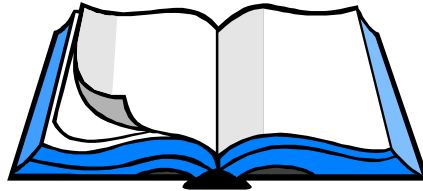


Scripture Speaks, We Confess

A Study in the Continuing Relevance of the Formula of Concord



Article III: Concerning the Righteousness of Faith Before God

Am I right with God today?

Teacher's Guide

Intro to Three-Lesson Series (Lessons are 2 hours each)

As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and of each of us who believe. *(Bible passages to support? Jn 1:29; Jn 3:16)*

As Lutheran Christians, we believe that God has justified, or made right with himself, the world because of God's grace in Christ and that God justifies, makes right with himself, each one of us individually through faith in Christ, our substitute. *(Bible passages to support? 2 Co 5:19; Ro 3:28 or Gal 3:26)*

How important are these truths to you? *(Most important teaching of our faith!)* Yet don't we often wonder about our relationship with God? When we sin, we wonder what God thinks about it and whether he'll forgive us. When something goes terribly wrong in our lives, we wonder if God is punishing us for some bad we've done in the past. When we lie on our deathbeds, we'll really start to think about our relationship with God, because we'll be seeing him soon! But *today, right now*, what is our relationship with God like? How does he see us *today*? **In this Bible study series, we want to answer this question: am I right with God today?** *(Does God answer that question in his Word? What does God's truth about my justification (my salvation and forgiveness) mean for my daily life? What comfort does it give me as I live my Christian life until death? Can I take these passages and promises of God on justification "to the bank" today?)*

Intro to Lesson One

Some people who call themselves Christian, even Lutheran, say that justification (being right with God) is a process that happens over time, over a lifetime, maybe even in the afterlife. However, that's not what Lutherans have believed in the past. That's not what WELS Lutherans believe today. Most importantly, that's not what God tells us about justification in his Word.

This first lesson of our Bible study series will look at how the faithful Lutherans of the Reformation era answered the question, "**Am I right with God today?**" We'll do that this week by reading their confession of faith concerning justification as they wrote it down in Article III of a document called the Formula of Concord, written in 1580. (Our WELS Lutheran churches today still stand behind the Formula of Concord and say so officially in their congregation's constitution. Check out ours to see if it's there!)

Next week, in lesson two, we'll look at specific passages from God's Word that answer this question: "Am I right with God today?" Faithful Lutherans have always answered their questions by finding God's answers in the Bible. That's where God has promised to speak to us. (*Bible passages to support? 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Jn 17:17*). That's where we will look, too, to answer our question.

Finally, we'll spend the third class period looking at what some other Christians today are saying about justification (whether or not we're right with God today) and compare what they say to what we have learned from God's Word about justification.

Lesson One

How Lutherans dealt with this question, "Am I right with God today?" in the Formula of Concord of 1580.

During the lifetime of the leader of the Reformation, Martin Luther (1483-1546), the Christians in Germany who believed as Luther did (Lutherans) confessed their faith before the world in a document called the Augsburg Confession (1530). As Luther neared his death, he expressed concerns that the biblical truths he had rediscovered and had taught would not be preserved by the Lutherans. He was especially concerned about the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone, since he called it "the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls." Soon after he died in 1546, his concerns became reality. Most Lutherans still agreed with Luther, that God makes us right with him by giving us Christ's righteousness. However, a few Lutherans started to teach different things about how God justifies us, or makes us right with him. Two of the main dissenters were Andreas Osiander and Francesco Stancarus. We'll just call them Ozzie and Stan...



Ozzie

Ozzie was a German Lutheran pastor who outlived Luther. One historian says that he was "as proud, overbearing, and passionate as he was gifted, keen, sagacious, learned, eloquent, and energetic." (Bente, p. 153)

Ozzie taught that only the divinity of Christ makes us right with God. This is what he meant: "*But if the question be asked what is righteousness, one must answer: Christ dwelling in us by faith is our Righteousness according to His divinity; and the forgiveness of sins, which is not Christ himself, is a preparation and cause that offers us His righteousness, which He is Himself.*" (Seeberg, *Dogg.* 4, 498, as quoted by Bente).

Do you see anything wrong with what Ozzie was saying? (Take answers, ask for passages to support, hold on to them until later...)

