

# Soteriowhat?

*Taken from Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology, Chapter 36: Justification (Right Legal Standing Before God) and Chapter 37: Adoption (Membership in God's Family)*

## About Our Series: Soteriowhat?

Note: We are using Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* for the structure of this series, but the Bible for the substance of this series.

Systematic – carefully organized (all relevant passages organized into topics)

Theology – the study of religious truths

**Grudem: What is systematic theology? . . . Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic.**

Our series is divided up into three different major divisions:

Before Conversion	During Conversion	After Conversion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common grace</li> <li>• Election and Reprobation</li> <li>• The Gospel Call and Effective Calling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regeneration</li> <li>• Conversion</li> <li>• Justification</li> <li>• Adoption</li> <li>• Baptism in and Filling With the Holy Spirit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanctification</li> <li>• Perseverance of the Saints</li> <li>• Death and the Intermediate State</li> <li>• Glorification</li> <li>• Union with Christ</li> </ul>

So far, we have looked at common grace (blessings not part of salvation), election (God choosing the saved), reprobation (God passing over the lost), the gospel call (evangelism), effective calling (the Holy Spirit making evangelism effective), regeneration (being born again), and conversion (turning from sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith). Tonight, we look at justification (our declared righteousness) and adoption (membership in God's family).

## Justification (Right Legal Standing Before God)

So far in this salvation process, our sin and the guilt of our sin has not been dealt with. We turned away from it at conversion, but our sin is still unforgiven.

History aside: **Grudem: Once Martin Luther realized the truth of justification by faith alone, he became a Christian and overflowed with the new-found joy of the gospel. The primary issue in the Protestant Reformation was a dispute with the Roman Catholic Church over justification.**

**Grudem: Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.**

### A. Grudem: Justification Includes a Legal Declaration by God

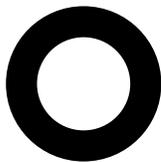
The Bible uses the word *justify* in more than one way, but the first is a way that *declares* something to be true—not in a way that *makes* something true. **Luke 7:29–30** (the crowd doesn't make God righteous, they just declare Him to be righteous). **Romans 8:33–34** (here, justification is contrasted with condemnation and we see it to be a legal declaration by God).

### B. Grudem: God Declares Us to Be Just in His Sight

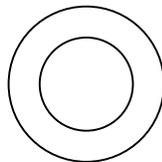
**Romans 3:20, 28; 5:1.** Justification does not make us just (sanctification makes us like Christ over time)—justification declares us just (i.e., not guilty). **Grudem: In God's legal declaration of justification, he specifically declares that we are just in his sight. . . . We have no penalty to pay for sin, including past, present, and future sins.** Therefore, **Romans 8:1.**

Our faith in Christ + God's declaration = Our **forgiveness**. While forgiveness wonderful, it is not enough. Forgiveness doesn't make us righteous in God's sight. **Grudem: It would only make us morally neutral before God.**

**Sinful**  
unrighteous  
before God



**Forgiven**  
morally  
neutral

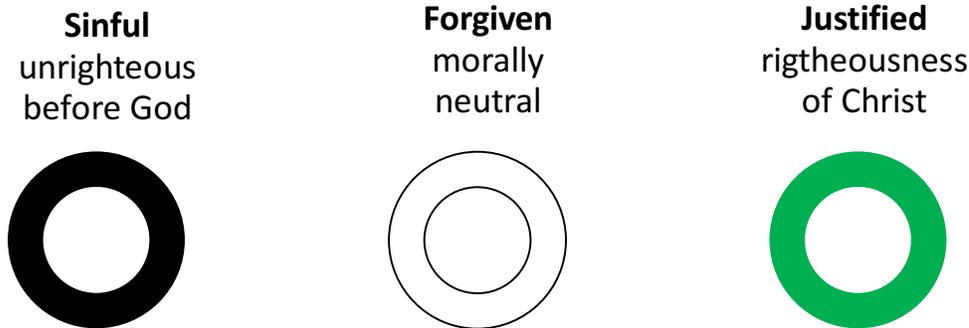


## C. Grudem: God Can Declare Us to Be Just Because He Imputes Christ's Righteousness to Us

Imputes = reckons or **counts**

**Romans 4:3-6; 5:19**. Grudem: Christ's righteousness became ours.

Our forgiveness + Christ's righteousness = Our **righteousness**



**Grudem: This is the third time . . . we have encountered the idea of imputing guilt or righteousness to someone else. First, when Adam sinned, his guilt was imputed to us; God the Father viewed it as belonging to us, and therefore it did. Second, when Christ suffered and died for our sins, our sin was imputed to Christ; God thought of it as belonging to him, and he paid the penalty for it. Now in the doctrine of justification we see imputation for the third time. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and therefore God thinks of it as belonging to us.**

