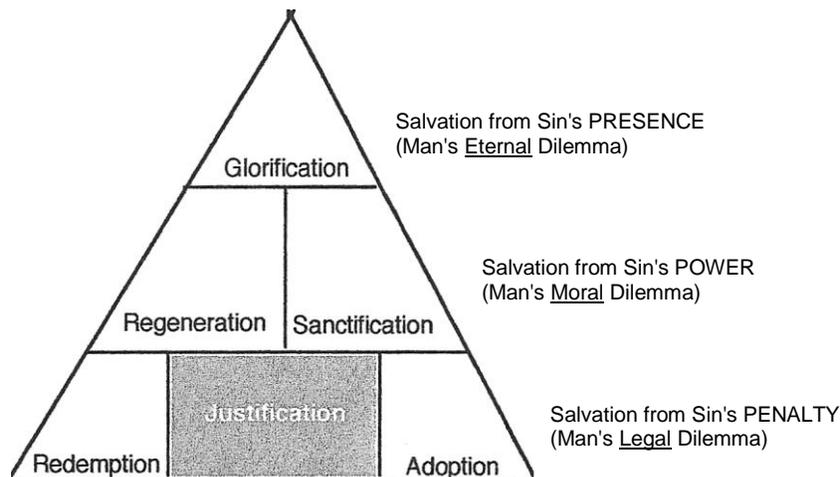


The Cross

This summary study of a theme in the Bible called, "Justification" is intended to *inform* you and *inspire* you. Your Christian walk will never again be the same once you begin to understand how incredible it is to be "justified" by what Jesus did for you on the cross. How you perceive this truth will make your Christian life enjoyable and solid. Martin Luther said, "*The mark of a standing or falling church is its perception of Justification.*" If you want to be a sturdy and prolific Jesus follower, this brief study should help you immensely.



This diagram represents salvation in its various facets. The writer of Hebrews says, "*He is able to save completely those who come to God through Christ*" (Hebrews 7:25). The salvation He gives us is *complete*, and deals with every aspect of our sinful dilemma. It fixes our *legal*, *moral* and *eternal* dilemmas. He provides deliverance from sin's *penalty*, *sin's power* and *sin's presence*. To look at it another way, God has made a "*declaration*" in redeeming, justifying, and adopting us to consider us righteous. He has also made a "*determination*" in regenerating and sanctifying us. He also has a final "*destination*" for us in glorification when He takes us to heaven and makes us perfect.

In this paper we're talking about, "*Justification*" - God's rescue operation to save us from sin's penalty - remedying our legal dilemma. If you look at the diagram, you'll notice that it's the most crucial "block" in our salvation. That is, if you take this piece out, the whole thing falls down! It's literally the *foundation* of all of God's blessings to you!

We'll look at four things in this paper...

- **What we did that made us need to be justified**
- **What God did to do the justifying**
- **What we have to do to receive justification**
- **What justification looks like**

FOUNDATION #1

What we did that made us need to be justified

SIN IS SERIOUS...

In order to measure the greatness of what Jesus did for us, I think we have to first calculate how lethal our sin problem is. In order to realize the height of God's salvation, we've got to understand the depth of the pit from which he extracted us. Our problem is a serious one. It is something only God could fix. Unless we see this, our appreciation of what Jesus did will be minimal. Take a look at a few passages which shed some light on our plight...

- *Gen. 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*
- *Gen. 8:21 ...every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.*
- *Eccles. 8:11 ...the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.*
- *Isa. 59:2-3 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.*
- *Isa. 64:6 All 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.*
- *Mark 7:21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,*
- *Eph. 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

When a jeweler shows you some of his product in the store, he will place them against a black backdrop, so the gems will stand out in their brilliance. In the same way, before He tells us good news about His grace, God makes sure we know how much we need it. Sin is not only serious, it's universal...

- *1 Kings 8:46 ... there is no one who does not sin.*

- Ps. 53:3 *Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*
- Eccl. 7:20 *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*
- Romans 3:9-19 *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. 9 Now 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.*
- Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

The word, "guilt" is found in the Bible in 102 verses, and the word, "guilty" in 81 verses! But, believe me, Christianity is not a "guilt ridden religion," as some claim. It's the only way to *get rid of your guilt!* In order to see the Good News for what it is, you have to first grasp how much you need it.

