

Alignment (Week 3)

Small Group Lesson

Last week we spoke about the difference between “righteousness” and “self-righteousness”. This week we will study what it means to be justified. Think about working outside in the heat cleaning out and organizing your shop. It’s a dirty job but somebody has got to do it, right?! If you are like most guys when you finish you look like you have been in a battle, dirt from head to toe and nothing feels better than to get in a shower and get clean. Did you know that you can be spiritually clean, as if you have never sinned?

The experience is liberating and will help you feel that you are free to be mightily used by God! Many men are intimidated to speak out about their faith because they are haunted by their past. You will never be confident in sharing your faith until you understand what it means to be justified.

I. “There is none righteous...” (Romans 3: 9-10)

Let’s make it plain, there is nothing that you can do that will make yourself a righteous person. Jesus is not a self-help method and His mission was not to come to earth to try to make us better people but to pay the price for our sin and restore us to a place of right standing with God. Righteousness is not “being good”. Even though you may do good things, your good works are not going to add to your righteousness. Doing good things may make you feel better but those good things do nothing about your thoughts that are wrong (v. 10-12), your words that are poison (v. 13-14) and your actions that are on the wrong path (v. 15-18).

Alignment question: In your own words, what does it take to be cleansed from our bad thoughts, words and actions?

II. “Righteousness is not keeping the Ten Commandments”

The “law” was given to “shut our mouths” (v. 19). It is hard to claim to be righteous if you have violated any of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20). You might say “I’ve never committed adultery” but Jesus warned that if we have entertained the thought, we are just as guilty (Matt. 5:28). Verse 20 tells us that the law points out that we have sinned. The Ten Commandments is like a mirror. It reveals where we have missed the mark. Now don’t feel like you are alone. Everyone has “fall short” (v. 23) of God’s perfect standard. The word “fall short” means to “not keep the pace” of the glory of God which is perfect. We also cannot change the standard to fit yourself into justification.

Alignment question: Why is it that we so often seek to find an excuse for our actions or sins by shifting the blame or denying our faults? Wouldn’t it be liberating to just own our sins, “yeah, I did it”, rather than try

to talk our way out of it?

III. “Justification is by faith” (v. 24-26)

Paul said all of these verses to say this; it is an act of faith. “Justify” means to pronounce and make righteous. If our righteousness does not measure up, God is going to have to give us His righteousness by faith, not works. God wants to both “impute” (give us) and “impart” (download) His righteousness. When you are “Justified” it means “just-as-if-I’d” never sinned. Wow! How awesome is that. God saw our need for righteousness, knew we could not make ourselves righteous so He gave us His if we will receive it by faith!

Alignment question: When you receive by faith God’s righteousness, what does He see when He looks at you now?

IV. “Three words that describe justification”

“Freely” (v. 24)- Like a convict pardoned and acquitted, we are all caught red handed but freely pardoned and acquitted (“I don’t remember anything like that”).

“Redemption” (v. 24) - a slave released by ransom paid on the auction block.

“Propitiation” (v. 25) – This is a long theological word that speaks of the blood sacrifice sprinkled on the mercy seat, the lid of the ark, once a year paying the price of the sins of Israel in the Holy of Holies for Israel.

App. Point: In Luke’s gospel chapter 17 Jesus healed ten lepers of their deadly disease and only one took the trouble to thank Him. For us to be made righteous Jesus had to pay it all, even His very life. Set aside time this week to spend time in gratitude to God for this wonderful gift we have received and if given the opportunity, let others know what Jesus has done for you!

Leader: Take a few minutes and lead your group in prayer for the names of men that your group is agreeing for their salvation. Look for opportunities to serve in outreach at your campus.