

WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE? by J. V. Fesko

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. How would you answer the title’s question, “What is justification by faith alone?” Think through this and try not to give a quick and simple answer. (5-7)

Depending on your group, you will probably have a fairly good answer. Don’t spend too much time on this as you will need the time for the rest of the study.

2. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve stole a piece of fruit and disobeyed God. Why would this simple act be considered so atrocious as to warrant spending an eternity in hell? (8-11)

Help the group to understand this: All sin is personal. Adam and Eve’s act personally offended God. God had given them everything they could have ever needed, and they threw His love and generosity back in His face in ingratitude. Sin is *not* just breaking a law; it is personal because the Law of God is the representation of His character. If we can get people to understand this truth, they might be more sensitive about offending God.

3. In the story of Noah and the Flood, we see all three ways God deals with man. How would you explain each in light of Noah’s situation? (11-13)

Justice – is getting *all* you deserve – This was true for the people of Noah’s day, as they received all they deserved from God.

Mercy – is *not* getting *all* you deserve – The flood did not wash away the consequences of man’s sin. Noah and his family were forgiven, but they still suffered because of Adam’s sin.

Grace – is getting what you *don’t* deserve - Noah, like all the others, deserved God’s judgment, but instead, God displayed His mercy by preserving Noah and his family.

4. Read Genesis 15 slowly and carefully. Today the word *covenant* could be thought of as a binding contract or agreement between the two parties signing the agreement. Here God is making a covenant between Himself and Abraham, but who signs this contract? What difference does that make? (13-16)

God alone signs the contract! This binds Him alone to keep it, but the benefits of the agreement are given to Abram and his generations. This is significant because there is no way Abram was capable of living up to the terms of the agreement. The dead animals represented what would happen if either party broke the agreement. Since God bound Himself to the covenant, we can trust He will always keep His promises.

5. Read Romans 5:12-21. Fill in the chart comparing what we got from Adam and from Jesus. (17-23)

THE COMPARISON OF THE TWO COVENANT HEADS: ADAM AND CHRIST		
	ADAM	CHRIST
5:15	Adam's act of transgression brought death to all he represented.	Christ's act of grace brought the gift of life to all He represented.
5:16	Adam's one sin brought judgment, resulting in condemnation.	Christ's free gift (of life) arose from these sins, resulting in justification.
5:17	Adam's one sin caused death to reign over all men as their ruler.	Christ's one act, giving grace and righteousness, will cause man to reign in life.
5:18	Adam's one act condemned all men .	Christ's one act justified all men.
5:19	Adam's one act of sin (disobedience) make all whom he represented sinners.	Christ's one act of obedience (in life & death) makes all whom He represents righteous.
5:20	The Law entered the picture so that sin was made to increase.	...where sin increased, grace then abounded all the more (literally <i>super-abounded</i>).
5:21	Sin rules by means of death.	...God's grace rules by means of righteousness, resulting in eternal life in Christ!

Use this chart to take the group through the three sections of Dr. Fesko's work explaining the critical aspects of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

6. If all of our sins (past, present, and future) are all forgiven (which they are), then why can't we live any way we want? (27-29)
 God did not save us to live to ourselves; He saved us to be able to fulfill our calling – to glorify and enjoy Him. Take the group through Rom.6:1-14 to show that this new life in Christ enables us to see the world in a very different way than we did before. We now live for Christ's glory, not our own.
7. When you consider all God has done for us, what can we do to make Him "proud" of us? (29-30)
 There is *nothing* we can do, because when God looks at us He sees Jesus, and there is nothing that can make Him prouder than what Jesus accomplished. The works we do now are not done to make God proud of us, they are done out of a loving response to the tremendous love He has shown us on the Cross.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

God the Holy Spirit has been given a job to do in the life of everyone one of us who believe –to mold us into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). One way He does this is by growing the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives. How well are you growing in this Fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23? As you go over the chart on the following pages, figure out where you are on each. Make a plan you can prayerfully follow over the next year. As part of that plan, take a concordance and look up every reference to each part of the fruit to learn more about what it takes to be like it. At this same time next year, see if you have grown by at least one increment. If not, don't be discouraged, the Holy Spirit will continue His work to see this happen.

For Further Study

Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine, J.V. Fesko. P&R, 2008.

Justification by Grace through Faith: Finding Freedom from Legalism, Lawlessness, Pride, and Despair. P&R Publishing, 2008.

The Fruit of the Spirit is..., J. V. Fesko. Evangelical Press, 2011.

Find this and more at www.pcabookstore.com.

PLAN YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

LOVE

How do you evaluate your ability to love unconditionally?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

JOY

How do you evaluate your ability to “count it all joy”?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

PEACE

How do you evaluate your relationship with 1) God, and 2) others?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

PATIENCE

How do you evaluate the degree to which you are maintaining balance with 1) God, and 2) others?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

KINDNESS

How do you evaluate your ability to be wise and discerning in this area?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

GOODNESS

How satisfied are you with the way your life reflects the life of Jesus to others?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...
