

## JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH

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Romans 4:1-8

**"To the man who... trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness." Romans 4:4**

Suppose you work hard and do everything your boss tells you. Then, on payday, he hands you a check for the amount you've earned and says, "Here's a gift for you." Wouldn't you feel insulted? That's no gift--he owes you! You earned that money. "When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation" (Romans 4:3).

If we always kept the Ten Commandments, if we loved God and loved others without fail, salvation would be not a gift but an obligation, something we deserve. However, the fact is, we've sinned many times. Even as Christians, we often break the Ten Commandments; we don't love God and others perfectly. God doesn't owe us anything except the wages of sin: death (Romans 6:23). We cannot be justified--have a right standing with God--based on our efforts.

"However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:4). Although I have broken God's commands and still tend toward many kinds of evil, "God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone" (Heidelberg Catechism). What a gift, to be justified through faith!

PRAYER--God who justifies the wicked, may I never base my standing with you on my own sin-stained works but only on your promise to credit Jesus' perfection to me, a sinner. Amen.