

## PERVERTING THE “FIRST PRINCIPLES”

### *Part Three*

*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, **and it was counted unto him for righteousness**. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but **believeth** on him that justifieth the ungodly, **his faith is counted for righteousness**.*

*Romans 4:1-5*

Tonight I'm going to continue looking at the perversion of the first principles of Christ. I'm going to begin by examining the second principle listed in Hebrews 6:1—“faith toward God”. Faith has been defined by many of today's scholars and preachers as mental assent to the truth, or becoming fully persuaded of something. This definition comes primarily from what Paul taught in Romans four. There, he said: “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*”. He uses the terms believe and faith interchangeably, which means they are synonymous.

But what does it mean to have faith? What is faith anyway? Is faith just mental assent to the truth? Is faith just an acknowledgment or an acceptance of what somebody (even God) has said? Well, that's what many of today's leaders teach. Some of them explain it a little differently in that they use the terms trust and rest. An example of this can be seen in the following statements:

What is faith? It is **a resting in Christ** and His saving work for us. **Faith is not work**. Faith is going to God with open hands and receiving the righteousness God gives freely.

C. H. Spurgeon wrote in *All of Grace*, ‘Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Faith is the eye which looks. Faith is the hand which grasps. Faith is the mouth which feeds upon Christ.’

**It is this simple trusting in Christ that gives us a right standing** in the presence of a holy and righteous God.

Before going any further, let me say a few words about Mr. Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I'm well aware of the fact that everyone thinks Mr. Spurgeon was right up there, next to the apostle Paul, and that his words are almost on a par with Holy Writ; but I don't. He did have some good teaching, but overall, he was just as bad as any Calvinist preacher out there because he was a *staunch* Calvinist. He was a Baptist minister who pastored the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, and he wrote very famous work called: *A Defense Of Calvinism*. Since he has been presented to the average Christian as a hero of the faith, many have been deceived by his Calvinistic teachings. And of course, all the Calvinists just love him. They use him as proof that Calvin's errors are the gospel. Indeed, Spurgeon himself declared that Calvinism is the gospel and that Arminianism is heresy. He said:

“And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own private opinion that **there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism.** It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; **Calvinism is the gospel**, and nothing else.” 1

The fact that Spurgeon declared Calvinism the gospel and Arminianism heresy, shows that his understanding of the Scripture was completely unbalanced. Being a Calvinist, he naturally denied the possibility of a believer ending up lost. He said he abhorred such an idea:

“... nor can I comprehend a gospel **which lets saints fall away after they are called,** and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation **after having once believed** in Jesus. **Such a gospel I abhor**”. 2

Mr. Spurgeon said he couldn't “comprehend” a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called. This is a very interesting statement. He didn't just say he couldn't believe such a gospel or that he rejected such a gospel. He said he couldn't even *comprehend* such a gospel. That means his mind was so darkened regarding the truth, and he was so thoroughly brainwashed by Calvin's errors, he couldn't even *understand* a message that conflicted with Calvinism. That says a lot about the spiritual condition of his mind. It's hard to believe that someone with Spurgeon's education and mental capacity could not *comprehend* the meaning of Paul's words, when he said:

*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, **if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.***

*I. Corinthians 15:1-2*

The gospel Paul preached states very clearly that a person who *has* received the gospel, and who *is* currently standing in that gospel, and who *is* saved, can end up believing “in vain”. This makes Spurgeon's statement—“*The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach today*” 3—pretty much a farce. He was so convinced the Calvinistic teaching on Eternal Security was true, he said “the Bible is a lie” and he himself would become an “infidel” if he ever came to believe that even one of God's saints was ever lost.

“If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and **then there is no gospel promise true**, but **the Bible is a lie**, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. **I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally**” 4

Well, Mr. Spurgeon, the Bible is not a lie and it teaches very clearly that a child of God can depart from the faith and be lost. All you had to do was accept the truth of God's Word instead of clinging to the lies of your deluded hero. You sir, and all the others who preach this kind of garbage, are placing a

snare before the people who listen to your error. By his own admittance, Mr. Spurgeon’s fanatical adherence to Calvin’s doctrine of the “perseverance of the saints” prevented him from becoming of all men most miserable. He said:

“I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, **manage to be happy**. It must be a very commendable thing in them **to be able to get through a day without despair**. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think **I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort**”. 5

Excuse me! Since when is being “happy” the goal of the Christian life? God’s truth should be our quest; not happiness. Some doctrines in the Bible are very disturbing, like the eternal torment that awaits the lost. But it’s still true. Yes, truth can be disturbing at times—especially if you are walking in error, as Mr. Spurgeon was.

