



Jesus experienced the
WRATH OF GOD
*so that His people
could experience
lasting joy in God.*

JESUS, THE ONLY SAVIOR

INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS



Parents, how do you think your child would answer these questions?

Why is it important that Jesus never sinned?

Why did Jesus die on the cross?

What did Jesus experience on the cross?

Why is this important to know?

What does Jesus' resurrection prove?

Why are these questions important to ask? Because our children need to see and understand the importance of Jesus' perfect life, death on the cross, and resurrection so that they may comprehend justification. Justification is at the core of understanding the Gospel. It is why the Reformation that Martin Luther sparked more than 500 years ago is still important for us now. While it may be age-appropriate for a preschooler to simply learn and recite that "Jesus died on the cross to save sinners," as our children age and mature we need to provide them a more in-depth biblical foundation for understanding the necessity of Jesus' death and what it accomplished.

After all, throughout history we can find thousands of heroic examples of men and women who willingly died for the sake of others. Some were Christians, but many were not. Only one life and death stands apart from all others—the perfect life and sacrificial death of God's holy and righteous Son.

Therefore, our children must be taught this essential doctrine. Salvation itself hangs on the truth and meaning of justification. And His glorious resurrection is the final seal of approval of this justifying work on behalf of God’s people. May we diligently teach and remind our children the essentials of the Reformation, as expressed in the five “solos”:

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, on the authority of Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone!

GATHER: The topic of justification is so important that a few simple props are recommended to help explain the meaning of justification during the Instruct the Mind portion of this devotion. Be sure to prepare the props and practice with them ahead of time. You will need a clear plastic bag (e.g., 1 gallon-size storage bag), one piece of white paper, a table in the middle of the group, a permanent marker, one piece of dark-colored paper, a pair of scissors, a light-colored cloth or towel, and a trash can. You will also need a piece of paper and pencil or pen for the Pique Their Interest section.

PIQUE THEIR INTEREST



Depending on the size of your family and the age of your children, divide your family into teams (or simply work together as one team). Each team must have one proficient writer and will need a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Explain that you are going to have a quick contest. Each team will have exactly one minute to do the following:

Write as many words or phrases as you can think of that describe who Jesus is, and any words that describe something He has done.

Give the signal to begin and end. Take a minute to quickly read each team’s answers.

INSTRUCT THE MIND



Introduce, read, and interact with the following Scriptures:

The New Testament Scriptures introduce us to the Person, teachings, and deeds of Jesus. We learn about who Jesus is: From all eternity, He has existed as fully God. He is the second member of the Trinity along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Yet, He also became fully human and was born of the virgin Mary. As truly God and truly man, Jesus lived a sinless life—perfectly obeying and fulfilling God’s holy and righteous law.

We read of His many miracles—healing the sick, blind, and lame. Feeding thousands of hungry people with a few pieces of food. Even raising the dead to life again. All of these miracles were glorious deeds done to show that He was truly the LORD God.

We read about His teaching through parables, illustrations, a sermon, and commands, all of which point to the greatness and worth of God and our need to fear, honor, love, and obey Him. Jesus also made great claims about Himself—claims that showed why God the Father had sent Him into the world. Here is just one of these claims:

Jesus said..., “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”—JOHN 14:6

- ❓ **What is the meaning of this claim?** [Jesus is the only way to God. You can’t be in a right relationship with God apart from Jesus.]
- ❓ **But how did Jesus accomplish this? How did Jesus become the one and only way for sinners to become right with a holy God?** (Encourage a few responses.)

Listen very carefully as I read one of the most important paragraphs in the Bible.¹

¹If you have younger children and this passage is too difficult, the following verses could be used to convey the key themes as you use the props: 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; and Ephesians 2:8-9.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

—ROMANS 3:21-26

To explain what these verses mean, we are going to use some ordinary objects.

Display the CLEAR PLASTIC BAG.

These verses refer to God’s “righteousness” four times. God is righteous. Everything He does is right. Let’s pretend for a moment that this clear bag represents God being completely righteous, without any sin.

