

# The Justification of Man Before God

by James Arminius

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*The sermon emphasizes that justification before God is achieved solely through the imputed righteousness of Christ, received by faith.*

**Scripture:** Romans 3:22, Romans 4:5, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 3:9

**Topics:** "Justification By Faith", "Imputed Righteousness"

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## Description

James Arminius discusses the controversy surrounding the justification of man before God, particularly focusing on the differing opinions regarding the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers. He highlights the peaceful coexistence of varying beliefs within the Christian community and expresses his own stance on the matter, emphasizing the importance of faith and the obedience of Christ in the justification of sinners before God.

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## Transcript

### IX. THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN BEFORE GOD

I am not conscious to myself, of having taught or entertained any other sentiments concerning the justification of man before God, than those which are held unanimously by the Reformed and Protestant Churches, and which are in complete agreement with their expressed opinions.

There was lately a short controversy in relation to this subject, between John Piscator, Professor of Divinity in the University of Herborn in Nassau, and the French Churches. It consisted in the determination of these two questions: (1.) "is the obedience or righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to believers and in which consists their righteousness before God, is this only the passive obedience of Christ?" which was Piscator's opinion. Or (2.) "is it not, in addition to this, that active righteousness of Christ which he exhibited to the law of God in the whole course of his life, and that holiness in which he was conceived?" Which was the opinion of the French Churches. But I never durst mingle myself with the dispute, or undertake to decide it; for I thought it possible for the Professors of the same religion to hold different opinions on this point from others of their brethren, without any breach of Christian peace or the unity of faith. Similar peaceful thoughts appear to have been indulged by both the adverse parties in this dispute; for they exercised a friendly toleration towards each other, and did not make that a reason for mutually renouncing their fraternal concord. But concerning such an amicable plan of adjusting differences, certain individuals in our own country are of a different judgment.

A question has been raised from these words of the Apostle Paul: "Faith is imputed for righteousness." (Rom. 4) The inquiry was, (1.) Whether those expressions ought to be properly understood, "so that faith itself, as an act performed according to the command of the gospel, is imputed before God for or unto righteousness -- and that of grace; since it is not the righteousness of the law." (2.) Whether they ought to be figuratively and improperly understood, "that the righteousness of Christ, being apprehended by faith, is imputed to us for righteousness." Or (3.) Whether it is to be understood "that the righteousness, for which, or unto which, faith is imputed, is the instrumental operation of faith;" which is asserted by some persons. In the theses on justification, which were disputed under me when I was moderator, I have adopted the former of these opinions not in a rigid manner, but simply, as I have likewise done in another passage which I wrote in a particular letter. It is on this ground that I am accounted to hold and to teach unsound opinions concerning the justification of man before God. But how unfounded such a supposition is, will be very evident at a proper season, and in a mutual conference. For the present, I will only briefly say, "I believe that sinners are accounted righteous solely by the obedience of Christ; and that the righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause on account of which God pardons the sins of believers and reckons them as righteous as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law. But since God imputes the righteousness of Christ to none except believers, I conclude that, in this sense, it may be well and properly said, to a man who believes, faith is imputed for righteousness through grace, because God hath set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be a propitiation, a throne of grace, [or mercy seat] through faith in his blood." Whatever interpretation may be put upon these expressions, none of our Divines blames Calvin or considers him to be heterodox on this point; yet my opinion is not so widely different from his as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes; this I am prepared to do at any time, and to give them my full approval. Most noble and potent Lords, these are the principal articles, respecting which I have judged it necessary to declare my opinion before this august meeting, in obedience to your commands.

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