It doesn't matter whether you're *less* sinful than the next guy. If several of us decided to swim from the West Coast of California to the Hawaiian Islands, what would be the outcome for each of us? Nobody would make it. Everybody would drown! We may not all die at the same place or same pace. But no one would make it to the end! Those who don't know how to swim at all would drown right away. Those who swim a little bit would get farther, but still drown. What would happen to the good swimmers? Because they're better than the others will they not drown? Will they actually get to all the way to Pearl Harbor? No way! They may get farther, but drown like the rest of them; just in deeper water! Will those who get farther be *less drowned*, *less dead* than the others? It doesn't matter how good you are, if you're not perfect you'll not be able to earn a right relationship with God. *"All have sinned ... all*

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come short.”

GOD IS JUST . . .

He’s a wonderful Savior, but God is also the Judge of Universe. And, as such, He must be respected as a “Just” Judge. When He judges, it’s always with justice.

- *Exod. 34:7 ...maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.*
- *Deut. 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*
- *Neh. 9:33 In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong.*
- *Ps. 7:9 O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.*
- *Ps. 7:11 God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.*
- *Ps. 89:14 Righteousness and Justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.*
- *Isa. 45:21 And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.*
- *2 Thessalonians 1:5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.*
- *2 Tim. 4:8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day --and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*
- *Rom. 2:2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.*
- *Rom. 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*

- Rev. 16:5 *Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just In these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged;*
- Rev. 19:2 *for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*

Some think of the God of the Old Testament as the *just God*, and the God the New Testament as the *loving God*. They view the capital punishments, the mass massacres, and the gory judgments upon Jew and Gentile alike and say, "*That's what God used to be like; thank heaven He's changed.*" But God hasn't changed. In fact, there's more wrath and judgment in the New Testament than in the Old. The Old Testament judgments were only partial judgments upon only a few. But the New Testament contains one cataclysmic judgment that's greater than any before it in magnitude: *the judgment of the whole human race at the cross!*

***Christianity is not
a guilt ridden religion.
It's the only way to
get rid of your guilt!***

Upon Jesus was laid the sins of all people, and the justice of God totally exhausted itself upon His suffering soul. God hasn't ceased to be the *just God* He was in the Old Testament, but has provided a perfect way that His justice could be revealed, and then satisfied by the full punishment of sin in Christ.

GOD GETS ANGRY . . .

- Ps. 2:12 *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*
- Ps. 7:11 *God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.*
- Ps. 76:7 *You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?*
- John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

- Rom. 1:18 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness*
- Rom. 5:9 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*
- Eph. 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

Some think that today God is only a *God of love*, and that as such, He's not capable of being angry with the people He created. I understand the sentiment, but it really shows a lack of appreciation for God's justice. In order to run this world with equity and in keeping with His character, He must punish rebellion. He stops being God the day He stops being just. In order to understand the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus we'll need to understand God's wrath and His just penalty for sin. As one author put it, *"It is only as I realize God's wrath against sin that I realize the full significance of His providing a way of salvation from it."*

When we're talking about the anger of God, make sure that you don't compare it with the way *you* get angry and with *the things* you get angry about. God's anger is probably nothing much like *your* anger. His anger is based solely on justice. His anger is about the things which destroy His creation and His kids. He's angry with what hurts those He loves. And His anger is not shallow, testy, or irritable like mine is. His is the *just* reaction to what's not like Him. God doesn't just get 'ticked off.' He doesn't have bad days and just lose His temper (Thank God!). His anger is rooted in His justice and in His purpose to maintain the moral fabric of His universe.

All this talk about the anger of God may give you the notion that God is *against* us; that God doesn't want to help us, but can't wait to judge us. But that is the furthest thing from the actual truth. God is not against us for our sins, He's for us against our sins! Again, this isn't a 'guilt ridden' thing, but the only way to *get rid of your guilt!*

**God is not against us
for our sins, He's for
us against our sins!**

If we could use human terms for a moment, it could be said that God "had a problem!" It is truly a DIVINE DILEMMA when you think about it. How can God be consistent with His character and yet cancel our criminal record? He's a good God, but part of His goodness is His justice. He's a "just God and a Savior" (Isaiah 45:21). He's an honest and consistent God of integrity and God of His Word. Therefore, He "had a problem" on His hands. It wasn't a problem His great wisdom couldn't solve. He solved it with the cross!

What God did to justify us

Okay, so we've looked long enough at the Bad News. Our "plight" is clear - we're sinners, and bad ones at that! Not only that, but God can't accept us in that condition. In fact, He's outright *enraged* about our condition and will have to (because He's just) punish us for our crimes against Him. Unless, that is, He could find a way to satisfy His justice and appease His wrath. And that's exactly what He did!

