

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

The Foundations of Our Faith

Discussion Guide Appendix: Scripture References

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Sermon Title

“But What About Good Works?”

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Justification by Faith: Part Two

I Timothy 1:8

- Intro: James 2:21-26 ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 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. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.
- I.A. Romans 7:12 ¹² So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 1 Timothy 1:8 ⁸ But we know that the Law is good. Exodus 20:1-17 ^{NAU} Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. ⁷ "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. ⁸ "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹ "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Matthew 5:17-19 ¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- I.B. Galatians 3:21-25 For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Romans 7:7 I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." James 1:22-25 ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.
- I.C. Romans 3:28 ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Romans 5:20 - 6:1 ²⁰ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 7:5-6 ⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. Romans 7:8 ⁸ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. Hebrews 7:18-19 ¹⁸ For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. Hebrews 10:1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

- II.A. John 3:7-8 ⁷ "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 7:37-39 ³⁷ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 14:16-17 ¹⁶ "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. John 20:22 ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13-14 ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. 1 John 4:2-4 ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.
- II.B. Acts 1:4-5 ⁴ Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Acts 1:8 ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Galatians 5:19-25 ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 3:3 ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Romans 8:3-4 ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Jeremiah 31:31-34 ³¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." Hebrews 10:14-23 ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ¹⁶ "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," He then says, ¹⁷ "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE." ¹⁸ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. ¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful
- II.C. Romans 8:6-9 ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Romans 8:14 ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Galatians 2:19 - 3:1 ¹⁹ "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. ²¹ "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." Galatians 5:16 ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Philippians 2:13 ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Colossians 3:1-3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Hebrews 4:9-16 ⁹ So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. ¹¹ Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. ¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

III.A. Antinomianism—*literally* “against or without law.” The problem arises when the Gospel is either preached, or received in a faulty manner, as if it were merely a religion or system of belief or moral philosophy. The Gospel is true truth, it is absolutely and eternally the fact of God. But, if it is acknowledged or received merely as truth, then there is no transformation of the life because there is no inward change or imparting of the Spirit of God. Never in the Bible is it suggested that simply giving intellectual agreement to the truth of the Gospel will save anyone. As James makes so very clear:

James 2:19 ⁹ *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*

Saving faith, according to the Bible, is entering into a relationship with God through conviction of our sin and His atonement, repentance from our sinful ways and self will, a broken humility before God with an absolute surrender to His will and way in our life from that moment forward. Saving faith is putting our trust completely in the finished work of Christ on the cross for our approval and acceptance before a Holy God and embracing Jesus Christ as Lord and Master of our lives. Nothing short of that full commitment will result in regeneration.

Saving faith is expressed in the Scriptures in various ways, all of which sum up to turning away from one’s sinful past, turning toward God in humility and repentance, and determining to follow Jesus from that moment on through the rest of one’s life:

Mark 10:21-27 ²¹ Looking at him [the rich young ruler], Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. ²³ And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." Matthew 16:24-26 ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Matthew 10:32-39 ³² "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. ³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; ³⁶ and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. ³⁷ "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. 1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

III.B. James is concerned about those who say they have faith, and therefore eternal life, but who live and act no differently than the world. They have misunderstood the powerful life-changing nature of the true Gospel, and assume just because they profess the truth that it possesses them. Nothing could be further from the truth. If one has the life of Jesus Christ in him as a result of truly being born again, there is a change that follows that can be observed in outward actions. These are the naturally arising works of righteousness and obedience that flow out of the life of a true follower of Jesus Christ. James views these as the “proof of the pudding.” If there are no works, then there is no true faith. If one’s life has not changed, then God cannot possibly be residing in that one. James presses this point to his stubborn audience quite strongly, emphasizing the absolute necessity of resulting good works as the only true proof of new birth and states, therefore, that faith [as in mere belief from the head, or profession of faith in Jesus apart from total commitment] alone is not sufficient:

James 2:8 - 3:1 ⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸ But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 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. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The teaching of James must be placed in the total context of the whole of Scripture. Consider it along side of Paul’s admonition to the Galatians who were wrestling with a totally different kind of problem: thinking that it was necessary to add good works to the finished work of Christ in order to be truly saved in the end. He writes:

Galatians 1:6-8 ⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! Galatians 2:15-16 ¹⁵ "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; ¹⁶ nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. Galatians 2:20-21 ²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. ²¹ "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. Galatians 3:3 ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Galatians 3:21-26 ²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Galatians 5:1-8 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. ² Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. ⁴ You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. ⁷ You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. Galatians 5:11-16 ¹¹ But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. ¹² I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. ¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

These two passages of Scripture, but Divinely inspired, must be taken together in the total context of the Gospel. We have seen clear evidence that we must be justified by faith alone apart from works of law because we are hopelessly unable to satisfy the requirements of the law by our own means in any case. But, faith in Jesus Christ is not mere intellectual assent to the truth of the Gospel, it is the commitment of one's life to the Savior now and forever with a repentance and faith toward God that results in a life changing new birth that can be seen clearly by others who observe us. The life of Christ within lives out of us by His Spirit in attitudes and deeds of love and goodness to others. This is the external proof of inward salvation, and it is an important corroboration to faith. It is so important that James says without this evidence a person does not have true, saving faith. When Jesus was questioned as to His authority to forgive sins, He recognized the impossibility of proving His authority to forgive on those terms alone (no one can *see* forgiveness), so he added objectively verifiable proof that no one could deny:

Matthew 9:2-8 And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." ³ And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." ⁴ And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? ⁵ "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'?" ⁶ "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home." ⁷ And he got up and went home. ⁸ But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Can you prove your faith? The answer is, apart from a changed life that others can recognize, you cannot. So, if you do not see any evidence you need to re-examine your "faith!"

III.C. John was dealing with a different variation of the antinomian heresy. Those in Ephesus [to whom he writes in I John] were not necessarily pure libertines, they were buying into a philosophy of dualism that spirit and matter were unrelated and opposite entities of existence. They were believing that the spirit could be made holy and pure while the body remained dirty and worldly, and that one need not be terribly concerned with this state! In fact, some of them were saying that it did not even matter what your body did as long as your spirit was noble! His letter is useful in that he gives some practical ways to determine if we have been truly reborn by the Spirit of God. Again, these are observable changes that we should be able to see within ourselves with the aid of the Holy Spirit. It is on the basis of this evidence that he writes:

1 John 5:11-15 ¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

The knowing is based on the evidence which is explained in III.C. of the outline.