

# Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

*Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ*

March 21, 2022

## Justifying the Ungodly

### Part 1 of 5

For most of the past nineteen centuries, theologians have labored to explain the Apostle Paul's teaching on justification. Much of their effort has resembled those who might choose to study a hippopotamus through a microscope. They may see and know much about a very small part of the hippopotamus, but will never comprehend the entire animal through such a limited lens. Paul's teaching on justification in the book of Romans is a multifaceted account of the unsearchable judgments of God. Romans 11:33. Yet many teachers have concentrated on a singular aspect of justification and treated their narrow view as though it was the whole. Those who approach the word of God in such a manner will never know the glories and vastness of this great salvation.

#### **Two Sides of Justification**

Contrary to its usage in theological circles, there are two simple ways justification can be applied to a person or situation. The first is to show someone or something to be righteous. If in a criminal trial, the defendant is found to be not guilty, he or she has been justified by the legal

process. They have been cleared of wrongdoing. However, if a guilty person is declared innocent, this is not justification, but rather a miscarriage of justice. God confirmed this absolute truth of justification when he told us that although he would *“forgive iniquity and transgression,”* he ***“...will by no means clear the guilty...”*** Exodus 34:7.

David helps us understand this first manner of justification in his repentance after his great sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. He told God, *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”*

Psalms 51:4. This last statement is more understandable as Paul quoted it. He wrote, ***“That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”***

Romans 3:4. David was saying to God, “You are justified in whatever judgment you choose to pass upon me because of my sin, and you will be found guiltless when your decisions are judged.”

The second manner of justification is only revealed after a person or situation is found to be unjust. Justification, in this situation, is the remedy for unrighteousness. Nothing that is unrighteous can be justified without curing its unrighteousness. To call something righteous which is not righteous, is, quite simply, just a lie. An unjust scale is only “justified” when it is adjusted to show the correct weight. The unjust accounting book is not justified until the mistakes in the ledger are corrected. In the criminal justice system, justification can take the form of punishment, reformation, or even court

mandated acts of restitution. We need to remember that human remedies are always limited in their ability to correct an unjust situation. God's ability is not.

## **The Whole World Found Guilty**

The first 2½ chapters of Romans set the stage for revealing the “*justification*” God provides in the gospel. In these chapters, the nation of Israel and the Jewish people are proven to be equally as sinful as the Gentiles. Paul asks, “*What then? are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*” Romans 3:9. Paul uses the record of the scripture to prove this, and concludes, saying, “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and **all the world may become guilty before God.***” Romans 3:19.

Since all the world was found guilty before God, the first manner of justification cannot apply. True justification cannot show the guilty to be innocent. To do so would be unjust in of itself. For this reason, our justification takes the form of the remedy. It is what God did to cure the unrighteousness of fallen humanity. This remedy is what Paul called “*the righteousness (justice or justification) of God.*” Romans 1:17.