

7: What Happens When You Are Born Again?

When someone is born again, having a new nature he will begin to respond to God's Word in repentance and he will start to exercise faith, because now he wants to do what pleases God and turn away from what is sinful. That will be the first outward evidence of what has happened inside, but it is not all that happens when someone is saved. The Bible uses different words to describe different aspects of the whole package of salvation.

You Are Justified

One of those words is justification. Everyone who is called by God and born again is justified: that is, he is pardoned of his sin and he is declared righteous by God.

“Moreover whom He predestined these He also called; whom He called these He also justified.”

Romans 8:30

An important distinction has to be made here. Someone who is justified is not *made* righteous in the sense that he is given the ability to do righteous or good deeds that make him acceptable to God. That is sometimes called “imparted righteousness” and it is the teaching of Roman Catholicism. Instead he is *declared* righteous.

It Is All Legal

Justification is a legal term. When a judge declares someone acquitted it does not change his nature; it merely changes his legal standing. Similarly, when God, declares a sinner not guilty it does not change his nature, it changes his standing before God. Of course a person's nature is changed when he is saved. He is given a new nature and he begins to behave differently, but that is not the reason for his acceptance by God.

The justified sinner is declared righteous because Christ's righteousness has been credited to him. This is known as “imputed righteousness”. He is accepted because of what Jesus did. It was both His death and His keeping of the law that earned salvation for His people: He did not just die to take the punishment for their sin; He did good works on their behalf too in order to satisfy God's requirements.

“[That I may] be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

Philippians 3:9

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

1 Corinthians 1:30

Question: Why do you think the distinction between imparted righteousness and imputed righteousness is important?

It Is All By Faith

Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who have faith in Him

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

Romans 3:21 – 22

But it is important to remember:

- It is not faith which saves, it is Christ.
- Faith is a gift of God, it is not earned.
- The free gift of Christ's righteousness given to those who have faith is the only way a sinner can be justified.
- Good works, as we have already seen, will inevitably follow where there is faith but they always follow justification, they are never the cause of it.

What If You Sin?

What happens if a believer sins?

Those who are justified are forgiven for all sins — past, present and future. They cannot lose their justification because it depends on what Jesus has already done and does not depend in any way on what they do.

Although a true believer cannot lose his salvation he can lose the joy of salvation. Believers who sin may well lose the joy of fellowship with God and that will continue until they confess their sin, seek His forgiveness and renew their faith and repentance. Of course, this only applies to those who are believers and not to those who are deluded in thinking they are believers when they are not and never have been.

Question: Does this mean that someone who professes to be a believer can continue to sin and still hope to be saved?

You Are Adopted

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3:26

All those who have been justified are not only forgiven, they are brought back into the family of God — the family we rejected in Adam — they become children of the Father and they are given the spirit of adoption. This refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit whom all believers have as a result of being adopted into the family of God.

"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"

Galatians 4:6

"...but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

Romans 8:15 – 17

The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of adoption since he is the one who generates in our hearts the love and confidence of a child so that we can call God, "Abba, Father".

As adopted children believers have all the privileges of sons: they inherit all the promises of God given to the heirs of salvation, they have access to the throne of grace and they will never be cast out for they have been sealed by God.

“[God] also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

2 Corinthians 1:22

There are many other privileges that go with adoption including the chastening of God:

“Whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”

Hebrews 12:6 – 8

Key Words

Justification To be acquitted; declared and treated as righteous by God.

Righteousness Freedom from all taint of sin.

Adoption to be brought into God's family with the full status of a son.

Memory Verses

- ☺ Romans 8:30
- ☺ Romans 5:1
- ☺ Galatians 3:26