EXPLANATORY QUOTE: "To [Ozzie] justification was not an act by which God *declares* sinners righteous but an act by which God gradually *makes* a man just by dwelling in him. He said that Christ the man was righteous because of the indwelling divine nature; therefore we are justified by faith because faith unites us with the divine nature, and God's righteousness becomes ours in this way." (Klug, p. 35)



Stan

Stan was a former Catholic priest from Italy, who came to Germany because he disagreed with Roman Catholicism. One historian indicates that he disagreed with almost everyone, in fact: “Vain, opinionated, haughty, stubborn, and insolent as he was, he roamed about, creating trouble, wherever he appeared... treated all his opponents as ignoramuses and spoke contemptuously of Luther and Melancthon...” (Bente, p. 159). It’s not a surprise, then, that when Stan met Ozzie, he wanted to argue with his teaching, too. “[Stan] differed with [Ozzie] on the question of whether it was the divine nature or the human nature of Christ that effected our redemption. He taught that it was the human nature alone.” (Klug, p. 36)

Stan taught that only the humanity of Christ makes us right with God. This is what he meant: “*Only the human nature of the God-man [Jesus] is sent, and only the human nature of the Mediator [Jesus] acts in a reconciling way. Men are reconciled by Christ’s death on the cross; but the blood shed on the cross and death are peculiar to the human nature, not the divine nature; hence we are reconciled by the human nature of Christ only, and not by His divine nature.*” (Schluesselburg 9,216ff, as quoted by Bente, p. 160)

Do you see anything wrong with what Stan was saying? (Take answers, ask for passages to support, hold on to them until later...)

EXPLANATORY QUOTE: “Consistently, the Stancarian doctrine destroys both the unity of the person of Christ and the sufficiency of his atonement... And if it were a mere human nature that died for us, then the price of our redemption is altogether inadequate, and we are not redeemed...” (Bente, p. 160)

In 1580, the Lutherans got together and worked this controversy out. They looked at what Ozzie and Stan were teaching, compared it with what God says in Scripture, and confessed the truth. They made this confession in the Formula of Concord, Article III: “Concerning the Righteousness of Faith Before God.” One important Lutheran pastor who helped write the Formula of Concord was named Martin Chemnitz. We’ll call him Martin Jr. ...



Martin Jr.

Martin Jr. was a German Lutheran who was trained as a teacher of the Bible, worked as a librarian, and later became a pastor and a great theological writer. He got involved in the controversy created by Ozzie and Stan. In the end, he helped write the Formula of Concord, which clarified what God’s Word and what Lutherans teach about justification, how we are made right with God.

[TAKE A TEN MINUTE BREAK HERE]

Let’s read some quotations from the Formula of Concord to see what Martin Jr. and the Lutherans back then believed about justificaion:

Epitome, Article III, Affirmative Theses:

1. *Against both of these errors [of Ozzie and Stan] we believe, teach and confess unanimously that Christ is our righteousness neither according to his divine nature alone nor according to his human nature alone. On the contrary, the whole Christ, according to both natures, is our righteousness, solely in his obedience that he rendered his Father as both God and a human being, an obedience unto death. Through this obedience he earned the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for us, as it is written, “Just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5[:19]).*

What kind of person was Jesus? (How many persons was Jesus?)

The Bible speaks of Jesus as unique person, who has both a human nature (son of Mary, born in time) and a divine nature (Son of God, eternal) which are distinct, but are unified (not like two planks of wood nailed together, but like body and soul or fire and iron) and are never apart. Jesus is only one person, not two.

How were Ozzie and Stan teaching wrongly about the person of Jesus?

They both spoke about Jesus as if he works as two persons: Ozzie said *only Christ's divine nature* justifies us by dwelling in us; Stan said *only his human nature* died on the cross for us. The Bible says *Christ (one person, two natures)* died for us (*Passages? Ro 5:6-8; Acts 20:28*) and dwells in us by faith (*Passage? Eph 3:17*).

Why is important for us to avoid the errors of Ozzie and Stan?

If Jesus only justifies us by his divine nature, then it was not his death on the cross as a divine-human being that saved us. Then it is not Jesus' death and resurrection that justifies us (*Contra: Heb 2:14, Ro 4:25*). If Jesus only justifies us by his human nature, then his death on the cross was only the death of a perfect man, not a substitutionary sacrifice for us. His death must mean something else (*Contra: Heb 2:14, Heb 1:1ff*). In short, if we fall into the errors of either Ozzie or Stan we will deny what God says in his Word and we will not be sure about what Jesus death means or how Jesus saves us; then we will never know whether we are right with God at all.