One good thing Spurgeon did was reveal the true reasons OSAS people believe the lie of Eternal Security. Behind all the rhetoric and the Bible thumping, behind all the supposedly logical reasoning, lies fear and selfishness. They couldn’t be “happy” believing the truth, and they would be “miserable” because they would have no comfort. They would be *scared* of falling.

Notice that Spurgeon incorporated Paul’s comment about being of all men most miserable in his defense of Eternal Security. He was bending Paul’s words to fit his error. Paul said: “*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*” (1. Cor. 15:19). All he was saying was that the Christian’s hope in Christ extends beyond the grave. He wasn’t saying what Spurgeon suggested he was saying.

Spurgeon was not like the apostle Paul at all. Spurgeon said it was commendable that Christians who believe they can fall from grace were able to get through a day without despair. If he would have been forced to accept the truth, he would have eventually become a basket case and ended up in a mental institution. Paul survived and flourished quite well living in the reality that he could fall away. He wasn’t weak and fearful of the truth, like Spurgeon was. He walked in that spiritual reality every day of his life, yet he wasn’t overcome with despair. So you’ll have to pardon me if I don’t put much stock anything Mr. Spurgeon has to say, when it comes to justification and faith.

The writer of the article begins by asking the question: What is faith? Her answer is: faith is “resting in Christ”—that is, faith is resting in what Christ has done *for* us. She says “faith is not work”. It’s a “simple trusting in Christ that gives us right standing with God”. She’s defining faith as a combination of believing and trusting. But this is only half the truth. You will notice that in both these definitions, the term *works* isn’t mentioned.

Now, I’m not accusing this writer, or Charles Spurgeon, of saying we don’t have to have works. All I’m pointing out is the fact that when defining the term “faith” for people, works are not mentioned. For them, faith all about believing, and placing your full confidence in what you believe. I’m saying faith is *more* than believing, and then placing your trust in *that* belief. It’s more than believing what God says.

Faith is *doing* what God says. Faith isn't a work, this writer says. Maybe not. But faith must *have* works or it's not Biblical faith. Works must accompany faith or that faith is dead—so says the apostle James:

*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith **by** my works. **Thou believest** that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead**?...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead also**.*

*James 2:18-20 & 26*

Genuine faith has always produced works and it always will. The person who claims to *believe* God or *trust* God, but has no works does not possess genuine faith. They can believe and trust God all they like—they don't have genuine faith. Works *validate* faith. Works are the seal that marks our faith as genuine. We must have works or our faith is dead. There are multitudes of people who believe in Jesus and trust in God, but their faith is dead because they have no works.

We don't think about dead faith too much, but we should. What? Do you think those who have dead faith *don't* believe the Bible? Do you think they don't believe Jesus is the Savior and that He died for their sins? Do you think those who have dead faith don't believe in imputed righteousness? Do you think they aren't "*resting in Christ and His saving work for us*" just like you are? Do you think they don't have that "*simple trusting in Christ that gives us a right standing in the presence of a holy and righteous God*" like you do? If so, you have no idea what's happening all around you!

Today's churches are filled with people who's faith is dead. They believe the same things you do about justification and imputed righteousness. They believe the teaching of today's Evangelical gospel, just like you do. They read the Bible and pray, just like you do. They listen to Christian music, and to Bible sermons, just like you do. They may even attend *PalTalk Bible studies*, just like you do. They are no different than you—except for one thing—they have *no* works.

The only way to tell the difference between a person who has a living faith and the one who has a dead faith is by the presence or absence of works. When you remove works from *the definition* of faith, you have just removed the only way to judge whether or not a person is a genuine Christian. All you are left with is their word, or their testimony, that they have faith. And as I said the other month, it's impossible to judge whether or not someone who says they believe, actually believes, if the only criteria is belief! You can't crawl inside someone's head a see if they really believe! There has to be an objective standard to measure their claim, and that standard is works.

This is precisely why Jesus said: "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles...Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*" (Matt. 7:15-16 & 20). God has not left us at the mercy of what people say. There is a way to verify their claims. When the Bible talks about faith, it's talking about more than acknowledging the truth, or trusting that something is true. It's talking about a belief that produces works. So whenever you hear ministers saying we

should “live by faith” or “walk by faith”, if you are wise, you will find out exactly *how* they are defining faith because most of the time they are defining it as just believing.

