

Administering The Lord's Supper, Romans 4:5, Made Right With God

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, start with a refresher of our understanding of how we are made right with God. We consider the words of Romans 4:5, "...to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness..."

How are we made right with God?

We know that we have each sinned against God, and that we cannot win back God's favor and approval. No amount of good and right behavior can erase our previous wrongs.

So, how can God justify us? What we are asking is -- how can God be honest and look at our sinful lives and acquit us of all guilt? In the words of Scripture in Romans 8:1, we could ask our question this way – how can it be true that there is "*no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"? How can that be the case? We know that God is holy, so that means God would never compromise the truth and "go soft" on us in order to reach a "preferred" conclusion. God does not bend the rules for certain favorite people. God would never do that. God has a holy moral standard that is unbending. That is what it means to say that God is righteous. God would never allow Himself to grant a false judgment.

And we cannot make it up to God for the wrongs that we have done. There is no amount of good that we could do to cover for the guilt of our sins or to outweigh the bad things we have said. Even if from this moment forward, we could live perfectly, and not add to our record another single sin in thought, word, or action, the past blotches would still be there.

We cannot simply rely on our current good desires. That right now, if we had it to do over again, we would wish for ourselves to live better. We cannot present our lives to God as we wish we had lived our lives. Our lives stand as they happened, and our lives are an objective reality – we did not live worse, and we did not live better – we lived exactly as we lived. God knows this, God saw all of this, and God is completely accurate and fair, and God always judges our lives truthfully and flawlessly. God does not miss anything, and God does not add anything. God judges us according to our actual behavior and our real thoughts.

So, how can God justify us?

Our one verse here in Romans 4:5 answers our question. Let me read again Romans 4:5, "...to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness..." According to the yardstick of God's measure, we are ungodly people. We may not view ourselves as ungodly, but God is the One who has sole authority to say so. God does not base His judgment on any goodness found in us. Ungodly is our core character. God's benchmark says that we are displeasing to God.

The only way that the ungodly are justified is as a gift. It is a gracious giveaway from God to us. But here is the key to understand. God gives us this wonderful endowment without in any way compromising His own moral upstanding status. God remains just, even as He grants us the status of innocent, despite our past sins.

This happens by faith. Not that our faith is itself the right status before God. Our faith cannot be our righteousness. Rather, notice carefully what is stated in this verse. For us as believers, our faith is “*COUNTED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.*”

Why does God tell us about faith, then? Because faith is our way of receiving the gift. We open the gift of righteousness of God, by placing our faith in Christ.

We did not work. We did not perform. We did not change our ways.

Our performance was poor and our ways were blackened.

Again in our verse it says, “to the one who DOES NOT WORK, BUT BELIEVES...”

Our faith has no content of its own. It is like a straw. You cannot drink a straw. You can drink using a straw. You can drink water, lemonade, tea, milk, or cherry coke with a straw. Faith is the instrument that enables us to receive Christ. By faith, we rest in the righteous Christ, and in His perfect life’s record being given to us as a gift. God pronounces us as formerly ungodly ones, are now considered by God to be righteous ones. How? Because Christ’s righteousness belongs to us by faith. Our new status is permanent and unchangeable.

As we eat this bread and drink this cup, these are proofs again that Christ belongs to us, and we belong to Christ. His perfect living is counted as ours, and we are welcomed into God’s family. We, the ungodly ones, are welcomed into God’s family. The Holy Spirit reminds you again and again, that when God the Father considers you, that God the Father finds you to be righteous in Christ Jesus.