2. *Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins by sheer grace, without any works, merit, or worthiness of our own, in the past, at present, or in the future, that he gives us and reckons to us the righteousness of Christ's obedience and that, because of this righteousness, we are accepted by God into grace and regarded as righteous.*
3. *We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument through which we lay hold of Christ and, thus, in Christ lay hold of this "righteousness which avails before God." [Rom. 1:17 from the Luther Bible] Because of him "faith is reckoned to us as righteousness" (Rom. 4[:5]).*

How did the Lutherans of 1580 believe that they were justified by God? They believed that they were justified (made right with God) because God forgives sins as a free gift for Christ's sake. They believed that faith (simply believing that what God has done in Christ is true) is the hand that grasps Christ's righteousness, that God credits Christ's righteousness to us by that faith.

Were they right? Look up Romans 4:1-5.

Yes! (We'll take a closer look at this next week.)

- 5a. *We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word "to justify" in this article means "to absolve," that is, "to pronounce free from sin."*

Some people believe that justification is a process. The Lutherans of 1580 believed that it is a pronouncement—in other words, it is like a courtroom declaration. How will we know whether the Lutheran definition of justification is correct?

We will know that our definition of justification is correct if the Bible speaks about justification as a pronouncement or a courtroom decision, rather than a process.

Article III cites two passages to support our definition of justification. Let's look them up: Proverbs 17:15 and Romans 8:33.

Proverbs 17:15: ¹⁵ *Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.*

This passage speaks about a courtroom scenario. In this scenario, someone guilty is acquitted or justified (pronounced innocent, made right with the state, etc.); he is not transformed into an innocent man—he is simply declared innocent.

Romans 8:33: ³³ *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

This passage about the justification of sinners also puts it in a courtroom scenario. Some people or the devil may bring charges of sin against God's chosen people. But will they get anywhere with their charges? No. Why not? Because God has justified them, declared them innocent. They are right with him.

(We'll look see this more clearly in our study next week.)

Since justification is a “declaration of righteousness” rather than a process toward actual innocence, and since God has justified us by faith, are we believers right with God today?

Yes, we are. The sins we have committed in the past, present, and future are forgiven. God has declared us who trust in Jesus the Savior to be righteous. Our relationship with God right now is one of Father and son. He loves us, is here to help us through his Word and Spirit, and is ready to take us home to heaven whenever he chooses to call us home.

Lesson Two: How God answers the question, “Am I right with God today?” for us in the Bible.

Intro to Lesson:

Remember that last week we looked at what the Lutherans in the 16th century confessed about justification, and we briefly looked at a few passages showing that God’s Word speaks about justification as a pronouncement, or a courtroom decision, rather than a process. Today, we’ll look at more specific passages from God’s Word that address our question: “Am I right with God today?” Lutherans have always answered this question with the Word and that’s how we will, too, just as we answer all our questions regarding spiritual matters with God’s Word. (*Passages to support this practice? Many, including 2 Tim 3:15-17, Psalm 119:32, 105, John 17:17, Is 8:20*)

It is the aim of this lesson to solidify our definition and understanding of justification by looking closely at more passages from God’s Word that speak of justification. This is probably the most important lesson of this Bible study series. Knowing these passages will help each of us know that we are right with God today! So, knowing these passages will help us find the peace of forgiveness and joy in our lives under the Lord!

The biblical definition/understanding of justification that we came to last week was that justification is God’s *declaration* that he considers us righteous for Jesus’ sake (not that we will be *become* righteous in God’s sight only when God “dwells in us fully” as Ozzie said, or when we’ve gone through any other process to *become* righteous). Let’s solidify the spiritual cement that we poured last week by seeing other passages from God’s Word that describe justification for us. (This will take some concentration, so we’ll take two short breaks during this class period.)

Probably the best passages in the Bible about justification are those that exclude the role of works completely and include only the role of God’s grace and mercy in Christ.

Read (a) Romans 3:12, (b) Romans 3:23-24, and (c) Romans 3:27-28.

a. Is there anything in human beings that can make them right with God? No, nothing at all. A person’s works in and of themselves in God’s sight are evil and worthless.

b. How is anyone actually justified, or made right with God? Freely, by God’s grace (a free gift), through the redemption (buying back from sin, death and the devil) that Jesus accomplished.

c. What one thing within a person justifies him? Faith.

