

What Must I do to be Saved?

Reading: James 2:14-26

Other Scripture: Romans 3:19-24; Gen. 15:6, misc passages

Sermon Audio: On October 31st, 1517 a monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed some paperwork to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany-thus began the Protestant Reformation. Luther's most significant contribution to Christian Theology is the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone, my topic for today.

I. What was the Reformation all About?

A. You are a German peasant

B. Confession, Penance and Indulgences

C. Justification by Faith Alone

1. It is Luther's most significant contribution to Christian theology. Though preached clearly in the New Testament and found in the writings of many of the church fathers, the medieval bishops and priests had largely forgotten the truth that our own good works can by no means merit God's favor. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, and good works result from our faith, they are not added to it as the grounds for our right standing in the Lord's eyes (Eph. 2:8-10). Justification, God's declaration that we are not guilty, forgiven of sin, and righteous in His sight comes because through our faith alone the Father imputes, or reckons to our account, the perfect righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). *Ligonier Ministries*

II. What are the Arguments in Summary Form?

Key Question: Am I saved through grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone or do my works contribute in any way (provide the grounds) toward my salvation?

A. The Catholic Argument

1. James 2:21 (NASB95)

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

2. James 2:24 (NASB95)

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

B. The Protestant Argument

1. Romans 3:19-24 (NASB95)

a. Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;²⁰ **because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² **even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;**²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;**

III. Does James Contradict Paul?

A. Does the Holy Spirit Contradict Himself?

1. If we believe that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit we must assume the Holy Spirit does not contradict himself. This means that Paul and James are not at odds and so we should not pit them against one another. Although, at first glance the passages seem hard to harmonize we have to do the hard work of figuring it out.

B. Do We Understand the Context in which Paul and James wrote?

1. We have to understand the context in James epistle and Paul's epistles (esp Galatians and Romans). In other words we have to come to grips and understand the particular problem each other was addressing.

a. Paul wrote Galatians and Romans to deal with the error of adding a work to faith alone for salvation.

(1) Galatians 3:11 (NASB95)

Now that no one is justified by the Law [works] before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."

(2) Romans 3:20 a(NASB95)

because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

b. James wrote what he did to make the point that those who profess Christ but do not have any fruit to show for it and thus do not have a genuine saving faith.

c. We have to be careful not to read Paul's use of words into James and the other way around esp when we deal with the word "justified."

IV. How am I made righteous before a holy God?

Key Definition: Justification, God's declaration that we are not guilty, forgiven of sin, and righteous in His sight comes because through our faith alone the Father imputes, or reckons to our account, the perfect righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Ligonier Ministries

A. Justification

1. Justification is a forensic or judicial term.
2. Justification is drawn from a Latin word in the Roman system of law.
- 3.. Justification mean to "make just" or "to make righteous."

B. Our Need (Rom. 3:10)

1. Romans 3:10 ...as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one;

C. The Means:. Acquittal, Reckoned\declared (Gen. 15:6; Ja. 2:23)

1. Acquittal in Scripture

- a. Exodus 23:7 ..."Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.
- b. Numbers 14:18a...'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty,

2. Reckoned in Scripture

- a. Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He **reckoned** it to him as righteousness.
- b. ⁶And he believed the Lord, and he **counted** it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6, ESV)
- c James 2:23 ...and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was **reckoned** to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

d. ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was **counted** to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. (Ja. 2:23, ESV)

D. What is Imputed Righteousness? What is infused righteousness?

1. To reckon (means to count) means to show that it is God who changes the account of our books from being in debt to be out of debt.

a. Colossians 2:13–14

b. Romans 4:3–6

2. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.

a. 2 Corinthians 5:21

E. What is grace?

1. Romans 11:6 ...But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

2. Romans 3:24... being **justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

3. Romans 4:5...But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is credited as righteousness**,

V. What is Paul’s Argument from Romans in Summary Form?

1. God justifies the ungodly on a just basis; meaning that the requirements of the law have been met or satisfied. (in Christ)

2. Paul shows that God’s standards have not changed so that He can make people right before His eyes. Paul shows that God’s law has been fulfilled in Christ.

3. On the basis of Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law God imputes, places within the sinners who believe in Christ righteousness (God makes sinners justified)

a. Romans 5:19 ...For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

b. 1 Corinthians 1:30...But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

VI. Conclusion

A. Justification by Faith (that is not alone)

B. Salvation, like many doctrines in the Bible has an ethical quality to it.

C. Scriptural Evidence

1. Gen. 22:1-9
2. Heb. 11:17-19
3. Eph. 2:8-10

Appendix: Does this still matter?

1. Know what it is that was protested.
2. Know what you believe and why.
3. The Reformation still matters

Three basic reasons why:

1. If you read your Bible today in your own language that's because of the Reformation.
2. If you asked God for forgiveness without paying any money or doing something unpleasant, that's because of the Reformation.
3. If you checked the truth of a preacher's sermon with what the Bible says, that's because of the Reformation.

Book Recommendations

1. Justification by Faith Alone by R.C. Sproul
2. Rescuing the Gospel: The Story and Significance of the Reformation by Erwin Lutzer

Questions for the Community Groups

1. Ask the group what stood out to them and why? Ask if there is confusion regarding the sermon. Be honest; have you ever given this issue any thought and if you had too could you explain it to a Catholic friend? (or any friend, maybe even an evangelical who is clueless)
2. What are the key terms a person has to understand and be able to define in order to explain the doctrine? Group leaders, this is a good place to camp if you have to.

3. I once used the Book of Galatians to show a Catholic friend the truths we discussed today. If you have time read through Galatians from top to bottom and note the argument as a whole and highlight the key passages you could use with a Catholic friend or neighbor.
4. Discuss the Scriptural evidence listed under VI. C.