

BENEFITS OF THE GOSPEL

In the previous lesson we learned that all are sinners deserving God's holy and justified wrath. However, God Himself saves His people from sin and wrath by providing a substitute, God the Son -- Jesus. This is the gospel, the good news of what God has done to save us from our sins. The motivation behind the gospel is God's grace alone. There is nothing in man that merits this salvation in any way.

The atoning work of the cross applied to our life brings wonderful benefits-- justification, reconciliation, adoption, the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and glorification. In this lesson we will look at what these mean and how these benefits are applied to our lives.

I. JUSTIFICATION

Job asked this critical question - "But how can a mortal be righteous before God?" (Job 9:2b). We are clearly portrayed in Scripture as being sinners with no righteousness of our own to recommend us to God. At the same time, God is clearly portrayed as being just and holy, bound to punish the guilty.

Man's answer to the question is always some form of law- keeping or good works. God's answer is justification: righteousness credited on the basis of the substitutionary death of Christ.

Romans 3:21-24 "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Galatians 2:15-16 "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶know 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."

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A. Justification Defined

Romans 1:17 tells us that "in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed." Righteousness from God means a righteousness that comes from God and that satisfies God. Another way to say it would be a righteousness that is acceptable to God, one that He approves. We have already seen however that man does not and in fact can not have ethical righteousness. Therefore, the righteousness spoken of here must be a judicial righteousness, a righteousness that is declared.

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Romans 3:28 "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

Justification means that God declares guilty sinners righteous through identification with Jesus. It is...

1. a gift from God - not something we achieve or earn.
2. a once-and-for-all, instantaneous event in our lives.
3. a change in our standing or position before God, not a change in our actual practice. However, if one is truly justified, their faith will produce works, but this is part of the process of sanctification, not justification.

B. Justification Applied

God applies the work of Jesus on our behalf in both a negative and a positive way. In the negative sense, He forgives our sins by charging them to Jesus instead. In the positive sense, He credits us with righteousness by uniting us with Christ and declaring us righteous in Him.

1. Forgiveness of sins.

To forgive means to grant relief from payment, to completely cancel a debt, to cease to feel resentment (wrath) against an offender. Since Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross we are now no longer liable to pay the penalty ourselves. Our sins can be forgiven.

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In justification, God brings eternal judgment into the present. He declares that in Christ we are completely forgiven of all our sins; past, present, and future.

Romans 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. . ."

- a. His forgiveness is complete in quality--our sins are forgiven totally.

Colossians 1:21-22 "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²²But 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."

Isaiah 1:18 "'Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.'"

- b. His forgiveness is complete in quantity--all our sins are forgiven.

Colossians 2:13 "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful

b. His forgiveness is complete in quantity--all our sins are forgiven.

Colossians 2:13 “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.”

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

2. The righteousness of Christ.

Romans 4:3 “What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’”

Credited is an accounting term. When God justifies us, not only does He wipe out all the debt we owe from our sin, but also He credits to our account the righteousness that Jesus deserved for His perfect sinless life. As a result, we are accepted before God in the same degree and manner as Jesus Himself and accorded the same privileges.

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Philippians 3:9 “And be found in him, 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.”

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.”

1 Corinthians 1:30 “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

The righteousness we receive is not just a better one than we had before, it is the perfect righteousness of Jesus. This righteousness, like our forgiveness, is permanent and complete. We will never be more or less righteous than we are the moment we are justified because Jesus will never be more or less righteous than He already is. Our deeds don't add to His perfect righteousness in any way, and our sins don't detract from it in any way. Our justification is by grace alone, that is, without regard to any merit of our own but based solely on the merit of Jesus.

Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on Justification:
Justification: The Great Exchange – February 11, 1996
Justified By Faith Alone – August 13, 2000

II. RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation means to exchange antagonism for friendship, to bring together those who have fallen out, to restore friendship, harmony, or communion. Our sin separated us from God. We were unable to have any kind of relationship with Him. Now that we have been justified however the barrier that separated us has been removed. We are free to fellowship with God and enjoy all the pleasures that relationship includes

have any kind of relationship with Him. Now that we have been justified however the barrier that separated us has been removed. We are free to fellowship with God and enjoy all the pleasures that relationship includes.

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

2 Corinthians 5:18 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

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Colossians 1:21-22 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²²But 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.”

This means that we now have free access to God and can come boldly before Him, knowing that we are His children and that we stand clean before Him because of the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 10:19-22 “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”

Ephesians 3:12 “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on Reconciliation:
Reconciled to God – March 16, 1997

III. ADOPTION

The magnitude of God's gracious love towards us is seen in the fact that not only does God forgive our sins and allow us access to His presence, He also treats us as His very own children. As such, this means that we are given the full rights of God's children, including being heirs of all God's blessings.

John 1:12 “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Romans 8:15-17 “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear; but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

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Galatians 4:4-7 “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”

Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on Adoption:
Adoption Into the Family of God – February 25, 1996

IV. THE BAPTISM AND GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the experience in which the believer encounters Jesus Christ as baptizer and is immersed in the Spirit of God, resulting in an increased awareness of God--His presence and His supernatural power.

It was foretold by John the Baptist in each one of the four Gospels:
Matthew 3:11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Also see Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33)

This experience is distinct from regeneration but occurs simultaneously as the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer and fills him. Every believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, for it is the baptism of the Spirit that joins believers to the church, imparts spiritual gifts to them, and enables them to be witnesses for Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

1 Corinthians 12:7 “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

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When someone becomes a Christian they are baptized in the Holy Spirit and given gifts to enable them

When someone becomes a Christian they are baptized in the Holy Spirit and given gifts to enable them to serve Christ. However, due to various factors, not everyone experiences the Spirit or His gifts as a meaningful part of their lives. Additionally, though we are filled with the Spirit and given gifts at our conversion, we are commanded to seek to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit and to desire spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 5:18b "Be filled with the Spirit."

1 Corinthians 14:1 "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy."

Therefore, every believer should continually ask God to fill them with the Spirit, and be seeking to discover and use their gifts to the glory of God.

This will be discussed in greater detail in Lesson 9: "Discovering and Employing Your Gifts."

Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on Being Filled with the Spirit and Seeking Spiritual Gifts:

The Greed Need: God's Spirit – May 10, 1998

The Great Promise: The Spirit Poured Out – May 17, 1998

Pursuing the Gifts – November 8, 1998

V. GLORIFICATION

To be glorified means that we will one day be completely freed from all the effects of sin, including death, and enjoy eternity in the presence of God. Our present justification assures our future glorification.

Romans 8:30 "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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