However, is this faith a good work or a requirement that the person accomplishes? No, faith is not an accomplished requirement on the part of the person; it must be the free gift of God.

Do these passages show us that being made right with God depends on God’s instantaneous declaration or on our fulfillment of requirements? It depends on God’s instantaneous declaration, the benefits of which come to the individual through God-given faith.

Read (a) Romans 4:4-8, and (b) Romans 4:16.

a. If we are made right with God by work we do for God, is that justification a gift of God? No, if that were so, justification would be something God owes us (an obligation).

Are we justified then by anything we do? No, not by any work that we do.

How are we justified? God credits us with righteousness. That is, he declares us to be right with him by crediting us with Jesus’ righteousness.

Paul says that forgiveness and a right relationship with God comes to the person “to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.” This person does not work for it. He is really a wicked person, but “his faith is credited as righteousness.” Can you describe this justification in a “bank account” scenario? (Be sure to include the role that faith and righteousness play in justification.) Justification is like God wiring an unlimited amount of money into our bank account. The wire is faith and the money is righteousness. We used to be broke and in debt to God (no righteousness while God demands

it from us); now we have unlimited cash and can pay off all our debt to God and be in good standing with him (Christ's righteousness which pays off all the debt that our sins incurred).

b. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and that through him all nations on earth would be blessed. Simply by believing God like Abraham did, we are part of Abraham's family, which is God's people. Do we have the blessings of this promise (being right with God) right now or must we wait until we do something for God or until God changes us in the future? We have the blessings of this promise—we are right with God—right now, because through our faith God gives us these blessing as a gift and it is guaranteed to be ours.

Read Ephesians 2:8,9.

This passage reiterates that God makes us right with him by grace (as a free gift) through faith (simply by believing that God has done this because of Jesus), and that this justification is in no way a result of anything that we are or have done. Is this justification something that *is happening now* or *will happen in the future*, or is it something that *has already been done*? It is already done! This passage says "you have been saved."

We ourselves are not yet perfectly righteous, but what has God declared about us?

(For more passages that exclude the role of works from our justification but include only God's gracious declaration that he considers us righteous today by faith in Jesus, see Romans 11:6, Galatians 2:15-16, and Galatians 3:11.)

[TAKE A FIVE MINUTE BREAK HERE]

Other passages showing that justification (being made right with God) is a work of God (not of us) and is something God has declared to be true today (not in the future after a process) are those that say we were spiritually dead because of our sins, but that God has made us alive by his grace (a free gift).

Read Ephesians 2:1-5.

We were dead to God because of our sins. But God has made us alive to him because of Christ by bringing us to faith in Christ. Christ's death has already paid for our sins. God has brought us to faith already today. Are we right with God today or are we still waiting? We are right with him today; we *have been saved* by grace—our justification is done, a declared fact.

Read (a) John 3:5-6 and (b) Titus 3:3-5.

a. Jesus spoke these words to the Pharisee Nicodemus, saying that we are dead and not a member of God's kingdom by nature, because we are born with a sinful nature (or sinful flesh). What do we need in order to enter into God's kingdom (be made right with God)? We need to be born again. This is a spiritual rebirth, accomplished by water and the Spirit, that lets us into God's kingdom.

b. This passage again tells us about the sinful, spiritually dead state that we were in from the time we were born. But it says God saved us from this spiritually dead condition. Why? How? Simply because of his mercy. By "the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." This refers to baptism, in which the Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts and at the same time gave us the new spiritual birth we need to enter God's kingdom.

Are we spiritually alive today so that we are living members of God's kingdom, completely right with God today? Yes, we are. God has made it so by his gracious working of faith in baptism. Baptism has not changed us into completely righteous people, but through it God has declared us to be righteous in his sight.

The Lutherans who wrote the Formula of Concord in 1580 also believed that God had declared them to be righteous and that they were right with God that day. They also recognized that God is at work in his believers to make them actually righteous, that is, to make them perfectly holy in all that they do. However, they were very careful not to mix up these two truths:

- ① that God *has declared us righteous* today through faith in Christ,
- ② that God *is in the process of making us righteous* like Christ today, throughout our lives, and finally perfectly in heaven.

They knew that if they mixed up these two teachings of God's Word, then the teaching that justification (being made right with God) is a gracious declaration of God for the sake of Christ would be lost. If these two teachings were mixed up, people would never be sure that they are justified today like God would have it. They would start to think that they were only in the process of being justified.