What could God possibly do to fix the fact that though He loves us, He can't simply forgive us just because He has it in His heart to do so. His justice has to be satisfied. That's the DIVINE DILEMMA - the ethical problem of God! He *is* just, and His perfection requires consistency with His nature. This "problem" God had, had nothing to do with a fault in Himself, or a *lack* in His character. In fact, it has everything to do with *the perfection* of His character. His problem was: *How can He forgive without compromising His character? How can He do justice to His justice and still justify the guilty?!*

2 Samuel 14:14 says, *"God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him."*

In His wisdom, God devised a method for "banished people" to be reconciled to Himself without compromising His justice. He found a *way to justify Himself and us at the same time!*

Romans 3:25-26 has the clearest statement to be found in the Bible on how God solved the DIVINE DILEMMA.

"God 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-- he 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."

Because of Jesus' death, God can be both *"just and justifier"*. That is, He is able to give a righteous status to the unrighteous without compromising His own righteousness! But how? By putting Himself in the path of His own righteous anger and taking on Himself the punishment we deserved! He did it by sending Jesus to die as our Substitute; by taking our guiltiness and the judgment commensurate to that guiltiness.

What we're saying is that God didn't lower His standard (His justice) in order to save us. He found a way to maintain His integrity while providing us with forgiveness. It would have been immoral on any other basis!

Paul wrote that God, *"cannot disown Himself."* (2 Timothy 2: 13) That is, He can't

be anything other than Himself. Being perfect, God has nothing in Himself which is incompatible with Himself, and therefore has nothing to deny or disown. Because that's true, He can't disown that part of Him which is *just* in order to *give* us a clean slate. His justice has to fit into the equation. He has to honor that part (as well as every other part of His being) in every action He takes. A.W. Tozer wrote, "*All of God does all that God does.*" He's not schizophrenic. He never has any part of His being contradicting any other part. He always acts in perfect integrity (wholeness) - in perfect harmony within Himself.

So, because He can't *disown* Himself, He therefore can't *forgive* without a cross! The substitutionary death of Jesus is the only way He could be consistent with His character, not disown Himself, and still *forgive* guilty people!

Don't get the idea that the cross made God *willing* to *forgive* us. He was always *willing*, but not always *able* to forgive without compromising His character. God has always *loved* us. That's *never* been the issue. Jesus dying on the cross didn't make Him *love* us. He *loved* us, and therefore wisely contrived a way for sin to be punished, justice to be done, and set the guilty parties set free. *What justice demanded, love provided!*

God didn't change from a *God of wrath* to a *God of love*. But, as a God of love, He provided a way for His wrath to be exhausted in a just fashion. God's *feelings* for us didn't change, but His *treatment* of us did. He can now be a "Just God and a Savior." He saved us and satisfied Himself at the same time!

He can now be a
"just God and a Savior"

- Isa. 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- Isa. 53:12 *... and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*
- 1 Pet. 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*
- 1 Pet. 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,*

- 1 John 4: 10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*
- Gal. 3:13 *Christ 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."*

What this says about the cross is so important. It means that when Jesus died, though He was **personally innocent**, He hung there **judicially guilty**. He had never sinned, yet He died a guilty man in our place. *He took our place in punishment that we might take His place in reward!* He became sin with our sin that we might become righteous with His righteousness!

2 Corinthians 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

John Stott wrote, *"The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone."*

That is, only man *should* pay the price for sin, but only God *could*. Christ, being all God and all Man is the only One in Whom *the should* and *the could* come together!

Mark 15:25, 33-34 *It was the third hour when they crucified him At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani ?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

When you read the accounts of His crucifixion you'll notice a distinct lack of any intervention by the Father. He didn't speak to Jesus or help Him in any way. Why is that? Because He had turned His back on Jesus. He was punishing Him with the kind of punishment Hell has to offer for those who choose to go there. God didn't say anything, He just left Jesus alone. Even when Jesus cried out, "Why have You forsaken Me?" there was no answer from heaven. He was *separated* from the Father so that we could have access to Him. He was *forsaken*, so that we could have assurance that we would *never be forsaken!*

What we have to do to receive Justification

We've seen what God did to justify us. What actually does the justifying is what Jesus

did on the cross for us. *He* does the saving, because He's the Savior. But there is something He requires of *us* in order to receive His justifying work. This salvation is in a sense, 'conditional.' Jesus died, paid the price for everyone, but only those who appropriate His provision receive the benefits of it. The term we'll use for this condition is, "Saving Faith." This Saving Faith is the *appropriate* means of *appropriating* salvation. Let's look at four things about this "Saving Faith."

