God there is. And your God is my God.

Is that works like we talk? I don't think so. I think we're confusing the wonderful results and product of a man coming to believe in the Lord with the little things that we do for God that should rise out of love and service for Him. I think we're confusing two things here.

Man is never a test. If that were the issue then Mormons, some of them, and some good unbelievers I know would appear more Christian than some Christians. Man is not the test. Man judges by outward appearance. Let me put it to you another way. You've got to define 'works'. In Paul, works deal with the law. In James it deals with the fruit and the product of a Christian who

has come to know the Lord. There are things that change: his love, his attitude towards people, his speech, how he talks and his attitudes among the Christians. All of that. In other words it's a little different than what we normally think.

There should be evidence in every believer's life that we truly have come to believe in the Lord. If we truly come to believe in the Lord, God does place His Holy Spirit in us and there will be some effect, some results that we will see. Some call it the fruit of the Spirit. But it's hard to evaluate that. Like, how much love do you have to have to prove that you're in?

I think rather, it's another issue. If nothing changes, if my attitudes as a believer are exactly the same as an unbeliever, how does this really represent the faith of God? I don't understand that. Change occurs. God causes the change. I have a new nature from the Lord. And God says there's going to be a war between those two. When there isn't any, how can we say that we know the Lord? If there's no real change in attitude, how do we say we know the Lord? I don't understand it. And if you can just go on and sin up a storm and it doesn't bother you, I'm sorry. That isn't what the Bible teaches.

So it is troublesome. I realize it's troublesome. But you're not saved by works. It's not what you do that gives you righteousness. But the righteousness that you have in Christ through the personal work of the Holy Spirit in you, causes some very definite things in your life. And maybe we ought to just go back and check all of those off, whether or not they are there or they're not there.

So, let's keep going. I could ask then, what security do I have? Well, it's interesting when you really look at what God says is the security behind your justification. The fact is you're declared righteous before God on what Christ has done. Grace makes it possible, Romans 3:24. "We're justified freely by His grace." The ground upon which it rests is the blood of Christ. It's through His redemption. We're justified by His blood, says Romans 5: 9. There's so much evidence that tells us it's not your works, it's the work of Christ. God's grace gives you what you don't deserve. The blood of Christ is the ground upon which it is based.

And what's the guarantee of your justification? And here's what the Catholics say, "By the way you live." Now, we're just back troubling you over James again. You see, we've got to go back and forth sometimes and just kind of finally log it in. No. The guarantee is not your performance. Your performance has nothing to do with God declaring you righteous. Will there be a change in you as a result of God's work in your life? Yes, there will be! And that's faith that has a fruit, a product. Which James calls works, but it's not the same works that Paul is talking about. It's an interesting problem.

Now when we look at the guarantee, what is the guarantee? Romans 4:25 says, it's the resurrection. We are raised because of our justification. In other words, what settles the issue that God can declare us righteous is that Jesus was raised from the dead, thus proving that God had fully accepted His payment for our sins. He isn't a dead Savior. Death didn't conquer Him. He conquered death, thus proving that His justification is real (cf. Hebrews 2:14 and 2 Timothy 1:10). That's the guarantee. And once again it has nothing to do with what we do.

So, what we have here is our standing or position before Christ. If there's ever anything that needs to be taught to believers, it's our position in Christ. A neat study is to take the phrase "in Christ" or "in Him." A multitude of times it appears throughout the Bible. Just take the study "in Christ." I have an old book in my library. I forget who the author is. It's an old thing, over a hundred years old. And the title of it is "In Cristo" in Christ. All it does is talk about your position in the Lord.

And when you finish it, you feel embarrassed that the only way you've been discussing this matter is on a basis of what you do. You see, when we're in Christ that position means that the righteousness of Christ is now ours. We don't have any other. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "Christ is our righteousness." 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." He did it all.

