

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION ON ONE PAGE

Justification summarized in one Bible passage:

John 3:16–18 ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

Justification defined in the Lutheran Confessions:

The word justify here means to declare righteous and free from sins and to absolve a person from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ’s righteousness, which is credited by God to faith (Philippians 3:9). This use and understanding of this word is common in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. (Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration:III:17)

To receive the forgiveness of sins is to be justified, according to Psalm 32:1, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven.” By faith alone in Christ...we receive the forgiveness of sins, although love follows faith. Therefore, by faith alone we are justified. We understand justification as the making of a righteous person out of an unrighteous one, or that a person is regenerated. (Apology to the Augsburg Confession:IV:76-78)

A simple summary of the Biblical facts of the sinner’s justification:

- ✓ All people are sinners and have earned for themselves only suffering, death and eternal condemnation under God’s holy Law. (Ezekiel 18:20; Rom. 3:19-20,23; 6:23)
- ✓ God loved the whole world and gave His Son for the salvation of all. (John 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:6; Gal. 4:4-5)
- ✓ God credited the sins of the whole world to His righteous Son and punished Him for the sins of all, making atonement for the sins of all people. Christ has thus earned forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation for all people. (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; Gal. 3:10-13; 2 Cor. 5:21a; 1 Tim. 2:6; Rom. 3:23-25)
- ✓ God earnestly desires that all men should come to repentance and faith in His Son. (Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
- ✓ God, by His Holy Spirit, calls out in the preached Word to all men, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).
- ✓ God gives His Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace to work faith in Christ, where and when it pleases Him. (John 3:8; Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 10:17)
- ✓ God credits the righteousness of Christ to all who believe in Him, and thus justifies the believer, saves the believer, forgives the believer, adopts the believer as His child, and gives to the believer the gift of eternal life. (John 3:14,16-18; 5:24; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:21b, Rom. 1:16; 3:22-26; 4:5,11,13; 4:24-5:1; 6:23; 8:1, 15-16; 10:4; Gal. 3:24)
- ✓ God the Holy Spirit justifies sinners through the Means of Grace alone. (John 20:23; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5-7)
- ✓ God credits the righteousness of Christ only to those who believe in Jesus, and thus justifies only those who believe in Jesus. (John 3:16-18, 36; Luke 18:14; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:26; 4:5; 10:10; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:8-9)

Luther’s simple summary of this:

“All men are sinners and are justified solely by faith in Christ.”