1. Saving Faith is not the thing that saves us, but the means of appropriating what Jesus did to save us.

Acts 13:38-39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Acts 16:31 "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved --you and your household."

Rom. 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Rom. 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

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

Rom. 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring

Rom. 4:24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

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. 3:11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law,

because, "The righteous will live by faith."

Gal. 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Phil. 3:9 ... 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.

We're not saved **by** saving faith, but **through** it. Faith is like the coupling which joins the train engine to the first car. The coupling doesn't pull the train, the engine does all the pulling. But it couldn't pull anything if the coupling weren't holding onto the next car. Faith is like that in relation to salvation. It holds onto what Christ did for us.

When you lean over the bathroom sink and cup your hands to wash your face, what is it that washes you? Is it your hands or is it the water? Your hands merely accumulate the water. It's the water that washes. Our sins are washed away by Jesus, but only as we take hold of Him by our faith. Another way to put it is, saving faith is like an aqueduct which connects the reservoir with the farm land. That is, like faith, the aqueduct is the medium through which the water travels to get to the parched ground.

Faith is merely the way that we access the saving merits of Jesus. Don't confuse your faith with the Savior. It's not your hold on Him which saves you. He does the saving as you hold onto Him. That is, the *object* of your faith is always more important than your *faith itself*. If you have doubts about your salvation, don't stare at your faith, don't dwell on how much or how little you have. Focus on Him Who saves you!

We're not saved
by saving faith,
but **through** it.

Someone put it this way: Would you rather have a strong faith in a weak plank (stretched across a chasm) or weak faith in a strong plank? It's not your faith which actually supports you, it's the plank. No matter how strong your faith is you must have a strong plank to get you across the chasm! So focus on the plank (Jesus) and let it do its work!

2. Saving Faith is not a good work, but it leads to good works.

Believing in Jesus is not in itself a *good work* that somehow earns you a place in heaven. Don't think of faith as something you do to *pay for* your salvation. There's no more merit in faith than a beggar reaching for a handout. Saving Faith is just the hand

which receives what is offered. When you believe in Jesus to save you, you're merely authorizing Him to do the saving. It's like signing the form for the surgeon to do for you what you could not do for yourself. You can't *earn* salvation, but you must *receive* it by exerting Saving Faith.

3. Saving Faith is not *purely rational*, but it is not *irrational*.

Saving Faith is more than mere intellectual assent. It's more than just believing *about* Christ. We all probably 'believe about' Abraham Lincoln. We believe the historical record of his one-time existence. But the way you believe in Jesus to save you is different than the way you believe in a historical figure. Believing in Jesus is putting our trust *in* Him. We're not just believing *about* Him, but *in* Him. Believing "savingsly" in Christ is more than the kind of believing we do when, as pre-schoolers we were convinced that 2 plus 2 equals 4. James tells us that even, "The demons believe (with an intellectual assent) and tremble."

One the other hand, though faith is not based on the intellect, neither is it contrary to it. Saving Faith is not irrational. It's not an illogical belief in the improbable. It's not wishful thinking that there is a God and that He loves you. Faith doesn't create anything any more than unbelief annihilates anything. Someone thought that faith is, "Believing what you know isn't true." It's not at all irrational to put our confidence in the reality and reliability of God and His truth.

4. Saving Faith is more than "belief," it always includes repentance.

You can't separate saving faith from repentance. These are two parts of the same thing. Repentance is turning *from* the wrong direction (sin), and faith is turning *to* the right direction (Christ). Faith is clinging to Jesus, which you can't do while still clinging to your sin.

*2 Tim. 2:25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them **repentance** leading them to a knowledge of the truth,*

*Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "**Repent** and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give **repentance** and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

*Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to **repent**.*

*Acts 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in **repentance** and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*

Acts 26:20 *First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their **repentance** by their deeds.*

2 Pet. 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to **repentance**.*

Luke 24:47 *and **repentance** and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

A story is told of a French tight rope walker named, Blondin. He dazzled crowds all over the world. One day he was performing over a deep gorge while pushing a wheel barrow full of potatoes. He asked the crowd, "How many of you believe I can put a person in the wheel barrow and wheel them across?" Nearly everyone in the crowd raised their hand. Blondin pointed to one of the "believers," and said, "You there, hop in!" "No way!" said the "Believer."

"You then," said Blondin, pointing to another who had raised their hand, claiming to believe. He also refused. Blondin couldn't get anyone who said they *believed* to show they believed by getting in the wheel barrow.

