

**Traditional Model of Justification:**

- When a person is saved initially (regenerated) God justifies His new child positionally, legally and forensically
- The believer is instantaneously credited with Christ's righteousness and, consequently, forgiven of all sins – past, present, and future
- That child of God then needs to follow the Lord in obedience and thereby experience practical or experiential justification
- But I do not believe that model is scriptural

1

- Positional, legal, forensic justification is not taught in the Scriptures
- That doctrine came out of the Reformation
- The Reformers synthesize the doctrines of salvation and sanctification
- They believe if a person has been saved, then they have also been legally justified, and they are automatically being sanctified
- If they are not being sanctified, then they were never saved – this is the Calvinist doctrine of Perseverance

2

- Most non-Calvinists (e.g., many Baptists) also hold to positional justification, having been affected by the Reformation more than they realize
- But there is one difference for non-Calvinists: They don't combine salvation and sanctification – they see those doctrines as two independent truths (we would agree on this)
- In other words, NOT all believers are being sanctified – because although have believed on Jesus for eternal life, they are NOT following Him in discipleship

3

- Those who hold to positional, legal justification think the believer has been declared righteous from the point of salvation
- All sins – past, present, and future – have been forgiven
- But doesn't that doctrine implicitly condone licentious living?
- Because if you have already been declared righteous, and if all of your future sins have been forgiven, then what does it really matter HOW you live?

4

- That is why so many view the Judgment Seat of Christ as an awards ceremony, having no negative consequences
- Most evangelicals Christians (including Baptists), think that ALL believers will be rewarded, ALL will be the bride of Christ and ALL will reign with Him
- There will be some regret at the JSC, but it will all be over in a few moments, for God will wipe all tears from our eyes (misapplication of Rev. 21:4)

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- They think everything will be hunky-dory for all children of God, failing to realize that God's Word warns of negative reward and urges believers to persevere unto reward
- Is not the doctrine of positional justification largely to blame for this?
- When we are saved, our past sins are forgiven and we are justified at that point in time
- But the Scriptures do not say that our *future* sins are forgiven – the Reformation doctrine of positional justification teaches that

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- We must avail ourselves of 1 Jn. 1:9 & 7 to have our present and future sins forgiven
- 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.
- 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

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- We do NOT have *positional* righteousness
- Thankfully, we DO have the *provision* of Jesus living within – and He is the righteous One! – but multitudes of believers never appropriate their provision and so continue living in a worldly, unrighteous manner
- A biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification is critical

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**“the just shall live by faith”**

Used three times in the NT:

- Heb. 10:38
- Gal. 3:11
- Rom. 1:17

In every case, the NT writers are quoting Hab. 2:4

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- Martin Luther claimed that phrase is soteriological (related to matters of salvation)
- But it is NOT soteriological
- Rather, In God’s eyes, every person living on Earth today is either justified or not justified, based on how they are currently living (i.e., their lifestyle, their behavior)
- Those God deems *justified* will not be judged, while those He deems NOT justified will be judged – and that is why the future judgments are all based on works

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- The terms “just” and “justification” need to be interpreted in light of what the Jews would have been thinking from their OT knowledge (Hab. 2:4 and Ezekiel 18)
- Paul uses these terms in the same manner, consistent with the OT usage and consistent with the book of Hebrews

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Gal. 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

- To determine how the term is being used in this verse, we must go back to the context

Gal. 2:11-12 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

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**Gal. 2:13** And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

**Why was Peter to be blamed?**

- Before representatives of the Jerusalem church came to Antioch, Peter would eat freely with the Gentiles
- But when representatives of the Jerusalem church showed up in Antioch, Peter separated from the Gentiles and would not eat with them

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- Peter's change of policy was driven by FEAR of the Jews
- Other Jewish believers got caught up with this, even Barnabas

**Gal. 2:14** But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

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**Gal. 2:15-16** We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

- Paul noticed that Peter was not being straightforward about the truth of the Gospel

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- Paul is NOT referring to the gospel of grace by faith, but the gospel of the kingdom
- We know that, because the matter at hand is Peter's unwillingness to eat with the Gentiles in the presence of the Jews from Jerusalem
- According to 2:13 it's all about hypocrisy

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**Gal. 2:16** knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