Read what the Lutherans of 1580 wrote in the Formula of Concord:

“It is correct to say that in this life believers who have become [been declared] righteous through faith in Christ have first of all the righteousness of faith that is reckoned [credited] to them and then thereafter the righteousness of new obedience or good works that are begun in them. But these two kinds of righteousness dare not be mixed with each other or simultaneously introduced into the article on [belief about] justification by faith before God. For because this righteousness that is begun in us—this renewal—is imperfect and impure in this life because of our flesh, a person cannot use it in any way to stand before God’s judgment throne. Instead, only the righteousness of the obedience, suffering, and death of Christ, which is reckoned [credited] to faith, can stand before God’s tribunal. Even following their renewal, when they already are producing many good works and living the best kind of life, human beings please God, are acceptable to him, and receive adoption as children and heirs of eternal life only because of Christ’s obedience.

Here belong Saint Paul’s words in Romans 4[:3], that Abraham was justified before God by faith alone because of the mediator [Jesus], without the addition of his own works. This was true not only when he was first converted from idolatry and had no good works, but also when he later had been renewed by the Holy Spirit and was adorned with many good and glorious works (Gen. 15[:6]; Heb. 11[:8])... Therefore, even if the converted and believers have the beginnings of renewal, sanctification, love, virtues, and good works, yet these cannot, should not, and must not be introduced or mixed with the article of [belief about] justification before God, so that the proper honor may continue to be accorded our Redeemer Christ and (because our new obedience is imperfect and impure) so that the consciences under attack may have a reliable comfort.” (FC, Art. III, ¶ 32-35; Kolb pp. 567-568)

Let’s see for ourselves what Paul and the Lutherans were referring to concerning Abraham by reading Genesis 15:1-6.

After God promised and Abraham believed, Abraham became a great example of faith in God and of a good life lived out of love for God. However, he was not nearly perfectly righteous—remember how he had a son with Hagar, Sarah’s maidservant and how he lied to Abimelech on one occasion to protect himself. Yet what had God declared about Abraham as soon as he believed the promises? God credited him with righteousness. God justified him, made him right with himself.

What does God also declare about us believers today? He also declares us to be righteous in his sight, justifies us, considers us right with him.

What do our good lives and good works now have to do with our justification? Nothing. They are a result of our rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, our new life in Christ, not any kind of cause or contributor to our justification.

[TAKE ANOTHER FIVE MINUTE BREAK HERE]

For discussion: What does God’s truth about justification mean for my life today?

(Perhaps use breakout groups, each brainstorming for the benefits they see in their lives because they know they are right with God today. Bring them back together to share their lists and discuss them. Hopefully this will give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to make this highly doctrinal Bible study into something very applicable to the students.)

Lesson Three: How are some Christians today answering the question, “Am I right with God today?”

Intro:

Over the last two weeks, we’ve studied the doctrine of justification, how God makes us right with him, and we’ve learned that God *has already* made us right with him. He sent his Son Jesus to live perfectly and die innocently in our place. Because of Jesus, God has declared the sins of the world to be forgiven. By bringing us to faith in Jesus, God has declared each of us believers to be righteous in his sight and worthy of his kingdom. Our justification is a done deal, accomplished by God alone and given to us as a free gift.

Some Christian leaders and writers today, however, make statements that obscure God’s teaching about justification. Some openly say that justification is a process in which we become righteous like Christ, not declared righteous because of what Christ has already done. Others make vague statements that don’t clearly tell the truth about justification. We’re going to look at some modern statements about justification. We’re not doing this to tear down others or to judge their faith, but we want to analyze their words so that we won’t be fooled by false statements and so that we will be more able to speak to others clearly about what God has done for them in Christ.

Break out into groups and divide the statements among the groups.

Within each group, read your statements and answer the following questions about each:

- ① **Is this statement true, false, or vague?**
- ② **If false or vague, why would you say so?**
If vague, how could it be understood correctly?
How could we say it more clearly according to God’s Word?

Write down the answers your group comes up with. When everyone is done, each group will present and discuss their questions with the class.

“God sees what the believer will eventually become by grace; and because of this foreseen righteousness...God justifies the believer.” (Robert D. Brinsmead, ed., quoting Karl Holl, in *Verdict*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1979, p. 2.)