(Place the WHITE PIECE OF PAPER on the TABLE and use the MARKER to write the word “Me” in the center of the paper.)

? **But what about you and me? What do these verses tell us about our condition?** [We fall short of the glory of God. We are sinners.]

We are all sinners who have failed to love and honor God as we should. We have failed to keep God’s law and commands. Therefore, we cannot be “justified”—be made right with God through the law. Our hearts are darkened with sin, and we are completely helpless to change this condition.

(Use the SCISSORS to quickly cut out a large heart shape from the DARK-COLORED PAPER. Place this HEART on top of the word “Me” on the WHITE PAPER)

Let’s pretend for a moment that this dark heart represents our sin.

- ❓ **What has God decided is the right punishment for sin?** [death and hell, experiencing God’s fierce anger—His wrath]

But in our last devotion we learned that, in the Old Testament, God had made a way for His people to be forgiven, showing God’s mercy—His kindness toward undeserving sinners.

- ❓ **What did God instruct them to do?** [kill animals] **Why?** [to show that the right punishment for sin is death; something must die for sinners to be forgiven] By instructing His people to do this, God was showing “forbearance”—or patience—as He “passed over former sins.” In other words, God “covered” their sins for a time by using the blood of animals as a substitute.

Place the LIGHT-COLORED CLOTH on top of the DARK HEART.

But the blood of animals could never “take away” sin. Therefore, animal sacrifices were only temporary. God had planned from all eternity to provide the perfect, final solution—one that would take away the sin of His people once and for all.

Write “Jesus” in large letters on the CLEAR BAG with the MARKER.

God’s solution was to send His Son Jesus into the world. Jesus is fully God and is righteous, too. He showed this to be true by living a sinless life. He perfectly obeyed and fulfilled God’s law and commands. Therefore, His name belongs on this clear plastic bag representing God’s righteousness.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is Christ Jesus,
ROMANS 3:23-24

But let’s look at the problem again. This “sin”—though covered up—is still there.

Remove the LIGHT-COLORED CLOTH from the DARK HEART and set the cloth aside.

This is where this really important phrase comes in from Romans 3:24b-25a...

*...Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward
as a propitiation by his blood,—ROMANS 3:24B-25A*

- ❓ **What do you think this verse means?** (Encourage a few responses.)
Here is a clue...

Draw a large, simple cross on the CLEAR BAG with the MARKER, and then place the DARK HEART within the bag. Also, if your children are using the *Glorious God, Glorious Gospel Notebook*, have them draw a cross after the words “God’s solution for man’s sin problem.”

The word “propitiation” means to fully receive and absorb God’s wrath at sin in such a way that the punishment for sin is completely satisfied, so God can now show His favor. That is what Jesus did for His sinful people when He bled and died on the cross. He took away their sin.

Remove the DARK HEART from the PLASTIC BAG. Give it to a child and instruct him to quickly throw it in the TRASH CAN.

But Jesus doesn’t just take away sins. He also gives His people something that they need. Jesus gives to them His perfect righteousness.

Place the EMPTY CLEAR PLASTIC BAG on top of the WHITE PAPER so that the word “Me” is visible.

So now God looks at His people through Jesus’ payment on the cross. He sees them as forgiven, righteous, and “Not guilty.” Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is proof that He accomplished this. Therefore, God’s people will never have to fear God’s wrath. God’s people are justified and redeemed through what Jesus has done. It is completely apart from anything we have done. That is why we are reminded in the passage that it is “by his grace as a gift” (Romans 3:24).

- ❓ **How does a person receive this gift?** [by faith in Jesus, believing in Him]

Here is how our Romans 3:21-26 passage states this...

*...through faith in Jesus Christ for
all who believe.* (verse 22)

... received by faith. (verse 25)

... the one who has faith in Jesus. (verse 26)

SUMMARY

Jesus came into the world to do what we could never do. Jesus came to save His sinful people from God's righteous judgment. Jesus took the sin of His people and died in our place. Jesus experienced the wrath of God so that His people could experience lasting joy in God. Jesus came to be the perfect Law-keeper in our place. Jesus came to proclaim to sinners the most wonderful news in the world: There is salvation in Jesus! That is the good news of the Gospel.