- Keep in mind: the word "justified" in the minds of the Jews is the idea of being considered righteous by God
- The Jews are not thinking positional/legal/forensic righteousness; they are thinking practical righteousness — obedience

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- Notice Paul's emphasis in v. 16:
- A man is NOT justified by the WORKS OF THE LAW
- The Pharisees, for example, obeyed the Mosaic law – so did the rich young ruler – and they thought they were justified in God's eyes, but they failed to realize that merely keeping the law is NOT the means of justification

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- They had bigger heart problems – that Jesus dealt with in the Sermon on the Mount – because they were not obeying God IN FAITH
- By his hypocritical behavior, Peter was no different than the Pharisees
- He was not obeying God by faith (remember the sheet from Heaven with clean and unclean animals?) – instead, he conveyed the message that God is pleased with mere **WORKS OF THE LAW** — things like circumcision and dietary laws

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- Merely “keeping a list” is not pleasing to God
  - Anyone can do THAT and not be righteous in God’s eyes — think of the Pharisees and the rich young ruler!
  - Think of the modern fundamentalists!
- Gal. 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!
- Those to whom Paul is speaking are already believers — they had believed on Jesus for eternal life

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- Paul had been proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom — that if you remain faithful to Jesus, confessing Him and persevering to the end — you will receive an inheritance in the coming kingdom
- Along comes Peter who, out of fear when the Jews show up, reverts back to living in accordance with the OT law, instead of living in accordance to the law of Christ, being enabled by Jesus and His Holy Spirit to live righteously

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- Peter has forsaken the Christ-life of faith out of fear
- He is not appropriating the eternal life that resides within by depending on Jesus by faith
- Paul rebukes him for this, for he is not only hurting himself by not living righteously, he is hurting many around him, keeping them from living righteously also

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- Paul points out that those who seek to be justified (by appropriating the righteousness of Christ), when they choose NOT to live by faith, Jesus certainly cannot be blamed for their sinfulness
- Gal. 2:18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.
- Peter, by reverting back to the Mosaic law is not depending on Jesus to live righteously – In so doing, he is living sinfully and sending the wrong signal to everyone around him

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- Gal. 2:19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.
- Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- Clearly, this passage is about sanctification — believers living by faith as they depend on the Christ who dwells within

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- Justification in this passage is not positional, legal or forensic – it is practical
- It is the idea of living righteously by depending on Jesus in faith
- Peter isn't doing that; instead, he has reverted back to law-living, which is not faith-living, so Paul calls him out on it
- Then Paul adds in v. 21, if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain

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- Going into chapter 3, Paul continues the argument by asking how these post-Pentecost Gentiles had received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit

Gal. 3:2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

- The answer: by the hearing of faith
- This is referring to their initial faith in Jesus, at which time the Holy Spirit took up residence

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Gal. 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

- Having believed in Jesus for eternal life by faith, are you now being made perfect (being sanctified unto maturity) by the flesh?
- Notice that Paul equates “the flesh” with the “works of the law”
- “being made perfect” = becoming sanctified unto maturity – that is the pathway of re-ward

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Gal. 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—

- Paul wants to know if Jesus gives the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to those who are depending on Him by faith or to those who are doing the works of the law
- The obvious answer: Jesus gives Spirit-enabling power for victory to those who come to Him in faith

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Gal. 3:6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

- Paul quotes Gen. 15:6, using Abraham as an example of a man who believed God and obeyed Him, and it was accounted to him for righteousness
- Many commentators claim that Paul is speaking of Abraham's initial salvation, but that is not correct
- In the context of Gen. 15:6, Abraham believes that he will have many offspring, as God said

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- The way Paul quotes Gen. 15:6 in Gal. 3:6 helps us interpret how the quotation is used in Romans 4 – also in an ongoing sanctification sense, NOT soteriological

Gal. 3:7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

- I used to think this is saying that everyone who has believed on Jesus for eternal life is considered Abraham's spiritual descendant
- That is NOT what Paul is saying here!

