



Doctrine 8: The nature of salvation

We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

Big ideas

- **Justification is a gift from God and received by faith**
- **God gives the justified person assurance of their right relationship with him**
- **Good works flow out of this right relationship with God**

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand”

(Romans 5:1–2).

Justification describes the process of coming back into a right relationship with God. God declares us as righteous or not guilty and fully accepted. Our broken relationship with God is healed and restored.

Grace is the undeserved mercy of God. It includes forgiveness freely offered in Jesus' name. It is a gift.

So being justified by grace means that our salvation is a gift of love from God. We don't earn it by being good people. We don't earn it by being religious or seeking to please him. We can't even discover it unless the Holy Spirit prompts our understanding. It is a freely given gift for us to receive.

Faith is the way that we receive justification. The only thing we need do is swallow our pride and humbly accept the truth of Jesus' love for us. It is a trusting acceptance of God's gift of love for us. It is to rely on the saving work Jesus did for us on the cross where he died for our sins.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not as a result of works so that no-one may boast”
(Ephesians 2:8).



The second half of the doctrine is a bit hard to understand, even in modern language: you who believe have the witness in yourself.

This is talking about assurance or being confident of God's love. Jesus' gift of love is permanent. We often fail, but God's love never fails. It does not depend on how we feel about our faith or about God. It depends on the word of God and the work of Jesus. The Bible says that when God saves us, God gives us his Holy Spirit, and the Spirit gives us an inner assurance that we belong to God. The Spirit witnesses to us that we are God's child.

All our lifestyle commitments as a Christian and as a soldier are a response to this work of God.

We love because we know we are loved. We value others because we know we are valued. God's love for us overflows to others. We serve and show mercy because God has served us and shown us mercy. Our lives are changed because we are in a right and thankful relationship with God our Father.

This means we will live according to values of the Kingdom of God. We will seek to live with integrity, care for relationships, look after families and marriages, and be a faithful steward of all that God has given us.

Soldiers don't make these lifestyle commitments or covenant to earn God's favour or acceptance. We make these commitments as a response to the love of Christ. The love of Christ compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14a).

Discuss

- What difference would it make if God accepted us because of the good things we did?
- If we can receive God's love as a gift, why should we bother with serving others or becoming a soldier?