“In justifying, God takes away what is past, *by* bringing in what is new.” (John Henry Newman, *Lectures on Justification*. London: Rivingtons, 1838. p. 112, as quoted by Peter Toon, *Justification and Sanctification*. Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1983. p. 115. Toon explains: “[In Newman’s view] To be justified is ‘to receive the Divine Presence within us and be made a Temple of the Holy Ghost.’ So we see how for Newman, his high doctrine of regeneration is united with his doctrine of justification. Regeneration, the indwelling of God in the human soul, is part of, the human side of, justification. For what God declares in Heaven he truly effects on earth.” p. 116)

“*To justify* means the same as *to forgive*.” (Rolf Preus. *Justification: Am I good enough for God?* Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2000. p. 2)

“Justification is ours only through our union with Christ. This union is also the mainspring of our sanctification: Christ is both our righteousness (justification) and our sanctification (1 Cor 1:30 RSV).” (Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Christian Spirituality: Five views on sanctification*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988. p. 34)

“A genuine experience of grace releases us to be totally honest in our relationship to Christ. We can own our true feelings without pretensions, acknowledge our sins and grow in love because Christ totally accepts us. Sanctification is God’s gift to us to enable us to enjoy communion with him.” (Laurence W. Wood, *Christian Spirituality: Five views on sanctification*. p. 41)

“[The believer] is not yet perfect, but he is headed in the right direction; and God, seeing this, justifies him.” (Robert D. Brinsmead, ed., quoting James Stewart, in *Verdict*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1979, p. 2.)

“Our faith does not cause God to justify us. Faith simply receives God’s verdict of righteousness, which Christ has won for us and which the gospel promises to us.” (Rolf Preus. *Justification: Am I good enough for God?* p. 10)

“Is this correct: ‘I don’t need to work at “becoming.” I’m already declared to be holy. No sweat needed?’ ... I hear moral demands in Scripture. I take the imperatives with dead seriousness. I am a common man listening for the Word of God... But *simul justus et peccator* [righteous and a sinner at the same time]? I hope it’s true! I simply fear it’s not.” (Russell P. Spittler, *Christian Spirituality: Five views on sanctification*. p. 43)

“[Paul] envisioned himself running a race. He didn’t consider himself to have been already perfected or to have already arrived, but he pressed on to attain that for which Christ had taken hold of him (Phil 3:12-16)... According to Paul, grace is free and unconditional, but paradoxically, it costs everything. It costs you your life. To follow Jesus you must deny self and take up a cross. The wise must count the cost.” (E. Glenn Hinson, *Christian Spirituality: Five views on sanctification*. p. 46)

“God’s verdict of justification must be an assent to a reality within the believer’s life.” (Robert D. Brinsmead, ed., quoting Vincent Taylor, in *Verdict*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1979, p. 2.)

“Justification by Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, is invisible.” (Wayne Mueller. *Justification: How God forgives*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2002. p. 93)

“The person with a servant’s heart... is promised a place in Christ’s kingdom... This reward [the imperishable crown] will be awarded those believers who consistently bring the flesh under the Holy Spirit’s control, refusing to be enslaved by their sinful nature.” (Charles Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*. Waco, TX: Word, 1981. pp. 102, 205, as quoted by Harold L. Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1989. p. 60.)

“If what I *am* is decided for me by what is *said* to me [by God], then the essential determinants of my life are not set by a foundation at my beginnings, but may very well enter my life later, as repentance and forgiveness and new birth.” (Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jensen. *Lutheranism, The Theological Movement and Its Theological Writings*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976. p. 67.)

“We are justified in Christ alone because the only righteousness that passes the test of God’s demands is the righteousness of that perfectly obedient life offered up on the cross for the sin of the world.” (Rolf Preus. *Justification: Am I good enough for God?* p. 15-16)

Also, check out these doctrinal statements on justification, which are still adhered to by the Roman Catholic Church:

“If anyone says that a man is justified either solely by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness or solely by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured out into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and stays with them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the favor of God; let him be anathema.” (Council of Trent, Chapter X, Canon XI, as quoted by Martin Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Council of Trent, Part 1*. Tr. Fred Kramer. St. Louis: Concordia, 1971. p. 460.)

“If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified, let him be anathema.” (Council of Trent, Chapter X, Canon XII, as quoted by Martin Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Council of Trent, Part 1*. Tr. Fred Kramer. St. Louis: Concordia, 1971. p. 460.)

Finally write out the simplest, clearest definition of justification that you can:

Justification is God’s declaration that by faith the sinner has been made right with him (forgiven, considered righteous) as a free gift because of Christ’s substitutionary life and death for him.