

Living as a Justified Person

Intro: The amazing good news of the gospel is that though we have sinned against God and cannot be called righteous, He has in His grace given His Son as a sacrifice for sins in order that He might justify (to acquit of guilt) those who believe in Him. For some this good news of justification seems too good to be true!

Not surprisingly, some of those who heard this message in the first century found it difficult to accept the idea that the Lord could or even would justify a person simply by grace through faith. It just sounded too easy; it seemed to place all the emphasis upon divine effort rather than upon human effort. They mischaracterized and slandered Paul's teaching by affirming that his teaching, practically speaking, was tantamount to saying, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8).

Of course, Paul never taught such a thing; and in fact followed up his doctrine of justification by faith with a description of the life of the justified person. The person who has been justified by faith will never be the same as the result of this experience; and the NT gives us a clear picture of the life of the justified person.

As we celebrate the justification God has granted us, we too need to be keenly aware of the features of the life of the justified person. The Justified Person...

Lives in the continuing assurance of God's forgiveness

When a person comes to the Lord in faith, obedient to the gospel, he can be sure that his sins are forgiven. This assurance is grounded in the promises the Lord has made.

"AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."
(Hebrews 10:17)

But the good news doesn't stop there! He lives not only with the assurance of His past forgiveness, but also His present and future forgiveness.

"through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:2)

We stand in His grace. But it is not grace that gives us one more chance to be perfect. Instead it assures us that as we continue to need forgiveness, God's grace is available to forgive.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Lives a new lifestyle

We need justification because of the sinful lifestyle we have lived; but Paul makes it clear that once forgiven, we must not continue that sinful lifestyle.

“WHAT shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”
(Romans 6:1–2)

Paul explains that the justified person will not continue in sin that grace may abound. Instead he understands that something really important took place at his baptism:

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
(Romans 6:3–4)

Since the justified person “died” with Christ to the old man of sin, he will “walk in newness of life.”

The word “walk” is significant since it is the biblical word for one’s lifestyle. Paul doesn’t mean to say that a baptized person will never sin again; he does mean to say his lifestyle will change. And it will be a “new” lifestyle, not the old life he used to live!

Practically speaking that means that the members of our bodies will be presented to the Lord as instruments of righteousness, not instruments of sin.

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”
(Romans 6:12–13)

Lives in service to a new master

Later Paul asks the question a little differently:

Shall we sin because we are under grace and not under law? Again Paul answers, “May it never be! When we obeyed the gospel from the heart, we were freed from slavery to sin, and were made slaves of righteousness.

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

(Romans 6:17–18)

We have changed masters, and that means the way we live has changed.

For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

(Romans 6:19)

We used to be servants of sin resulting in increasing lawlessness; but now we are slaves of righteousness resulting in increasing righteousness (holiness)

Lives with the help of the Holy Spirit

The decision to follow Christ brings us into a new relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, a relationship mediated through the Spirit's word & work.

"But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." (Romans 7:6)

The sinner's life under law resulted in sin dwelling in him leaving him in a state of hopelessness and despair;

But the justified person experiences the peace and hope of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. There is great power in His gospel message to save us from a life of sin.

He pours out the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

He frees us from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

He leads us to put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13).

He bears witness that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16).

He intercedes for us according to God's will (Rom. 8:26).

In other words, we do not have to do this all on our own. We have the help of God through the Holy Spirit to live this new life!

Lives with the prospect of suffering with Christ

There is no rose garden here. We are told up front to expect tribulation.

"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;" (Romans 5:3-4)

Not everyone will appreciate a holy life. Advocates of sin will persecute the righteous.

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." (Romans 8:16-17)

And so the justified person has to brace himself for opposition from Satan and the world under his control.

But the greatest news of all is that the justified person...

Lives in hope of eternal life

The justified person has not only the assurance of present forgiveness, but of salvation from the wrath of God at the judgment.

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." (Romans 5:9)

Consequently we can live with hope, a hope that is grounded in the love of God

"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:3-5)

Conclusion: The justified man experiences real life-long change! And with that change is the greatest hope one could have! Are you living the life of the justified person?