*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, **when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar**? You see that faith was working with his works, **and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 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. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.***

*James 2:21-24 NAS*

James said Abraham’s faith was shown to be valid by his obedience. His faith wasn’t validated by his belief. His faith wasn’t validated by his trust in that belief. His faith wasn’t validated by his testimony that he believed. It was validated by *what he did*. It was validated when he took Isaac up that mountain with every intention of slaying him. That’s why the Scripture says:

*And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: **for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.***

*Genesis 22:9-12*

Why did the angel say, “...*now I know that thou fearest God*”? Didn’t God know Abraham’s heart? Didn’t God already know that Abraham feared Him? Didn’t God know before the foundation of the world what Abraham would do when he was commanded to slay his son? You bet he did! The angel said “now I know” because on that day, Abraham’s faith was validated. On that day, Abraham became a son of God. On that day, he became part of that overcoming remnant that will rule and reign with Christ because on that day he *relinquished* the most important thing in his life.

Our “belief” and our “trust” must be accompanied by works or they will be useless. Unfortunately, this is not what’s being taught. The faith that’s being propagated today is a dead faith because according to those who propagate it, it doesn’t have to be validated. It doesn’t have to be accompanied by anything because it’s based *solely* upon belief. The belief validates itself.

If you want to see the true definition of faith, just turn to the faith chapter in the Bible, which is Hebrews eleven. There, Scriptural faith is recounted for you again and again. Faith *caused* Able to offer a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. It *caused* Enoch to please God. It *caused* Noah to build an ark. It *caused* Abraham to journey to a strange land and offer up Isaac, the child of promise. Scriptural faith *caused* the parents of Moses to hide him and it *caused* Moses to choose to suffer affliction with the people of

God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It *caused* Rehab to help the spies escape from Jericho. Scriptural faith *caused* some saints to subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire and escape the edge of the sword. It *caused* other saints to lay down their lives for God.

The faith all these saints possessed, caused them to *act* upon the word God spoke. They did more than believe God; they *obeyed* God. The faith that's being propagated today is not genuine faith because works are *not* mandatory. The only thing that's mandatory is that you believe, or in the case of the writer of this article, that you *trust* in what you believe. This is a direct contradiction of what James said, which is that man is not justified by faith alone. He said: "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith (belief) only*".

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Now you know why the some of the Reformers wanted to cut the book of James out of the Bible. The doctrine James taught is a direct contradiction of the Reformation mantra—"justification by faith alone, through grace alone, through Christ alone". The word "alone" was added to Biblical terms of faith and grace to make a theological point, and the point was, works are *not* necessary in order to be saved. The term alone was a dig and a rejection of Rome's teaching that people had to perform Catholic sacraments and rituals in order to *eventually* be justified. According to Rome, justification only come after many years of performing these prescribed rituals.

The leaders of the Reformation saw that this was error. But they went too far and said that works were no longer necessary in the process for justification. So when they said salvation was by "faith alone" they meant *believe* alone. When they said by "grace alone", they meant that you have nothing to do with being saved. It's "all of God and none of you", from start to finish.

Sorry, but the apostles never said salvation was by faith "alone" or "grace "alone". As a matter of fact, the term "alone" is only found seven times outside of the Gospels and none of them is talking about justification—except for one. Would you like to take a guess which one that is? It's the one where James said: "*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*" (James 2:17). Kind of ironic isn't it? The very foundation of the Protestant Reformation was built on an *denial* of what James taught in his little epistle!

Oh yes, I know that some of the reformers, in some of their writings, said faith is "never alone"—meaning, works will always accompany true faith. But those writings were like the *back page* of a news paper, while the mantra, "justification by faith alone, through grace alone" was the like the bold headlines of the *front page* of a news paper. What most people saw was the headline, and the headline lends itself very easily to a wrong interpretation of what's being said. When people saw that headline, they automatically understood it to mean that works aren't necessary because the *whole thrust* of the Reformation was the doctrine of salvation by grace, plus nothing—and the plus nothing was understood by everyone to mean plus "works".

The fact is, the seeds of deception were sown from the very beginning of the Reformation because they over-reacted against Rome's error. But the situation is much worse today than it was back then. Today, there is no back page of the news paper. It's *all* the headline, salvation by grace, plus nothing. It's gotten so bad that some of these false teachers actually try to use what Jesus said in John six to prove that belief (mental assent) is *all* that's necessary for salvation.