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ENGAGE THE HEART



Choose one or more of the following topics to discuss:

JESUS, THE SINLESS GOD-MAN

What are some of the commands of God? Can you keep all of them all the time? Do you think that any person could? What does it tell you about Jesus that He could perfectly keep the law? Why did God have to send His own Son to pay for sin, remove the wrath of God, and declare those who trust in Jesus righteous? What does this tell you about the heart of man? What does this tell you about the heart of God? What does this tell you about the heart of Jesus?

Make sure your children understand that not only was Jesus loving, humble, and self-sacrificing, but He was also submissive to the Father and trusted the Father's plan. You may want to look at Philippians 2:5-8.

JESUS, THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

What are some ways people believe we can earn the favor of God? Why is this wrong thinking?

Make sure your children understand that not only is it unbiblical thinking, and therefore untrue, but it is also impossible that man could do enough good to satisfy God's standards of righteousness.

Some people think that it is arrogant to believe that there is only one way to God. **Why is this untrue?**

What heart attitudes does it require to accept that Jesus is the only way to God? [humility, trust, conviction, brokenness, surrender, dependency] **How do you obtain (get) these heart attitudes?**

Make sure that your child understands that the heart that leads to salvation is a changed heart that only comes as a gift of God's grace. Though a child cannot change his heart, he can pray for a changed heart and ask for the grace to resist the sins of pride, unbelief and self-sufficiency.

A TEMPORARY SUBSTITUTE AND A PERMANENT SOLUTION

How does God's covering of man's sin through the blood of animals demonstrate God's patience? Think of the sins you have committed this week, this month, this year, in your lifetime. **Why was the blood of animals insufficient for Israel and for you?**

Can you imagine what it was like for Jesus to absorb the wrath of God for the sinful man? What does this tell you about sin? About Jesus? Why is the satisfactory substitute of Jesus' righteousness and the favor of God such a gift? Explain. How much of an impact does the death of Jesus on the cross make on your own heart? Explain. How can you grow in appreciation for the cross?

PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTIFICATION

If you are trusting in Jesus as your Savior, do you see yourself as having perfect righteousness? Explain. Is it hard to believe that God could look at you as forgiven, righteous, and not guilty? Explain. What may rob Christians of their joy in forgiveness? What lies might a Christian believe about his condition? How can you fight this?

If you are not trusting in Jesus as your Savior, does the weight of your sin trouble you? How will you answer a holy God about your sin? Does this strike fear and dread in your heart? Why or why not? How can your family pray for you?

FAITH IN JESUS

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What does “faith in Jesus” or “believing in Jesus” mean? What is involved in trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of sin?

Make sure your child understands that true faith in Jesus produces repentance for sin—not just sorrow over bad behavior but a recognition of the true nature of a sinful heart and its inability to change apart from grace. Faith involves not just the intellectual understanding but a deep-in-the-heart conviction that Jesus is the only One who can make things right with God and give him the righteousness that makes him acceptable to God. True faith produces the desire to follow Jesus in obedience and to “count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:8). It means surrendering your desires to Jesus and seeing Him as the greatest treasure. It involves a hunger to know Jesus better, to read His Word, and walk in obedience to His ways.

INFLUENCE THE WILL



What action or actions will you take this week to examine your heart and ask God to show you if you have saving faith? How can you grow in appreciation for the patience of God, the provision of God, and the sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross?

FAMILY WORSHIP TIME



Read the words of the hymn “Before the Throne of God Above” by Vikki Cook and Charitie Lees Bancroft (*Hymns of Grace*, 187, or find it on the internet). How do the words convey the sense of standing in a courtroom? What is the sinner’s plea in this situation? Why? What confidence and assurance is communicated in this hymn? Sing the hymn together.