

Salvation

Part 2 Article IV

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Key Text:

Romans 3:23-26: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Romans 5:9-11: “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

Romans 8:28-30: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 8:33: “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies.”

Romans 10:9-10: “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Romans 10:13: “For “*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*”

1 Corinthians 1:30: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Galatians 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.”

Galatians 5:22-25: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Philippians 2:12-13: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.”

Justification, BF&M Article 4b

One of the most amazing statements in the Bible occurs in Romans 4:5. Here Paul instructs his readers that God, whose character is that of infinite righteousness and who is the standard bearer of perfect justice, actually “justifies the ungodly.”

How can God justify (i.e., declare righteous) the ungodly (i.e., those who by nature, thought, word and deed are thoroughly unrighteous)?

Allowing Stalin, Hitler, Mao or Pol Pot to stand before a court of international justice and be declared fully and totally innocent in the face of genocide and despicable war crimes would pale in comparison to the horrid betrayal of justice indicated by this phrase – perpetrated by none less than God the Almighty.

And the *BF&M* article on justification affirms that “justification” is God’s “full acquittal” of “sinners.” We stand before God as morally “not guilty” of all our sins and willful disobedience against Him.

The “problem of divine acquittal” threatens to bring the holiness, righteousness, justice and moral nature of God and his ways cascading down the perilous cliffs of moral dissolution and anarchy.

But herein lies the gospel! While it would be entirely just for God to justify the righteous (of which, however, there is none – Rom3:23), or to condemn the ungodly (which we all, without exception, deserve – Rom 6:23a; Gal 3:10); in fact God has designed the means by which he can legally, morally and righteously justify the ungodly.

“On what basis can he do this?” The Bible and this article of faith give three facets of this answer.

First, the ground of sinners’ justification is the “redemptions which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). As this article puts it, God justifies “upon principles of His righteousness.” Romans 3:25-26 explains how this can be. In the shed blood of Christ, the sinless and innocent sin bearer, God “demonstrated His righteousness.”

God satisfies His just demands against our sin by judging our sin in and through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. God, then, is just to justify sinners insofar as their sin is fully judged and paid for in and by his Son. Christ took what was ours: sin. He gave us what was His: full righteousness. This has been called “the divine exchange.”

Second, the condition of sinners’ justification is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Since the sinner’s offense (sin) against God requires an infinite payment to an infinitely holy God, no amount of human works could ever satisfy God’s demands against us. We could never be good enough to earn our way into the presence of God by what we do.

Salvation by works is laughable in light of the infinite weight of our guilt and the infinite payment required to remove it. We need someone to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

But, since God in his purposes has sent his Son to take the sinner’s place and pay the sinner’s penalty, God now requires only that the sinner repent of sin and exercise faith in Jesus Christ to receive the benefits of Christ’s payment, credited to him as righteousness’ (i.e., justification).

Third, the dual motivation of a sinner’s justification is God’s abundant grace toward sinners and God’s longing to bring glory to his name through their salvation.

The sobering truth is this: God could be just, and only must, by requiring all sinners to pay the penalty of their own sin. If so, eternal, never-ending, conscious, despairing torment would rightly be meted out to all without exception and with no appeal nor basis for complaint.

But, Romans 3:26 tells us that God sought to be “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Note v.26 is not listed as one of the references on salvation. God

chose to be just, but he chose a path of justice by which he would also be gracious, declaring us righteous by faith in Christ and his substitutionary death on our behalf.

Such grace yields endless glory to God. (“Where is the boasting?” Paul continues in Rom 3:27). And such grace results in endless goodness to acquitted, forgiven sinners.

The great Reformer Martin Luther rediscovered the biblical teachings about justification by faith alone and experienced liberation of his soul. James Boyce, one of the founders of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, commented on the importance of justification, “No doctrine of Scripture is more important than that of justification.”

The biblical language of justification functions as one of the key themes of Scripture. Justification and righteousness are synonymous terms.

