

What Is Justification?

Justification is from the Greek word *dikaioo*. The related words in its family include *dikaiosune* or "righteousness," *dikaiokrisia* or "righteous judgment," and *dikaios* or "righteous." Justification is defined by Thayer as, "to judge, declare, pronounce, righteous and therefore acceptable." He goes further to say, "Especially it is so used, in the technical phraseology of Paul, respecting God who judges and declares such men as put faith in Christ to be righteous and acceptable to him, and accordingly fit to receive the pardon of their sins and eternal life."

Earle states that *dikaioo* was used in the early Greek writers to signify "custom, rule, right, righteous in performing duties to gods and men." Earle further says, "Justification aims directly at character. It contemplates making the man himself right."

W.E. Vine says, "Ideally the complete fulfillment of the Law of God would provide a basis of justification in His sight, Romans 2:13. But no such case has occurred in mere human experience, and therefore no one can be justified on this ground, Romans 3:9-20." In the context, the "law" which Paul had in mind was the Law of Moses.

The word has a variety of meaning in the New Testament, but the most intriguing is the use between Paul and James. Paul is mainly concerned with a right relationship before God, while James is concerned with right conduct before God. The two do not conflict, but rather harmonize the total teaching of justification. Justification can only come about by faith and obedience, and not by grace or faith only.

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