

Justification is About Justice

1. In Hebrew, righteousness and justice share the same word and are connected linguistically. Likewise in the New Testament, righteousness and justification share the same Greek word; thus, these words must be understood in the context of their Hebrew background. Carefully observe these passages and discuss what you see in their relationship. Can you think of another word that describes “justify?” What is the opposite of condemn?

“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court for judgment, and the judges judge their case, and they **justify** the **righteous** and condemn the wicked, (Deut 25:1, LSB)

But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be **justified**, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matt 12:36-37, LSB)

2. Throughout the Bible, salvation is often viewed in legal terms. Do you understand all these key terms? Who does God consider righteous? Who is seeking justice? How do you become righteous?

So you will return and see the distinction between the **righteous** and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. (Mal 3:18, LSB)

But now apart from the Law the **righteousness** of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the **righteousness** of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being **justified** as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, for a demonstration of His **righteousness**, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration of His **righteousness** at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom 3:21-26, LSB)

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Teacher Notes

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Ask the student: when God contrasts “righteous” with “wicked,” what does that tell you? By what standard is “wicked” determined?

It is by God’s standard that a person is seen as righteous or wicked. At this time, the Law of Moses is being presented.

Ask the student: what is the distinction between “righteous” and “justify?” Can you think of another word that describes “justify?” Take some time to discuss the distinction and some synonyms for justify.

Righteousness refers to something about a person qualifies him to be righteous in God’s eyes. It’s more than a character issue, because it is all about faith in God.

Justify can be understood as “proved right” (i.e. not guilty of charges). In contrast to righteousness, justify is not about the person but rather the legal process. Does that person meet the standard that proves him right and disqualifies (acquits) him from judgment?

With a good understanding of righteous and justify, review the above passages in study.

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Help the student understand the key terms in the passage. Encourage the student to use a Bible dictionary.

Law: This refers to the Law of Moses. The covenant God made with the nation of Israel through Moses that both parties agreed to stipulating what is sin and how to atone for it to be holy before God.

Redemption: This refers to the idea of God buying back a person who was formerly “owned” by Satan. The payment freed (redeemed) the person from “bondage.”

Propitiation: This means “to make favorable”, and it refers to averting God’s wrath against a sinner. It is the act that appeased the total and full wrath of God’s judgment for the sins of a human being.

Blood: This refers to Jesus’ substitution, in our place, of paying the judicial price of our sins. Blood has a special significance to God; God reveals that blood represents the life of an animal:

‘And any man from the house of Israel, or from the sojourners who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. **For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.**’ Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘No person among you may eat blood, and no sojourner who sojourns among you may eat blood.’ (Lev 17:10-12, ESV)

Forbearance: This word can be understood as grace in which the sinner does not receive the punishment he deserves from God.

Faith: This means 1) a belief that God is alive and exists, and 2) places a trust in Him engendering an obedience to His word.

Ask the student: who is seeking justice? Take some time to discuss.

It’s important for the student to realize that God works within a judicial framework. The divine covenants demonstrate that God Himself is bound by legal agreements, which He does not violate at all.

The sin introduced by Adam and Eve violated God’s intended Creation. The justice God seeks is payment for sin in the process of restoring Creation to His original intent.

Ask the student: who does God consider righteous? How is one justified in God’s court of law? Take some time to discuss.

The righteous one is the one who has faith in Jesus Christ whose life and sacrifice demonstrated the reality of God.

Through God’s provision, Jesus Christ’s blood redeemed people from paying the price for sin. Faith in Jesus’ atonement is what proves the Believer right and acquits him from paying the penalty of sin in God’s justice system.

This is what restores our relationship with God, and recovers the image of God in the process of restoring Creation to His original intent.

Be prepared to evangelize and assist any student through the process of becoming a Believer.