*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that ye believe on him** whom he hath sent.*

*John 6:27-29*

Since Jesus said believing is "the work of God", some preachers try to say believing is the "works" that validate your faith. And no, I'm not creating a "straw-man". There are ministers who actually teach this kind of insanity. I've head them. Of course, if believing is the "work" that validates our faith, that would make what James said pretty interesting, wouldn't it—"Faith without belief is dead"? Sorry. James was talking about what we *do* when he talked about works. There is no way around it, you can't just believe; you have to believe and do. You can't just trust; you have to trust and do:

*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; **notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?** Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

*James 2:14-17*

Works are what we do, not what we believe. They are defined by James in this case as feeding and clothing people who are in need. If you have genuine faith, you won't just *believe* these people are in need and you won't *trust* that someone else will help them. You will help them.

*Wherefore **lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,** [that's something we do] and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But **be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.** For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway **forgetteth what manner of man he was.** But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, **but a doer of the work,** this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

*James 1:21-25*

It's interesting that almost 2000 years ago, James came against this "by faith alone, through grace alone" error that we face today. He said, "be ye doers of the word and not hearers only". He said if your faith isn't producing works of obedience and actual righteousness, then you're deceived. He said if you think you are justified by belief alone, or by trust alone, you are deceived. And I can tell you by the authority of God's Word, multitudes of people are in that deception tonight.

I'm sure some who hear me talking against the Reformation like this will conclude that I am a secret Roman Catholic; but I'm not. Catholicism teaches that you must *earn* justification by works—and the works they are talking about are Romish sacraments. I have never said (or hinted) that we must obey God to *earn* forgiveness or *deserve* justification. All I have ever said is that works must accompany true faith. If they don't, you're faith is false and dead. I'm saying precisely what James said: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only".

The Reformers were wrong! They went too far with grace, just as the Catholics went too far with works. We're not Catholics; but neither are we Protestants. We're part of a stream of brethren who were never part of Rome or the Reformation. If you think I'm preaching heresy; if you want to call me a legalist, or a Catholic, or a cult leader and drag me to a stake and burn me, that's fine. But you'll have to burn the book of James along with me because he said if you don't have works, your faith is dead and your justification is worthless! He said we are NOT justified by faith alone!

What makes all this so confusing to the average "Joe" sitting in the pew is that many of the people who preach John Calvin's gospel, *still* encourage righteous living and obedience. But even though they may encourage these things, they can't demand them or require them because of their view of justification. Ask them how we are justified and every one of them will tell you the same exact thing—we are justified by what we believe, not by what we do. Well, if we are justified by what we believe and *not* by anything we do, that means the only thing that's *required* in order to be justified is that we believe. Works may be encouraged, but they cannot be required. If they are, you have just trashed your whole doctrine of justification by belief *alone*.

The problem all these ministers face is that they have to encourage God's people produce works, but the very foundation of their belief system doesn't require works—it only requires *belief*. On the one hand, they know they must encourage people to have the "works" that accompany true faith. But on the other hand, their doctrine of justification—which requires *no* works—annuls the necessity of works!

The only way they can deal with this glaring contradiction is to tell the people they *should* have works. As long as you only tell them they should have works, everything will be fine. But if you ever tell them *the truth*—which is that they *must* have works or their justification is worthless, you'll fry their brains because all their Christian lives they have been programmed to think that justification is based *solely* on what they believe, not on anything they do.

As long as the debate is kept in the realm of what we should do, the contradictions that are inherent of Calvin's gospel won't cause a problem. One of the reasons people don't like me is because I'm always moving the issue out of their comfort zone and asking what we *must* do. Is obeying God (having works) mandatory? Do we have to obey God (have works) in order to be justified? When I say *Yes*, people go bananas and start screaming legalism! Catholicism! Religious cult! Heretic!

It really is a theological three-ring circus out there. Most of today's preachers and scholars would agree that obedience and righteous living can and does provide assurance that a person is saved. But very few of them are able to concede that *the lack* of these things is proof that one is *not* saved because in their view, you don't have to have these things in order to be saved (*justified*). The doctrine is, we are justified by belief alone.

Are you getting the picture yet?

When someone has the audacity to suggest that believing (or "trusting") isn't enough to save us or keep us saved, most of today's Protestant Christians will immediately write you off as a heretic. When you tell them there must be evidence that their faith is real, and that evidence is what you do (not what you believe), they go into orbit and start accusing you of adding works to grace, of trying to be saved by works, of trying to establish your own righteousness and all the rest of it. They say: "*Hey; I'm justified by faith, not by anything I do or fail to do. If I have to do anything to be saved or remain saved, that's the same as earning justification*".

