

JUSTIFICATION

We believe we are justified by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law, or by works of our own righteousness.

Justification means to be put in right relationship with God. Paul said, "by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free" (Romans 3:24 TEV). Simultaneous with our "thorough change" (John Winebrenner's definition of regeneration), we are placed in right relationship with God (justified through faith).

The major emphasis in justification is that it is an act of God. We are not capable of doing it for ourselves. God justifies an individual on the basis of the merits of Christ. Justification is given to, and received by, the sinner through faith in Christ (Galatians 2:16-21). God declares the sinner cleansed from sin, released from sin's penalty, and restored as righteous in God's sight.

We believe the Scriptures teach four essentials in the act of justification: remission, restoration, God-bestowed righteousness, and new standing before God.

Remission means that the justified believer is freed from the demands of the law because those demands have been satisfied in Christ. "But the person who depends on his faith, not on his deeds, and who believes in the God who declares the guilty to be innocent, it is his faith that God takes into account in order to put him right with himself" (Romans 4:5 TEV). Remission is more than pardon from sin. It is a declaration by God that the sinner's guilt is forgiven in Christ.

Restoration means to be declared personally righteous in Christ. Sinners are not simply acquitted; they are restored as if they had never sinned. "Consider the experience of Abraham; as the scripture says, 'He believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous' " (Galatians 3:6 TEV).

God-bestowed righteousness means to be made right in God's sight because of Christ's presence in the believer. "But God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By him we are put right with God; we become God's holy people and are set free" (1 Corinthians 1:30 TEV).

The new standing before God is an absolute interchange of position. Christ takes the place of the sinner, being made sin in our behalf and judged for our sin. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the

righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21 KJV). The sinner then stands in the righteousness of Christ and is a child of God. "God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's sons" (Galatians 4:4-5 TEV).