

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

STORY OF FAITH: WEEK 14

We will focus on an important theological term called “justification” in this lesson. Theology professor, Dr. Wayne Grudem, defines justification as follows: “An instantaneous legal act of God in which He (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in His sight” (Systematic Theology, p. 723). Or, as Billy Graham once said, “Justified means just as if I’d never sinned.”

After explaining the need for Christ early in the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul now claims that God’s righteousness is revealed without the help of the Law of Moses. This righteousness is what comes to God’s people through faith in Jesus. As you place your faith in Jesus as Lord and as the one who died for your sins, then God righteously declares you “not guilty” and welcomes you into His kingdom.

Keep in mind, this justification is not something you did for yourself. You did not earn this. Jesus did it for you. Therefore, justification came to you by God’s grace. The idea that Christ paid your sin debt on the cross and satisfied God’s wrath is often called “propitiation.” Yet don’t make the mistake of thinking God’s wrath is minor or that your sin is so small it can be ignored. That would not be true. God hates sin because He hates everything that opposes His holiness and righteousness and moral character. His wrath, then, is a righteous and necessary response to the evil that causes all the suffering and misery in the world. In other words, He must respond to sin with judgment.

Romans 3:23 says, “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*” which means we all deserve God’s wrath. This is why Paul concludes that Jesus’ death was absolutely necessary according to God’s justice and righteousness, and for Him to accept us as forgiven.

Scripture memory challenge: Romans 3:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9

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ROMANS 3:9-26 (ESV)

No One Is Righteous

9 *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,*

10 *as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;*

11 *no one understands; no one seeks for God.*

12 *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”*

13 *“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.”*

“The venom of asps is under their lips.”

14 *“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”*

15 *“Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

16 *in their paths are ruin and misery,*

17 *and the way of peace they have not known.”*

18 *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

19 *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.*

20 *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

The Righteousness of God Through Faith

21 *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—*

22 *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:*

23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

24 *and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

25 *whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

26 *It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTIONS

on your own, with family, or with your small group

Why do most Americans think they are going to heaven? And why do people believe they are “good” without God?

In Romans 3, Paul introduces the concept of justification by faith. What does it mean to be justified by faith? Can you explain it?

Paul also discusses the concept of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. How is this different from being righteous by keeping the rules (i.e. the Law)? Does it have implications for us today?

How would you describe (or defend) the wrath of God to a nonbeliever? How does His anger differ from ours?

Romans 3:9-18 states that no one is righteous. How do those verses sit with you? Do you agree or disagree?