As I've said before, we can make the Bible say anything we want, as long as we don't have to make our doctrines fit the whole counsel of Scripture. This idea that justification is by belief alone, and therefore works are not necessary, won't stand the whole counsel of the Scripture. We are told to judge whether or not we are genuine believers *by* examining what we do:

*For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and **I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.** . . . This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." I already **gave you a warning** when I was with you the second time. I **now repeat it** while absent: On my return **I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others**, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you. **Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.** Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test?*

*II. Corinthians 12:20-13:5 NIV*

Paul told the Corinthians to examine themselves to make sure they were true believers. Why? Because many of them were practicing sin with no sign of repentance. He said when he arrived at Corinth, he would be grieved over *many* who had sinned and had not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged. He said that when he got there, he wasn't going to spare those

who had sinned, or the ones who are now sinning. Then he said: Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. The reason Paul told them to examine themselves is precisely because they were not living and acting like regenerated people. They were living and acting like the *unsaved* Corinthians around them. Practicing sin, and having no remorse for that sin or repentance for that sin, is a bad sign.

Paul wasn't telling them to make sure they still believed in Jesus—they still believed in Jesus. Neither was he telling them to make sure they still believed the gospel—they still believed the gospel. He was telling them to check the fruit! He was telling them to see if their faith was producing the kind of “works” a living faith produces. He was telling them to examine themselves to see if they were actually in the faith *by* looking very carefully at what they were *doing* and how they were *living*.

But this is unacceptable according to the Evangelical doctrine of justification by faith because according to that doctrine, there doesn't have to be any fruit. We're not justified by fruit; we're justified by *belief*. The bottom line is, their view of justification demands the only yard stick they can use to judge whether or not a person is a Christian is belief, because belief is the *only* requirement for justification. Anyone who requires fruit or works as evidence is *contradicting* his own theology.

This is the kind of confusion that results from ignoring the words of James. God inspired that man to write what he did for a reason. What he said about being justified by works, as well as by faith, was meant to keep people from doing what they have done—which is remove the need for works from the process of justification. When you remove works, and you say justification is by belief *alone*, you have not only perverted one of the first principles of Christ, you have made it impossible to judge who is and who isn't a believer. What James wrote is the only way to properly balance the issue of justification.

One of the many bad fruits this kind of error produces is false security. I mean, if the only thing that's required to be saved (justified) is that we believe, then not only do repentance and obedience become optional, sin becomes a non-issue. As long as you *keep* believing, they say, the imputed righteousness of Christ automatically takes care of your sin.

Naturally, this whole idea grates against the conscience and the spirit of the sincere believer because he understands it goes directly against the teaching of the entire New Testament regarding sin. But when he begins to question it, he's silenced very quickly by those in authority, who immediately accuse him of trying to be saved by his own works. “*You are saved (justified) by what you believe*”, they say, “*not by anything you do or fail to do! If you think anything you do can affect your right standing with God, then you are basing your justification on works and not on faith.*”

Well, that's a pretty persuasive argument for most believers. They have no answer for it and they certainly don't want to be guilty of trying to *earn* salvation! Who would? So they sit down and shut up. And after a while, their conscience doesn't bother them anymore. After a while, their spirit isn't agitated anymore. After a while, they are at peace. But they are also deceived because they have chosen to listen to men, rather than their own conscience or the Spirit of God in them.

It's dangerous to follow religious leaders and teachers these days because many of them are walking in religious confusion, and that confusion makes them dangerous people because they preach truth and error in the same breath. They give lip service to the fact that faith must have works; but then they turn

around and say: “*We are justified by what we believe, not by anything we do*”. A few of them even give lip service to the fact that a Christian can be lost; but then they turn around and say: “*If you think anything you do can affect your right standing with God, you’re basing your justification on works and not on faith.*” That’s double-talk, my friends. That’s deception and religious confusion; and the vast majority of today’s religious leaders are caught up in it.

One Bible teacher, who you are all familiar with and who propagates this error, did a study recently in which he tried to explain why justification is by belief *alone*. He started his study out by asking the following questions: “On what basis do you measure your righteousness?” “How do you measure your right standing with God?” “On what basis do you think you are righteous?”