The legal courtroom provides the background for understanding the biblical concept of justification. God functions as the Judge in the courtroom. Individual human beings stand condemned before the righteous Judge because they did not conform to His standard. Where as an individual may feel subjectively guilty, a sinner is objectively guilty. The *BF&M* properly defines justification from this courtroom background: “justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal.” God the Judge declares guilty sinners acquitted of guilt.

Justification is not “legal fiction” as some non-evangelicals claim. Neither does justification mean the God “makes right.” In justification, God upholds His holy righteousness in that He set forth the death of Christ as a “propitiation” (satisfaction) for sins (Rom 3:25). The one without sin bore the penalty of sin to bring humans into a right standing with God (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 3:18).

In God’s act of justification, a believer receives the gift of righteousness (Rom 5:16). Generations ago, godly theologians called this “alien righteousness.” Through a

believer's union with Christ, described by Paul with the phrase "in Christ," God considers (reckons) a believer righteous because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to the believer. Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). This gift of righteousness excludes all boasting or self-righteousness (Rom 3:27).

The 1678 Orthodox Creed of General (non-Calvinist) Baptists of England carefully analyzed justification. The agent (or efficient cause) of justification is God's free grace (Rom 3:24). The ground (meritorious cause) of justification is the blood of Christ (Rom 3:25). The material cause (the stuff of which something is made) of justification is Christ's active obedience. The essence (or formal cause) of justification is the imputation of Christ's obedience for us. The means (instrumental cause) of justification is faith. The purpose (final cause) of justification is God's glory and man's salvation.

Sanctification, *BF&M* Article 4c

For some, "sanctification" is associated with abstaining from certain kinds of behavior or practices. For others, especially young people, it was associated with a lack of enjoyment or fun. But this is certainly a misguided and distorted notion of sanctification.

Biblically speaking, sanctification is hardly a negative thing. Sanctification, at its heart, not only means that we are "set apart" from sin and the disastrous results that it brings, but sanctification also entails that we are "set apart" and "consecrated" unto the Lord – a very positive action indeed!

Christians are united to Christ by faith, and as justified believers, they are being renewed and conformed to the likeness and image of our glorious Redeemer (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:9-10).

When does sanctification begin? When does it end? The *BF&M* correctly notes that it begins in regeneration. In regeneration, God brings about new life in us.

And as a result of this new life in Christ, we begin, actively empowered by the Spirit of God, to live a new life unto God “toward moral and spiritual maturity” such that, as the *BF&M* reminds us, “growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person’s life.”

In sanctification we press on with an active dependence upon the Lord (Phil 2:12-13). We continue to grow in grace, being ever conformed to the image of our Redeemer and looking with eager anticipation for that blessed appearing of our Lord when “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Sanctification, rightly understood, has a threefold meaning: a present possession by virtue of our union with our Lord Jesus Christ, a progressive life-long process of God-dependent effort on our part and a future anticipated completion which will result in our glorification.

The *BF&M* therefore provides an adequate summary of the biblical teachings regarding this precious doctrine of sanctification.

First, the Bible describes God as the primary agent of sanctification. God sanctifies the believer (1 Thess 5:23). The *BF&M* affirms that sanctification occurs “through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit indwelling” an individual believer.

Second, the Bible underscores the personal activity of the believer towards the realization of sanctification. In contrast to regeneration and justification, sanctification results from Spirit-promoted activity on the part of the believer. The believer, in other words, is not merely passive, but actively pursues a life of Christlikeness and holiness.

Third, the Scriptures highlight the positional nature of sanctification. The *BF&M* affirms two key points regarding the positional aspect of sanctification. First, sanctification begins with the experience of regeneration. Second, at the beginning of the Christian life, believers are “set apart to God’s purposes.”

Fourth, the Word of God makes clear the progressive nature of salvation. According to the *BF&M*, the Holy Spirit enables the believer “to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity.” The *BF&M 2000* here made one change from the *BF&M 1963* by changing “spiritual perfection” to “spiritual maturity.” The *BF&M* notes that growth in sanctification “should continue throughout the regenerate person’s life.”