Provisions of Being Justified in Christ

- **Peace with God**

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

- **Access into His grace**

“We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” (Romans 5:2)

- **Salvation from wrath**

“Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Romans 5:9)

And here are three products, provisions. One, we have peace with God. Romans 5:1, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Romans 5:2, and “access into this grace wherein we stand...” What’s he talking about? You and I can have a personal relationship with God in prayer. We can come directly to the throne of grace. We have access to God. Third, we have salvation from wrath (Romans 5:9). Aren’t you glad of that? We’ve been saved by His wonderful work and it has saved us from wrath.

And our whole place in heaven. Even in Revelation chapter 19:8-9 at the marriage supper of the Lamb, what does He call those white garments that we are clothed in? That fine linen clean and white? He calls it what?—righteousness. The righteousness of the saints!

In everything that I’ve studied about righteousness and justification, of which this is a simplistic approach, all I’ve found led me to believe that this is an act of God. It’s an act of God. And most of my Christian life listening to people, I thought it was the ability of man that achieved it. Most of the time I thought by the messages I heard that some how we have to do something to become more righteous. Little realizing that was Catholic doctrine, but one day I

understood that it's an act of God. He declares me righteous because I believe what Jesus did on the cross.

I was reading a doctrinal statement out of Vatican II. And when I finished reading it I thought this could be in somebody's evangelical statement of faith. It talked about Christ living His life in you. That's biblical. We fill up the afflictions of Christ. That's biblical. We are saved by His life and His love working in us. It all sounded so good. At the end of this statement it says, "However, anyone who says that we are justified by faith alone let him be anathema." Let him be accursed.

You see, it's not so much what is said as what is not said. And when you're dealing with your Catholic friends, they don't understand really what you're talking about. They hear you say things that they believe. "Why are you so upset with Catholics? We believe that!"

But as you well know, those of you who have grown up in the Catholic church, it's what is *not* being said when you discuss salvation. When you want to know whether or not righteousness is based on the merits of Christ alone, then all you have to do is look at what they say about Mary. "Apart from the mediatorial work of Mary there is no salvation" - Vatican II.

Do they say Christ died for you? Yes. Died for your sins, they even say that. "Apart from the mediatorial intercessory work of Mary, the Mother of God, there is no salvation and he who says otherwise, let him be anathema." Let him be accursed.

The following excerpts are quotes posted on the internet by the Religious Tolerance organization regarding the status of Mary.

1964-NOV-21: The Chapter 8 of the *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, passed by the Vatican Council II, and "*Solemnly promulgated by Holiness Pope Paul VI*" states, in part:

Rightly, therefore, the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man's salvation through faith and obedience. For as Saint Irenaeus says: "She, being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching...death through Eve, life through Mary. This

union of the mother with the son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of conception up to his death.

1985: Pope John Paul II recognized Mary as 'co-redemptrix' during a speech in Guayaquil, Ecuador. He said, in part, "*Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity...In fact Mary's role as Co-redemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.*"

1997-APR-9: During an audience Pope John-Paul II referred to the role of Mary during the crucifixion of Jesus: "*Mary...co-operated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her co-operation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him, she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity...In God's plan, Mary is the 'woman' (cf. John 2:4; John 19:26), the New Eve, united to the New Adam in restoring humanity to its original dignity. Her cooperation with her Son continues for all time in the universal motherhood, which she enjoys in the order of grace. Trusting in this maternal cooperation, let us turn to Mary, imploring her help in all our needs.*"

To see more on this topic visit:

http://www.religioustolerance.org/mary_cor.htm

So you see, you could pull out of that—do Catholics believe that Jesus Christ died for you sins?--of course! It states it right there; it's Catholic theology. But it's what else they say that is crucial as to why the Reformation even occurred. Seriously, just trust what God says. Trust what God says.

Let's pray.

Father, thank You for Your Word! These matters are not easy and we don't claim to be the authority. You're the authority. And Your Word's the authority. Help us to be careful in our study of God's Word. We know that these lines, these very important lines between that which is false and that which is true seem to be rubbed out today, being obliterated in the attitude of tolerance and acceptance. And help us Lord, to be kind towards all, but to be careful that we don't

compromise the truths of the gospel. Thank You, Lord. We praise You, in Jesus'
name. Amen.