He went on to say how everyone is trying to attain a right standing with God through good deeds or by obeying the law. At first, it sounds like he’s asking how we think we were saved or justified initially. I mean, if someone asked how you think you were “made right with God”, you would probably assume he was asking you how you think you were saved.

But that’s not really what he’s asking. He’s combining our position as a sinner *before* we were justified, and our position as God’s child *after* we have been justified. When he asks how we measure our right standing with God, he’s not just asking how we were initially forgiven and justified. He’s also talking about our current standing with God. So the question he’s really asking is: “As a Christian, do you think your *current* standing with God is based on what you do in some form or fashion; or is it based on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ *alone*, and *nothing* else? The point of his message was that *belief alone* is basis for our justification. If we base our justification on anything we do, we are in deception. During his presentation, he made some very interesting statements. He says:

“The righteousness that God seeks...is based on **one thing**, and that is faith in Jesus Christ. **Believing that Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses you and gives you right standing with God.** Anything else you want to base your righteousness on, or your standing with God on, is a deception, and it’s false. Anything. See, we have to check ourselves. **Paul said examine yourselves, make sure you’re in faith. Make sure you’re not relying on anything else** [*other than believing Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses you and gives you right standing with God*]. **Make sure you’re not basing your righteousness on anything else but the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.** Do you see this? Do you see the deception in this, in the idea of, how our flesh is always trying to pull us away from simply believing?”

These statements demonstrates how warped this teacher’s view is because he’s imposing a totally foreign meaning on what Paul said to the Corinthians about examining themselves. He’s trying to say that Paul was telling them to examine themselves and be sure they weren’t trusting in anything *other* than *belief* for justification. That’s pure nonsense. Paul was telling the Corinthians to examine themselves because they were *behaving* like unregenerated pagans! And *how* were they to examine themselves? What are they supposed to look at? What are they supposed to be judging?

They were to examine *the fruit* they were producing. They were to examine *their works*. They were to examine what they were doing. The question wasn’t whether they were basing their justification on belief or works. They were still basing their justification on belief—that was part of the problem! They

were acting in a perfectly consistent and logical manner with regards to the “*justification by faith alone, through grace alone*” error. If belief is the only requirement for justification, then what we do doesn’t really matter! If you are justified by what you believe *alone*, then it doesn’t matter how you live. They figured that as long as they believed Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses you and gives you right standing with God, it didn’t matter if they involved themselves in wickedness.

The question was not whether they were basing their justification on faith or on works. The question was whether their belief was a *living* faith or a *dead* faith. The question was whether their belief was producing works—and that question could only be determined by examining their deeds, not by examining their belief. Here’s another interesting quote from this guy’s study. He says:

“If you are counting on anything **other than the righteousness of Christ in your life**—24 hours a day, seven days a week, no matter what you’ve done, no matter where you’ve been, no matter how you feel—it doesn’t matter, you are still in **right standing with God, if you will believe, by faith that Christ’s blood cleanses you from all your sins.**”

He says no matter what you’ve done, your justification is *secure* as long as you will *believe*, by faith that Christ’s blood cleanses you from all your sins. Notice that he didn’t say anything about the need for repentance in order to have your sins cleansed. Just keep believing. That alone should make a red flag go up in your spirit. I would imagine the phrase, “no matter what you’ve done” would include sinning, wouldn’t you? So no matter what kind of sin you have committed (and maybe not even repented of), if you will just continue to *believe* that the blood of Jesus automatically cleanses you from all your sin, your right standing with God won’t be affected. If you think that’s the gospel Jesus and the apostles preached, I feel sorry for you because you are in for a very rude awakening on judgement day. Just one more quote. He says:

“Every attempt to reach God outside of faith in Christ Jesus, is based on some type of self-justification. This is why God choose faith. **This is why God choose that we must be justified by faith alone, through Christ alone.** Because if there’s anything added to that it’s works. Our flesh will glory in it. Our flesh will take credit and think that God owes us something because if it’s works, it means wages. If it’s not works, then yea, it is a gift. And there’s nothing you can do to earn it. And there’s nothing you did to deserve it. **And frankly, there’s nothing you can do to keep it going except continue to believe that God is working in your life and in your heart.**”

Notice the Reformation mantra: “by faith alone through Christ alone”. Regarding justification, he says there is nothing we can do to earn it; there is nothing we can do to deserve it; and there’s nothing we can do to keep it going. Well, the flip side of that is there is also nothing we can do to *stop* it either. If there’s nothing we can do (or fail to do) to *maintain* our current standing before God (other than keep believing), then it’s also true there’s nothing we can do (or fail to do) to *endanger* our current standing before God (other than to stop believing). The bottom line is, as long as you keep believing, you will be eternally secure. You remain justified regardless of what you do (including sinning); and if you think anything you do (including sinning) can affect your justification, that means you’re trusting is something *other* than faith to be justified.