Fifth, the Bible establishes the pattern of sanctification (1 Pet 1:15-16). The pattern or standard of sanctification is never another believer. The holiness pattern is Jesus Christ. Sanctification, then, is a process by which the believer aided by the Holy Spirit grows to be like the Lord Jesus.

Sixth, the Word of God describes the path of sanctification. The Spirit develops holiness through the path of the daily disciplines of the Christian life. These daily disciplines form holy habits in the life of a believer.

The path of holiness includes focused study of the Word of God. Jesus said, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is the truth” (John 17:17 *NASB*). Other disciplines on the path of holiness involve prayer, ministry service, and fellowship with believers. Paul illustrates the need for constant diligence on the path of holiness by means of analogies describing strenuous activity, such as athletics and warfare.

Glorification, BF&M Article 4d

This aspect of salvation is often overlooked. The *BF&M* itself devotes only a scant 17 words to its explanation.

Theologian Wayne Grudem says glorification is "...the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own."

The doctrine of glorification has to do not only with the perfecting of our material bodies but with the immaterial aspects of our being since the total person has been made in God's image as well.

The wonderful truth is God has initiated a good work in us – one which will at last be brought to fruition when Jesus returns. Only then will we finally be perfected in holiness. Our battle with sin will end, and we will be entirely conformed to the image of Jesus Christ himself. We will have put on the imperishable and been clothed with immortality. (1 Cor 15:50-58).

Scripture indicates that Jesus was raised in the same body in which he died, and this will also be the case with Christians. In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul provides us with an analogy that seems to compare our glorified, resurrection bodies to the relationship existing between a seed and its plant; it is the same organism but naturally different. There is sameness but also a glorious difference.

John also tells us that when Christ returns, "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). This is a part of the "good news" that we as Christians

often neglect – that our glorified bodies will be like Christ’s, impervious to death and sickness, with our souls filled to the brim with righteousness and truth.

Even the very presence of sin will be eradicated, and the sanctification process will be completed. When we are clothed with a glorified body, our justification and sanctification will merge as one.

As for God’s redeemed people as a whole, the glorified state will entail nothing less than a perfect deliverance from everything once entailed by the curse of Genesis 3 itself.

As for our individually resurrected, glorified bodies, they will never be corrupted. As for our individually glorified souls, they will love God wholeheartedly without reserve or qualification.

Glorification, then, affirms that the mighty salvation we receive from God encompasses more than the mere salvation of our souls, or immaterial aspects. Instead, the *BF&M* affirms our “salvation involves the redemption of the whole man.”

Southwestern Seminary professor W.T. Conner wisely commented on glorification, “Salvation would not be complete without a change of environment as well as a change in character.”

Glorification entails the resurrection of the body. What will our glorified bodies be like? The Scriptures give few details. Our resurrected bodies will be similar to the resurrected body of Christ (Phil 3:21). In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul described our future bodies by means of four adjectives: incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (that is, bodies that are a fit instrument of the Spirit).

Glorification involves the reformation of a believer morally. The New Testament affirms that believers will conform to Christ-likeness (Rom 8:29; 1 John 3:2).

Glorification means a respite from suffering and frustration. *The Holman Christian Standard Bible* has the heading: “From Groans to Glory” for Romans 8:18-28. God will liberate the created order itself from bondage associated with the curse caused by sin (8:20-21). Notice that creation’s liberation occurs at the time when believers experience “glorious freedom” (8:21). The glorification of believers is certain. Paul even uses a past tense verb to describe our future glorification (8:30). At our glorification, believers experience freedom from four frustrations associated with sin: suffering, the cure of sin, human weakness, and the incompleteness of our salvation. Glorification marks the end of suffering, bondage, and weakness.

Glorification necessitates life in a redeemed environment, the New Jerusalem. Life for glorified believers will be in the context of community. The New Jerusalem is a holy, new, prepared city (Rev 21:2). The place of glory is a city, a garden paradise, and a temple. The very glory of God illuminates this final abode of the glorified (Rev 22:5). What a glorious destiny we anticipate and look forward to!

(This study draws from the writings of Bruce Ware, Steve Wellum, Hal Ostrander and Mark Rathel.)