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- Paul is talking about matters of sanctification
- Peter's lapse is his showcase illustration, demonstrating that a man is justified, not by keeping the works of the law, but by continually believing Jesus for victory, i.e., depending on His Holy Spirit who lives within
- Also, notice the phrase "sons of Abraham"
- The Greek word translated "sons" is *huios* = "mature, firstborn son"
- Firstborn sons would receive a double portion of the father's inheritance

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- *huios* is used consistently in the NT of those who are firstborn inheritors
- Thus, those mature believers who are living by faith and not according to the works of the law (or, in modern times, a list of hyper-separational "standards") are like Abraham, who also lived by faith
- God considered Abraham a righteous man, not positionally, legally or forensically, but simply because Abraham lived righteously, by faith in what the Lord had said to him

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- Those believers in Jesus Christ who go about their Christian lives IN FAITH are firstborn sons of Abraham ...
- In the sense that they are mature, walking by faith, and therefore stand to receive an inheritance in the New Jerusalem (if they persevere), like Abraham, who looked for that city

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Gal. 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

Gal. 3:9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

- When God said to Abraham, "In you all the nations of the earth will be blessed," he was prophesying of the glorious truth that Gentiles can also walk by faith, obeying the Lord – it is not limited to Jews

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- God considers ANYONE who walks by faith to be justified (righteous) in His sight
- Again, this is not positional, legal or forensic; justification is practical – the context dictates this conclusion

Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

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- Those who think that merely keeping the Mosaic law makes them righteous in God's eyes are cursed if they don't keep the whole law

Deut. 27:26 Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.

James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

- The OT law required that it be kept in its entirety

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- But no one can keep it in its entirety, thus those who attempt to be justified by merely keeping the law of Moses are doomed by it
- (That is the point Paul makes in Romans)
- They are unrighteous and will be judged by God accordingly
- Incidentally, that is why all the judgments are according to works

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**KEY VERSE:** Gal. 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

- God declares as justified those who are living by faith, not those who are trying to keep the law

Gal. 3:13-14 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us ... that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

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- Neither Jews nor Gentiles are bound to keep the law, which brings a curse to those who do not obey it fully, thus Jesus became the curse:

Col. 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

- According to Gal. 2:20, which is contextual, only those who are living by faith in Jesus are being sanctified and are deemed righteous

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- Gal. 3:14 emphasizes that this blessing is for the Gentiles too
- The entire passage is about sanctification by faith rather than sanctification by attempting to keep the law of Moses – keeping in mind the showcase illustration of Peter refusing to eat with the Gentiles
- The same terminology is used in the book of Romans –

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Rom. 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

- Paul’s point is the same in Romans as in Galatians, for he is writing to believers at Rome to help them understand this glorious truth
- In Rom. 1:16, Paul is referring to the Gospel of the Kingdom – this is evident in that:

1. He’s speaking to believers

Rom. 1:7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:

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2. He says their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world

Rom. 1:8 I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

3. He is eager to visit and preach the gospel (of the kingdom) to them also

Rom. 1:15 I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

- He eventually does that (see Acts 28)

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- **Rom. 1:16** – Paul is not ashamed of the gospel (of the kingdom), for it is the power of God to everyone who IS BELIEVING (present active participle)
- For in that gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith (initial faith) to faith (sanctifying faith unto reward)
- “the just shall LIVE by faith”
- Justification is practical, and it is obtained and maintained by walking in faith, not according to the Mosaic law

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- In ch. 3-4 Paul is NOT saying that justification is by faith alone (not of works)
- His point is that justification is not by **WORKS OF THE LAW**
- From Gal. 3, Heb. 11, and James 2, the Scriptures are clear that justification IS by works – but they must be faith-filled works! (Heb. 11:6)

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**What difference does it make?**

- The primary objection to kingdom truth is:
- “But we have been justified” – and they mean positionally, legally, forensically ...
- “Therefore, it is impossible for us to receive a negative verdict at the Bema ... because we have the righteousness of Jesus!”
- Although we have the righteous One living within, and He is our provision to live righteously, His righteousness is NOT our righteousness

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- We will all be judged based on our own righteousness, or lack thereof, as we appropriate His righteousness for daily living
- After all, “the just shall LIVE by faith”

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**Rev. 19:7-8** Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

- Notice the white robes of righteousness are given as rewards because of the righteous **ACTS** of the saints ...
- NOT because they have been positionally, legally justified and therefore possess the righteousness of Christ – that is erroneous

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- Yet, most evangelicals believe that **ALL** saints will receive white robes of righteousness because they hold to the doctrine of positional justification, which is not biblical

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**What about YOU?**

**Are you prepared to be rewarded by Jesus?**

**Are you being justified by faith?**