The Christian’s Self-Identity Phil Congdon

“I Have Been Declared ‘Righteous’!”

Romans 3.21-26; 4.4-5; 5.1-2; 8.1; 2 Corinthians 5.21; Galatians 2.16

So far in our ‘identity in Christ’ series, we’ve learned that Christians are spiritually alive forever, and we are God’s inheritance. Today our focus is on *justification*, that we have been *declared righteous* through faith in Jesus Christ. What does this mean for us – for now, *and* for eternity?

* The meandering history of Justification!

*Off on the wrong foot: The spread of the ‘Galatian’ heresy*

*Augustine makes justification a process*

*RCism follows suit: Salvation by faith plus works*

*Reformation corrections…and fumbles!*

* Four biblical truths about justification

*Justification means to be “declared righteous”!*

*Justification is instantaneous, not a process!*

*Justification is by faith alone, apart from works!*

*Justification should result in righteous works.*



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Digging Deeper

1. Perhaps the most pervasive truth in the Bible is that we are all sinners! *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3.23)*. Since God is holy, He had three options: He could condemn us, compromise His righteousness and accept us as we are, or deal with our sin so we could be declared righteous. Read Romans 3.21-26: By Whom was God’s righteous plan revealed? How is this justification acquired? What was the cost for our justification?
2. From the late first century on, the church has confused the doctrine of justification. Paul’s first epistle dealt with this (cf. Gal. 1.6-9). What did false teachers say? How did Paul respond to them (Gal. 2.4-5, 16, 21)? What kind of person does God justify (“declare righteous;” cf. Rom. 4.4-5)?
3. Down through the centuries, church leaders have included works in salvation in various ways. One way is to say that justification is being ***made*** righteous – the ‘proof’ you’re justified is that you’ll live a holy life. How holy a life does a person have to live? What if they fall away? How would anyone know they were saved? How does this differ from being *declared* righteous? See Rom. 5.1-2 and 2 Cor. 5.21.
4. A *real* difference between being *made righteous* and being *declared righteous* in our lives is instead of living a “have to” life (in order to be justified), we live a “thank you” life (because we *are* justified)! Reflect on Romans 5.1-2, 8.1; and 2 Cor. 5.21, and what motivates you to live for Christ.