

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: The Benefits Of Salvation

Justification, One of Three Divine Acts, Part 2

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Last week we discussed Justification as one of three divine acts. Some people object to the teaching that by faith in Christ alone, completely apart from the works of the law or law-keeping, God immediately pardons the ungodly of all his sins. God constitutes or establishes legally the ungodly person as righteous in His sight by imputing Christ's righteousness to him. So it is by Christ alone, by faith in Christ alone, by grace alone, that a person is justified, declared righteous because Christ was sent by the Father to save. Christ died, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Jesus made the reconciliation, the way back to the Father. It is all of grace.

Today we will look at five main objections:

1. Such teaching encourages licentious living and hinders the development of true ethical conduct.
2. James' teaching on faith and works contradicts it.
3. The fact that the final judgment is according to works in which there is a corresponding distribution of rewards to the faithful contravenes it.
4. The fact that the Christian needs to continue to seek God's forgiveness for his sins throughout his life opposes it.
5. Justification, so construed, grounds the Christian life in some sort of "as if."

Objection 1. Such teaching encourages licentious living and hinders the development of true ethical conduct.

Paul answers the first objection (Romans 3:8 **Why not say, as some slanderously claim that we say, "Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved!**) and meets it head on with his doctrine of the Christian's union with Christ (Romans chapters 6 and 7; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Gal 3:1-5). A true believer united by grace to Christ in His death and reckoning himself dead to sin and alive to God and understanding his resurrection to newness of life (Romans 6:1-14), will not want to sin. In gratitude for his salvation the true believer desires to live, no longer for himself, but for Christ who died and rose again for him (2 Cor. 5:15). If justification is by grace through faith in Christ, one lives out of gratitude. If by works, including the work of our own faith, then one lives in a growing self-righteousness, elevating self or lowering the Law or trying to obey in some human, soulish effort leading to despair. I call the latter, trying to live the victorious Christian life routine in one's own strength; we cannot, for Jesus will be glorified in all things. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of the faith.

Objection 2. James' teaching on faith and works contradicts it.

James intends by "justified" the verdict which God declares when the actually and previously justified person has demonstrated his actual righteous state by obedience and good works. Paul is concerned with how a person may achieve right standing before God and turns to Genesis 15:6 to find his answer. James is concerned with how

a person is to demonstrate that he is actually justified before God and has true faith and turns to Genesis 22:9, 10 as the fulfillment of Genesis 15:6 to find his answer. If someone has true faith, it will be a living faith working through love a good work that has been wrought in God. Look at Romans chapter four carefully and Romans chapter five.

Objection 3. The fact that the final judgment is according to works in which there is a corresponding distribution of rewards to the faithful contravenes it.

It is true that the final judgment is a judgment of works and that the Scriptures hold forth the promise of rewards for faithful living. The justified believer, justified by faith alone, will produce good works in obedience to God's commandments as the fruit and evidence of a true and lively faith. These works will be in the will of God, to and for God's glory, done because God has given grace to obey through faith which works by love. The true believer lives in Christ, with supreme loyalty and attachment to Christ, in union with Christ. Reward for good works is not administered because good works earn or merit reward, but because God is graciously pleased to reward them. It is a reward of grace.

Good works are done by persons accepted by God through Christ, proceed from His Holy Spirit, are done in faith, from the motive of love to God, in obedience to God's revealed will, and for His glory, all by God's grace. Only Christians (believers) will manifest such works. Rewards do not flow from any sense of indebtedness on God's part as though a believer's labors placed Him in their debt. God desires to bless and rewards are of grace. Whatever rewards from the Lord's hand will be of sheer mercy and never as "just desserts." Thus in Revelation 4:10, 11 the 24 elders cast the crowns they have received from Christ before God's throne as they sing of the worthiness of their Lord and God, worthy to receive glory and honor and power. God does the "good" work in and through us and then He rewards us for it! (Phil. 2:12, 13)

Roman Catholicism rejects justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ. In rejecting this doctrine, they have included a doctrine called "supererogation." This is defined as "the act of performing more than is required by duty, obligation, or need." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supererogation> The Roman Catholic Church regards works of supererogation by those whom it has determined are "saints," whose "works of merit" are placed in Rome's "treasure of merit." This merit is then dispensed through papal indulgences to the "faithful" as they submit to the Roman Catholic priesthood and its sacraments and to the confessional, and as prayers are offered in behalf of souls in a purgatory which they say exists but which Scripture does not demonstrate.

Objection 4. The fact that the Christian needs to continue to seek God's forgiveness for his sins throughout his life opposes it.

This objection grows from a failure to distinguish between God's wrath, from which the Christian's justified state delivers him, and God's fatherly displeasure which the Christian may still elicit by his daily sins and for which he needs to seek forgiveness and repentance as he grows in grace. The believer is in an ongoing or progressive sanctification by which the righteousness that has been imputed to him now becomes progressively imparted to him. The believer is in an "already, not yet" position. He is a saint, a holy one, with a sin nature as a sinner both at the same time; justified and already, but not yet, being sanctified. He is becoming what God has declared him to be.

Objection 5. Justification, so construed, grounds the Christian life in some sort of “as if.”

This objection is that the Christian life is made to have its beginning in some sort of fiction if justification is only judicial. But God does not treat the justified sinner as if he were righteous; the justified sinner is in fact righteous in terms of the “in Christ” relationship in which he stands. 2 Cor. 5:21.

Summary. Paul defines the “gospel of God,” which is also the “gospel of Christ,” specifically in terms of justification by faith in the accomplishments of Christ’s obedience and cross work alone, completely apart from law keeping (Romans). The manner in which he employs the term indicates that he regarded justification as an objective divine judgment respecting the sinner’s status before the Law and not as the subjective improvement of the sinner through the infusion of sanctifying grace. (Acts 13:38, 39) Paul pronounced an anathema upon any and all who would muddy the streams of grace which make glad the city of God by their efforts to contribute to their own justification in any way (Gal 1:6-9; 2:11-21; 3:1-14; 5:1-4, 12-16)

2 Corinthians 5:14,15,17,21 - **14**For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: **15**And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.,**17**Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new...For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin [the sin offering] for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. KJV

Galatians 3:1-5 - **1**O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? **2**This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? **3**Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? **4**Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain. **5**He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? KJV

Philippians 2:12, 13 -Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. KJV

Acts 13:38, 39 - Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by [or through] him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. KJV

Galatians 1:6-9 - **6**I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: **7**Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. **8**But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. **9**As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. KJV

Galatians 2: 15-21 **15**We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, **16**Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus

Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. **17**But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. **18**For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. **19**For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. **20**I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. **21**I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. KJV

Galatians 5:1-5 - **1**Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. **2**Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. **3**For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. **4**Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. **5**For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. KJV

Galatians 5:13-16 - **13**For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. **14**For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. **15**But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. **16***This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. KJV

The just shall live by faith.

P.S. The recording for this message contains a lot more than written here.
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