

Question: "What kind of faith makes us right with God?"

The word "justification" is the Bible term for being right with God. The fact that justification is "by faith" is a matter clearly established in the scripture. Paul wrote, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro 5:1). Paul is, of course, referring to their faith or belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ which he had preached to them (Ro 1:16). However, the question asks what "kind" of faith justifies us before God. The Scripture speaks of different "kinds" of faith:

Great faith -----	Matthew 8:10
Little faith -----	Matthew 14:31
No faith -----	Mark 2:5
Weak faith -----	Romans 4:19
Faith only -----	James 2:24
Faith working -----	Galatians 5:6

Just because a person has a "faith" - of some sort - does not mean that God is obligated to justify that person. In Jesus' day, many Jewish rulers believed that He was divine, but refused to confess it for fear of being "put out of the synagogue" (Jn 12:42). Were these men justified by their faith? Were they right with God? James said, "Even the demons believe -- and tremble" (Js 2:19)! The demons even went so far as to confess the divinity of Jesus (cf. Mt 8:29). Are the demons right with God? Are they justified?

The people who comprised the church in Corinth experienced a three-fold blessing from God when they heard and responded to the gospel. They were "washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1Co 6:11). When did God confer this blessing upon them? Luke's record in Acts states that when Paul came to Corinth preaching Christ, that "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Ac 18:8). Thus, they were justified (made right with God) by their obedient faith in baptism. Other passages indicate the continued need for obedient faith even after becoming a Christian (cf. Ga 5:6 Js 2:17, 20, 22, 24, 26).

Do not confuse justification through obedient faith with the idea of trying to earn or merit justification. Peter warned his fellow Jews to save themselves from a "perverse generation" (Ac 2:40). But acting in their own behalf was not an attempt to earn their justification. After we have done all that is commanded of us, "We are unprofitable servants," Jesus said (Lk 17:10). After we have done all that is commanded of us "by faith," it is hopeless to try to attain our justification and thus our salvation apart from God's grace and mercy. "For by grace you have been saved through faith..." (Ep 2:8 Ti 3:5). What kind of faith makes us right with God? A kind of personal faith that is obedient to THE FAITH, which is the gospel, is the kind of faith that justifies (cf. Ro 1:5 16:26).

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