

# Blueprints for Belief

*Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith*

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*“If the article of justification is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time.”*

- Martin Luther

*“The doctrine of justification is the great mystery of the Scripture, and the glory of evangelical religion. He that knows it not, knows nothing of the gospel.”*

- John Owen

1. Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.
  - *Romans 3:24* – “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
  - *Titus 3:5-7* – “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...”
2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.
  - *Romans 5:1* – “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - *Philippians 3:9* – “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ...”
3. Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction of His Father’s justice in their behalf. Yet because He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.
  - *2 Corinthians 5:21* – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
  - *Romans 5:19* – “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”
4. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect; and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins and rise again for their justification; nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit does, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.
  - *Galatians 3:8* – “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham...”

- *Titus 3:7* – “...so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”
5. God continues to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God’s Fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.
    - *1 John 1:9* – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
    - *Romans 8:1* – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
  6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.
    - *Galatians 3:6* – “just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’...”
    - *Romans 4:22–24* – “That is why his faith was ‘counted to him as righteousness.’ But the words... were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also.”

## Objections

Catholic/Orthodox faiths reject “faith alone” justification. Salvation is not a “legal declaration”, but a process. Faith is necessary, but not sufficient. Believers must cooperate with grace through good works and sacraments or risk losing their justification.

- 1) This is the error being challenged in the book of Galatians.
- 2) This makes salvation functionally the same as every other world religion.

## Discussion Questions

1. If God justifies us *not because of works done by us* but because of Christ’s obedience, how should this truth shape the way we respond when we feel guilty, ashamed, or unworthy before God?
2. Since faith is the *instrument* of justification and not the *ground*, what dangers do we face if we begin to look to the strength of our faith—or to our works—as the basis of our acceptance with God? How can we redirect our hearts toward Christ Himself?
3. If justification is a free gift of God’s grace, how should this doctrine affect the way we view and treat other believers—especially those who struggle differently than we do?