Now, this Bible teacher will swear up and down that he does not teach Eternal Security. But either he's a liar, or he's just *too ignorant* to understand the ramifications of what he's teaching. When you tell people—if they think anything they do (or fail to do) can affect their right standing with God, they are basing their justification on works and not on faith—you ARE preaching Eternal Security.

As I said the other week, today's ministers try to make justification the whole ball of wax. They may talk about things that have to do with sanctification; they may even talk about being sanctified, but it's all confusion because they think justification has *already* sanctified us and made us worthy of the kingdom. The fact is, they have justification and sanctification confused. Justification is a legal state that God provides for us *while* we are being sanctified. Justification is not the goal; sanctification is the goal. Justification is not sanctification and it never will be the same.

Justification is *imputed* righteousness. Sanctification is *actual* righteousness. There is a vast difference between these two kinds of righteousness. Imputed righteousness is something that is ascribed to our accounts legally and does not, in and of itself, make us righteous in our actions. God can ascribe (impute) the righteousness of Jesus Christ to any person at any time. But actual righteousness, which is sanctification, is spiritual fruit, and it must be worked in an individual's life.

Producing fruit is a process—both in the natural and the spiritual realm—and it takes time. Impute righteousness can be applied *instantly* to a person's life. A person can be very wicked, yet still receive forgiveness and the imputed righteousness of Jesus in a moment. But as long as that individual's character remains unchanged, his deeds will never change. Though he stands justified and forgiven, he will continue to produce the fruit of iniquity. Fruit is not what we believe. Fruit is what we *do*.

Though the Scripture talks about imputed righteousness in many places—particularly in the books of Romans and Galatians—the emphasis of the Bible as a whole is on *actual* righteous behavior and godly living. Sadly, as a result of listening to Calvin's false teachings, most of today's ministers have *reversed* the emphasis in our day, so that most preaching remains centered on justification. Godly lifestyles are encouraged, but they are not presented as being absolutely necessary to be saved. The attitude is, we should live righteously, but if we cannot (or will not), it's no big deal because we are saved (justified) by what we believe, not by what we do.

However, when you realize that God's goal is to have His righteous nature manifested through how we live and by what we do, the absurdity of making imputed righteousness—which is an *invisible* legal state—the focus of salvation is obvious. God's purpose has always been to bring His own righteous character forth in the earth, through the lives of His people. God isn't looking for imputed righteousness. He's looking for actual, tangible, visible righteousness

*For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, **until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles (nations) shall see thy righteousness, and all the kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name.***

*Isaiah 62:1-2*

*For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations.*

*Isaiah 61:11 NKJV*

Why is God looking for actual righteousness? First of all, because it brings Him glory. Jesus said: “*Let your light (conduct) so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 5:16). Please notice that Jesus said YOUR light and YOUR good works, not the light and good works of “Christ in you”; or the light and good works of the Holy Spirit.

Imputed righteousness is invisible; no one can see it! Only actual righteousness can be seen. Isaiah said the Lord is making “*trees of righteousness*” that “*he might be glorified*” (Isa. 61:3). Paul told the Philippian believers that he prayed they would be: “*...filled with the fruits of righteousness...to the glory and praise of God*” (Phil. 1:9-11). Unlike imputed righteousness, actual righteousness must be worked in our lives. It’s a *process* that involves chastening and discipline, sometimes severe discipline. So the thing that is nearest and dearest to God’s heart—which is that His people possess and manifest His nature in the earth—can only be accomplished by judgment. Only the chastening and correction of the Spirit of God can produce that fruit.

The Scripture says the Kingdom of God is (actual) righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). It says we must seek first that kingdom and that righteousness (Matt. 6:33). And it says we enter that kingdom and righteousness through much tribulation (Acts 14:22). This means actual righteousness is not an invisible legal state. It’s a possession that must be acquired and it’s acquired through tribulation. It takes tribulation and chastening to convert or change us from self-centered creatures to God-centered creatures. God is looking for actual righteous behavior and that behavior can *never* be imputed, either now or later in heaven.

