

JUSTIFICATION (Dr Barry Chant)

It has been claimed that no matter what psychological problem we may face, guilt is nearly always involved (*Collins; Narramore*).

Of course, guilt is based on sin - or the idea of sin. Even if you are a really good person, you probably sin at least once a day. Maybe more. This means that if you live to be 50, you will have committed around 18,250 sins - and that's at only one a day. No wonder we feel guilty!

Paul saw the problem of guilt and sin as a terrible problem - like a cancer clinging all over his body from which he could not get free (*Romans 7:14-24*).

This where justification comes in. The word means 'righteousness' or 'uprightness' or even just 'rightness'. It can also mean 'justice' or 'justification'. The best English translation might be 'innocence'.

In our language, few of these words seem to be connected, but in the original Greek version they all have a similar root (the letters 'dik' as in English words like 'judiciary') and it is obvious that to be justified is the same as being made righteous or pronounced innocent.

The point is that when we are justified, we are free from guilt. As someone once said, it is 'just-as-if-I'd' never sinned. 😊 And that's amazing.

So how do we do it? How can we reach this blessed condition? Well first of all, let's see what the Bible says about how *not* to do it.

Taking Abraham as a model, we see that it is not by good works (*Romans 4:1-8*), religious observance (*Romans 4:9-12*), keeping the religious law (*Romans 4:13-16*) or compliant circumstances (*Romans 4:17-20*).

This is the great discovery made by the Reformers 500 years ago. That justification is not the outcome of self-effort of any kind. It is the free gift of God. People like Martin Luther rediscovered the great biblical truth that righteousness comes by faith, that is, dependence totally on the grace of God.

The Bible teaches us that when Jesus died on the cross he took away our guilt. In fact, he carried our sins in his own body on the cross and actually *became* sin for us (*1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21*).

Imagine that someone discovered a cure for all human cancer and that it was possible for every cancerous growth to be dealt with by simply transferring it to someone else.

Imagine further that one human being said, 'Give them all to me: I will carry the whole lot in my body.' It is impossible to conceive of such a thing.

But this is in effect what Jesus did for us when he was crucified. He took all your sins and all my sins

and all the sins of every other person who has ever lived and absorbed them into his own body. The total weight and horrible corruption of that is inconceivable. But that's what he did.

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

What an amazing phenomenon! In all of eternity, Jesus Christ had never known sin. Now, for the first time ever, sin penetrated the godhead. No wonder Jesus cried out on the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

And wonderfully, just as our sin was imputed and imparted to him, so, in a greater miracle, his innocence is imputed and imparted to us!

The apostle Paul says in ***Romans 8:1*** *'Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'*. The statement is a strong one. For emphasis, the word 'no' actually comes first in the original Greek text.

More than that, it is not a common negative, but a strong term that could best be translated as 'not even any'.

In clumsy English, but with accurate word-for-word translation, the text reads, 'Not even any therefore now condemnation is to those who are in Christ Jesus.' As I said, bad grammar - but great theology!

And it is all by faith. Faith is simply total dependency on God and absolute trust in the saving work of Christ. And even there, God helps us. Even weak faith works, because faith itself is given to us by God. We may pray as did one man to Jesus, *'Lord, I believe, but please help my unbelief!'* And he will.

What a relief! All guilt removed. All sin dealt with. All condemnation expunged. And simply by faith. True freedom is ours in Christ. Let's accept it and claim it today!

For further helpful reading on this topic see my book, *Breaking the Power of the Past*, Miranda, NSW: Tabor Publications, 2000. Go to www.barrychant.com for further information.