

INTRODUCTION

Usain Bolt is the fastest human in history. He's won eight Olympic gold medals, holds world records in multiple races, and owns the highest speed ever recorded in the 100-meter dash. When sinners try to catch God's righteousness, they are like a slow person trying to catch Bolt in a sprint, getting farther behind with every stride. The righteousness of God is not reachable with human effort, but there is good news. The work of Christ made it possible for God to pick you up from the starting blocks, place you at the finish line in first place, and hand you a gold medal you did not earn. Not only has your debt been paid and forgiven, but you have been upgraded!

God is the righteous Judge, and you stand guilty before Him in His court room. Because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God declares you innocent of all charges when you put your faith in Him. This is called justification. When you are justified, you have peace with God – even if you do not feel like it (Romans 5:1). Faith then introduces you to grace and hope, and it grants you an invitation to the most exclusive party in eternity, where you will live with God forever. With grace, you find yourself standing in a permanent position of unmerited favor. With hope, you can rejoice even in the midst of trials.

Many Christians live like they cannot be approved when they have already been authorized to inherit the entire kingdom. If you have been justified by faith in Christ, remember this when guilt and shame weigh you down and lie to you. God has declared you to be forgiven, cleared, and now you have perfect credit. You stand in grace legally, so you can live by grace willingly. And you can have joy no matter what you face because your future is secure.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are your favorite events in the Olympics? What other record holders can you think of?
2. What does it mean when someone has good credit? What advantages do they have?

LET'S GET PERSONAL

1. How do you feel about being justified – confident and secure or doubtful and shameful?
2. What does it mean for you to be standing in grace, a permanent position of unmerited favor?
3. What is a trial you have faced, and how did you respond to it? How would you want to face it differently now?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. How can you begin to build confidence in the knowledge that you are forgiven and to overcome guilt and shame?
2. How can you find joy in your trials? What should you be prepared to tell others who watch you going through that trial so you can point them to Christ?
3. ***Want to dig deeper?*** Take a look at the following passages: Romans 3:24, 28; Genesis 15:6; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:13; Psalm 7:11; Psalm 9:8; Genesis 18:25; Romans 8:1, 28-31; Numbers 23:19; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 11:6.

RENEW YOUR MIND

*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. – **Romans 8:1***