**Grudem: It is essential to the heart of the gospel to insist that God declares us to be just or righteous not on the basis of our actual condition of righteousness or holiness, but rather on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness, which he [the Father] thinks of as belonging to us. This was the heart of the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism at the Reformation. Protestantism . . . has insisted that justification does not change us internally and it is not a declaration based in any way on any goodness that we have in ourselves. . . . The Roman Catholic Church understands justification as something that changes us internally and makes us more holy within. This is justification by works and the very thing that the reformers reformed against.**

## D. Grudem: Justification Comes to Us Entirely by God's Grace, Not on Account of Any Merit in Ourselves

**Romans 3:20–24**; Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:7

## E. Grudem: God Justifies Us Through Our Faith in Christ

Romans 8:33–34; 3:25–26; 8:30; Romans 4; 5:1; **Galatians 2:16**; 3:24

Another definition of justify in the New Testament is seen in **James 2:24**—where James uses the definition of **Grudem: demonstrate or show to be righteous.**”

This usage does not contradict Romans or Galatians, but rather complements it by fleshing out a definition of justification that is not connected with salvation. James is saying we are justified (showing evidence of our salvation) when we do good works. Other examples of this usage:

**Luke 16:15; 10:28–29; Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:35; Romans 3:4**

**So what? Why is this doctrine important?**

**Grudem: First, this doctrine enables us to offer genuine hope to unbelievers who know they could never make themselves righteous before God: if salvation is a free gift to be received through faith alone, then anyone who hears the gospel may hope that eternal life is freely offered and may be obtained. Second, this doctrine gives us confidence that God will never make us pay the penalty for sins that have been forgiven on Christ's merits.** Note that this is different than the consequences of sin. **Grudem: But God can never nor will ever take vengeance on us for past sins or make us pay the penalty that is due for them or punish us out of wrath and for the purpose of doing us harm. Romans 8:1. Grudem: This fact should give us a great sense of joy and confidence before God that we are accepted by him and that we stand before him as “not guilty” and “righteous” forever.**

## Scripture Memory Passage

**Romans 3:27–28: 27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.**

## Adoption (Membership in God's Family)

### A. Grudem: Scriptural Evidence for Adoption

*Grudem: Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.* (This aspect of salvation is not technical, but personal and relational.) [John 1:12](#); [1 John 3:1-2](#); [Galatians 4:4-7](#); [Romans 9:7-8](#)

There are only **two** options for family membership: the devil's family ([John 8:41-44](#)) or God's family ([Romans 8:14-17](#)).

### D. Grudem: The Privileges of Adoption

- *Grudem: Being able to speak to God and relate to him as a good and loving Father.* [Matthew 6:9](#)
- *Grudem: We now relate to God not as a slave relates to a slave master, but as a child relates to his or her father.* [Galatians 4:7](#)
- *Grudem: God gives us an internal witness from the Holy Spirit that causes us instinctively to call God our Father.* [Romans 8:15-16](#)
- *Grudem: He loves us* ([1 John 3:1](#)), that he *understands us* ([Psalm 103:13-14](#)), and that he *takes care of our needs*. [Matthew 6:32](#)
- *Grudem: God gives us many good gifts.* [Matthew 7:11](#); [Luke 11:13](#)
- *Grudem: He also gives us a great inheritance in heaven.* [Galatians 4:7](#); [Romans 8:17](#); [1 Peter 1:3-5](#); [Revelation 2:26-27](#); [3:21](#)
- *Grudem: The privilege of being led by the Holy Spirit.* [Romans 8:14](#)
- *Grudem: God disciplines us as his children.* [Hebrews 12:5-10](#)
- *Grudem: The privilege of sharing both in his sufferings and in his subsequent glory.* [Romans 8:17](#)
- *Grudem: "Brothers" and "sisters" in Christ.* [1 Corinthians 7:15](#); [Matthew 12:50](#); [James 2:15-17](#)
- *Grudem: We, as God's children, are to imitate our Father in heaven in all our conduct.* [Ephesians 5:1](#); [1 Peter 1:14-16](#)

## Scripture Memory Passage

[Romans 8:14-17](#): **14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. **15** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." **16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Last week's verses: [John 3:5-8](#) & [John 3:16](#) (say them & get a book)