

## What Do You Call a Christian? – Justified

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:9-28

As we have already noted, words change meaning over the years. Sometimes they lose meaning through overuse. Sometimes they are mishandled, causing the true meanings to be corrupted or lost. The word “Christian” has been overused and mishandled over the years. It is the purpose of this study to regain its original and true meaning through the study of Biblical words and phrases.

**The Second word in our study is “Justified.”** There are a few ways the words “justify,” “justified,” or “Justification” are used in the Bible, but we are only going to deal with that usage that deals with salvation. By definition, “Justified” means “to be declared righteous.” It is a legal term referring to acquittal. If you were on trial, in a courtroom, and the judge said “Not guilty,” smacking down the gavel – that is what “justified” means.

The problem is, before God, you **are** guilty! What would make the heavenly Father say, “not guilty?” He just can’t say that it is because he feels sorry for you or because he loves you. There must be a just reason. When talking about God’s judgement of you, there is another person who enters the courtroom. Jesus Christ has taken the punishment for your crime and offers to be your substitute. In the Father’s perfect justice, someone must pay for your crimes (sins) against God. Jesus Christ, the righteous, has made that payment. Your only plea before the Father must be the blood of Jesus Christ to pay for your sins. No other excuses or attempts to pay for your sins will be accepted. It is only the work of Christ on the cross that will satisfy the Father. See John 19:30 (*“It is finished”* = the work of satisfying God’s righteous demands was now complete); II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6-7; Romans 3:25; I John 2:1-2; 4:9-10 (*“Propitiation”* = *“to produce satisfaction; to turn away wrath”*).

**Here are some of the main Scriptures that teach us that justification is by faith and not by works (moral or religious):**

- Romans 3:9-28
- Romans 5:1-2,6-9
- Romans 8:28-33
- Galatians 2:16 cp. Acts 13:38-39
- Titus 3:3-7

Some schools of thought have tried to teach that there is a mixture of faith plus works that God requires before He will justify us. This opens the door for much uncertainty, rather than assurance of salvation. Instead of instantly knowing your standing with God, you are left in a confusing swirl of moral efforts and church sacraments. How much effort before you know that you are accepted? Which church's rules and sacraments are the right ones?

It is important to remember the statement that was probably first said by Martin Luther: "***You are not saved by faith plus works. You are saved by faith that works.***"

Some have taught that faith is just an intellectual act, merely agreeing with the facts about Christ's death and resurrection. When this kind of faith produces no changes in a person's life, it raises the question of whether that person is actually saved (Romans 2:13; 6:1-18; 8:1-13; II Corinthians 5:17). Faith produces repentance – a change of mind about sin (Acts 3:19; 26:18; Titus 3:8)

In dealing with that problem, James writes some important words, referring to justification, that have caused some people to question the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law. See James 2:14-24. To properly understand this, we need to examine how both Paul and James use Abraham as an example for teaching justification by faith.

**Abraham was justified by God when he believed / trusted the promise of God** (Genesis 15:1-6).

**Abraham demonstrated his faith by obeying God** (Genesis 22:1-12).

**James explains that God's declaration of Abraham's justification was "fulfilled" when he showed his faith and trust by obedience** (James 2:20-23).

**Paul explains that Abraham's justification before God is only by faith** (Romans 4:1-3,19-25; Galatians 3:6-14).

**James explains that Abraham's justification before men is by faith that works** (James 2:17-24). Note vs. 18 – "show me...I will show you."

**Abraham is the father of us all (Jew & Gentile) through faith in Christ** (Romans 4:16,19-25; Galatians 3:18,21-29).