He shouted, "Mom, are you in the crowd?"

"Yes, Son."

"Do you believe I can do this?"

"Of course, Son."

"Well, hop in, Mom!"

And she did! She believed in such a way as to prove it with a commitment of herself. That's what repentance is. You haven't repented until you've committed yourself to what you say you believe!

When you repent, you're not just feeling sorry for your sin. You don't want to sin anymore. It's not just *slowing down* in going your own way. It's *turning around* and going the other way! If you're going the wrong way on a one-way street, being sorry, slowing down or even stopping just won't do! You have to make a U-turn and go the opposite direction. That's repentance. To be a Christian is to be "Under New Management." Saving Faith (which includes repentance) is turning over your life to a *New Manager!*

What Justification looks like

So far we've looked at how much we need to be justified, what (Who) it is that justifies us, what we have to do to receive justification. Now let's look at what justification actually is. Let's examine (and bask in) the gift of justification that He's given us.

Let's begin with a definition and then unpack it one piece at a time.

Justification is God's righteous way of righteoussing the unrighteous with His righteousness.

It is ***"God's righteous way..."***

We've already seen how that when God provided a way for us to be saved, He did it in such a way in which His justice could be satisfied. He is therefore a ***"just God and a Savior."*** He is ***"just and justifier."*** He is ***"faithful and just to forgive us our sins."*** He couldn't disown any part of His character in order to forgive us, so He found a way in which His justice would be served while showing mercy to guilty people – *the cross!* It's God's righteous way...

...of righteoussing the unrighteous...

I admit that I made up this word (*"righteoussing"*), but it describes what the Bible tells us about our new standing with God due to the sacrifice of Jesus. He actually 'righteousses' us (another made-up word) - that is, He *declares us righteous*. He puts righteousness to our account with Him. He puts in the ledger that we've been nothing but righteous.

Rom. 4:3-6 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works...

Rom. 4:24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness -- for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Gal. 3:6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

...with His righteousness.

Since he received our unrighteousness on the cross He could give us His

righteousness. *Our sin* was placed on Him in order for *His righteousness* to be placed on us. Our sins were put to His account while on the cross, where He died under their just penalty. His righteousness was then put to our account when we repented and believed.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *"God made Him Who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."*

That is, He became guilty with our guilt, so that we might become innocent with His innocence. When on the cross, Jesus received our standing with God (a guilty standing). Then when we believed, we received from Him the standing He had with the Father (innocent, pure, and perfect). It's *The Great Exchange* - our guilt for His righteousness! He voluntarily accepted our liability, and gave us the credit for His righteous standing with God. What a deal!

If God had files in heaven on each of us, the "Great Exchange" would look something like this...

While perusing the files one day, God saw "Barney Wiget's" name. He pulls the file, and as He reads it, is appalled and repulsed at the sinful crimes He finds. He then sees the file entitled, "Jesus Christ." He pulls it, looks it over, and is well pleased by the impeccable record of His Son. He loves me, but His justice won't allow Him to forgive and justify me. He gets a brainstorm! He exchanges the contents of the two files. He puts my records in the file entitled, "Jesus Christ," and puts Christ's record in the file entitled, "Barney Wiget." Christ is then charged with my crimes and takes their due penalty. And I receive the perfect record that Christ achieved in His life. Now when God looks in my file (the one with my name on it), He sees the impeccable record of Christ! All that Jesus did in resisting sin and doing righteousness is now what God sees when He views me!

Colossians 1:21-22 *"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you **holy in His sight without blemish, and free from accusation.**"*

It's one thing to be *forgiven* and even more to be *justified*. We're not only pardoned and forgiven by God; we're treated as though we'd never committed a crime in the first place! We're *"holy in His sight, without blemish, and free from accusation!"* We are *"righteoussed with His righteousness!"* God didn't just cross out our bad record so that it's full of crossed out sins. He replaced them. He exchanged them! Justification isn't a cover-up. It's a thoroughly legal transaction. ***His righteous way of righteoussing the unrighteous with His righteousness!***

SO WHAT?

- *How does the “bad news” of our sinfulness affect the way you view yourself?*
- *How does it affect the way you tell the “good news” to people who need Jesus?*
- When the Bible says that he is a “just God and a Savior,” what does that imply about Jesus’ sacrifice?
- How can you use the story of the tightrope walker, Blondin? Plan to use it today with both a pre-christian and a Christian.
- We used the made-up word, “righteoussing,” (as in righteoussing us with his righteousness). Read and memorize a passage which teaches this, and tell someone (pre-christian or Christian) what it means.