

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

The Foundations of Our Faith

Discussion Guide
Vol. 10, No. 2
August 30, 2009

Sermon Title **But What About Good Works?** by Paul R. Martin

Justification by Faith: Part Two

I Timothy 1: 8

Introduction: Last week we considered the fact, and the necessity, of absolute and complete justification before God by faith, and faith alone, in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. Legitimately, however, there is the question of the place and nature of good works and James' curious statement in James 2:24 that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone! In this message we will consider these questions and seek to understand James' statement.

Sermon Outline

- I. **The Law Is Good if One Uses It Lawfully—I Timothy 1: 8**
 - A. The purpose of law in the Bible is to explain the character of God—it must always be read in this context. Christ is the fulfillment of the law, Matthew 5:17
 - B. The purpose of revealing the character of God through the law is to bring us to Christ, both before and after our new birth.
 - C. The law cannot make us holy. In fact, it actually serves to stir up sinful passions and rebellion, thus proving our true condition apart from Christ.
- II. **The Holy Spirit is Given to Us to Reproduce in Us the Life of Jesus Christ—John 14: 12-21**
 - A. Regeneration restores our life in God and allows us to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit of promise, the very presence of God in us and the guarantee of eternal salvation.
 - B. It is His presence in us, living through us, that produces purity of thought and actions and motivates us to love others and to treat them as God has loved and treated us.
 - C. The actual evidence of the new birth (regeneration) and His life within is the way we live and treat others (like God would) and the way we respond to Him and others when we fall back on our own natural ability (the flesh or carnal nature) and fail.
- III. **James And John Are Writing To Correct the Error of “Antinomianism”**
 - A. Antinomianism is the belief that I can be saved by faith and then live any way I want and still be assured of eternal life. While this is logically true according to the doctrine of justification by faith, it is a fallacy because it does not take into account the reality of the new birth when true saving faith has been exercised toward God.
 - B. James is addressing the issue of *easy believism*: all I have to do is *believe* and I will be saved. The emphasis of *easy believism* is the acceptance of the historical fact of the atonement without a true commitment of one's life to God by faith. James responds that even the demons believe and tremble. The proof of eternal life is the outward, observable result of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that objectively looks like moral and spiritual obedience and true outward godliness.
 - C. John (in I John) is similarly addressing the Gnostic heresy of antinomianism with the view that what is done by the body does not affect the spirit and *vice versa*. He explains that there are three tests we can apply to see if we have eternal life—in other words, to see if we have really been born again—and all three have to do with objective evidence in our life resulting from a genuine conversion and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit:
 1. If we say we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness we lie (1: 6)
 2. No one who abides in Him sins (*habitually*), and no one who sins (*habitually*) has seen Him or knows Him (3: 6)
 3. The one who does not love [his brother] does not know God, for God is love (4:8)

Conclusion: If you were to be put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence from your life to convict you? **2 Corinthians 13: 5** *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?* The law has me as the focus; grace has God as the focus of the heart.

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,⁹ realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

I Timothy 1: 8-11 (NASB)

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.²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3: 24-29 (NASB)

Knowledge results in arrogance; the goal of our instruction is love.

Discussion Questions

1.) How do Paul's reflective questions in Romans 6:1-2 & 15-18 actually prove that justification is really by faith alone regardless of one's good works or sinfulness?

2.) Is it logically possible, from a purely doctrinal perspective, to be justified by faith while sinning with abandon? Explain why or why not.

3.) What is the logical fallacy with the idea that we can *sin all we want and be saved in the end*?

4.) Faith in God through Jesus Christ is actually a relationship, not a religion or mere system of belief. How does this affect lifestyle and behavior? Can you support your answer with Scripture? Can you give personal examples of attitudes and motivational effects of this relationship with Christ?

Question For Personal Reflection

What evidence is there to convict you of being a true Christian?

After you make your list, review it and cross off anything that can be done by anyone who is religious, with or without God. (For example: going to church, being baptized, taking communion, reading the Bible, etc.)

Now, of the remaining evidence, identify those things that only God could do in your life. You cannot do this exercise for anyone else, because you cannot see their heart. But the Bible tells us to examine ourselves and gives us the Holy Spirit to be our guide. He is the One Who bears witness that we are a son or daughter of God.

Can you find the evidence? Do you have the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit?

What clear differences are in your life since you began to follow Jesus that proves you are truly born again?

2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

1 John 5:13 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.

5.) Peter writes, (1 Peter 1:15-16) “but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’” How is this accomplished?

6.) When you read a command or exhortation in the Bible and find that you are failing in the matter about which it speaks, how are you to go about becoming obedient from the heart and correcting your behavior?

7.) In question #6 above, what is the “lawful” use of the law? How would you pray for yourself in this regard in order to reflect God’s character in the matter?

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11: 6 (NASB)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5: 1-5 (NASB)

MEMORY VERSE

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

I John 1: 6-7 (NASB)

God’s Vision and Mission for the Alliance Bible Church

The Alliance Bible Church is a multi-cultural church celebrating the life of Christ in us by:

- Proclaiming the full message of God’s Good News to the diverse cultures of McHenry and surrounding communities,
- Discipling believers in living the deeper Christian life,
- Equipping His people for the work of ministry, and
- Demonstrating the unconditional love of Jesus to our community through meaningful acts of service.