God is bringing forth righteousness in the earth. Since the Church is the light of the world and the only *real* threat to Satan's kingdom, he has focused his attack on trying to keep us from coming forth in righteousness. If he can get us to be comfortable living in an *unrighteous* state, he has succeeded in putting out our light. This is the purpose of the “free grace” message and the “by faith alone, through grace alone” error. These messages do not demand actual righteousness. They may encourage it at times—and even this is becoming increasingly rare—but they don’t require it.

Satan’s not stupid. He knows the nature of man very well. He knows that with few exceptions, people will always take the path of *least* resistance. He knows that if you offer them a *choice* between a gospel that demands actual righteousness and one that only encourages actual righteousness, the vast majority of them will pick the latter—and they will *never* come forth in actual righteousness because they don’t have to. He also knows that if you keep telling them they can never be righteous themselves because only God is righteous, this *too* will keep them from coming forth in righteousness.

*Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the*

*excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that **I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:***

*Philippians 3:6-14*

I talked about this last week, but let me give you one more quick illustration of how this skewed view of righteousness affects us. I promise you that most of those who read this passage misunderstand what Paul said because of what they have been taught about righteousness. He said he was blameless when it came to obeying the Law. That means, he had a righteousness of his own. He *earned* that righteousness by his fanatical obedience to God's Law. That righteousness was *his* righteousness. But he said he didn't want to be found with his own righteousness, which is according to the Law. He wanted to be found with the righteousness of Jesus, which comes through faith in Jesus.

Now, your Evangelical/Calvinist minister will tell you that Paul realized he could never have *his own* righteousness, so he relied on the righteousness of Jesus. This is only *half* the truth. Yes, Paul would have to rely on Jesus, as we all do to *make him* righteous! Not make "Christ in him" righteous. But make HIM righteous. But this is not the way most people interpret Paul's words. Instead, they impose Calvin's lies on what Paul actually said.

What Paul said was, he didn't want to be found with his own righteousness which came from the Law. He didn't say he didn't wanted to be found with his own righteousness which comes from Christ. The issue for Paul was *where* the righteousness was coming from, not who *owns* it. Unfortunately, the leaders of Church World don't believe the righteousness of Christ will ever be your righteousness because according to their doctrine, Jesus will never give *you* His righteousness. He will never actually make *you* righteous. He will only share His righteousness with "Christ in you". As long as *you* stay out of the way (die daily), His righteousness will be manifested through "Christ in you". But you will never actually be made righteous. If you were, you would have *your own* righteousness.

Like I said last week, you remain a wicked vessel in the eyes of most of today's ministers, even though you were supposed to have been raised a *new* creature. So in *their* minds, Paul wasn't just saying he didn't want to be found with his own righteousness which comes from the Law; he was saying he didn't his own righteousness at all—period. The term "his own" is automatically demonized because it's a reference to you—the person—and "you" remain wicked. There is no *new* you in their minds. There is only the *old* you. You're not really a new creature in their minds; the new creature is "Christ in you". You are still the *old* creature and God will never share His righteousness with the old creation. He'll only share it with new creation (*Christ in you*).

It's hard for us to really understand what Calvin's false teaching has done to the truth of becoming a *new* creature. We have been programmed for over 500 years to *recoil* at the very thought of having our own righteousness because the term "my own righteousness" has been defined as something evil. We've been told not only is having our own righteousness bad, bad, bad; even the desire to have our own righteousness is bad, bad, bad. This whole idea may sound spiritual, but it turns *ugly* when you get down to the nitty gritty of just who is being redeemed and who is being changed.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

*Romans 8:28-29*

*But **we all**, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, **are changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

*II. Corinthians 3:18*

I have a question for those who think I may be pushing the theological envelope here. Paul said God's elect (ie: those whom he foreknew) were predestined to be "conformed to the image of his Son". Well, exactly *who* is being conformed to the image of Jesus? Do you think "Christ in you" is being conformed to that image? If so, you don't understand that "Christ in you" is God. Well then, is it your "old man" or your "flesh nature" that's being conformed to the image of Jesus? That's not even possible.

Well, exactly who is being conformed to the image of Jesus? Who's being "changed into that same image" from glory to glory? If it's not Christ in you, and it's not your flesh (your old man), it has to be *you*. You are being made a new creature! And do you think this new creature, who bears the image of Jesus, is still wicked? Will the image of Jesus be wicked? That's preposterous!

The new creature is righteous. Moreover, that righteousness is it's own righteousness. It's the righteousness of Christ, but it belongs to the new creature. Do you know why? Because Paul said the new creation man is CREATED in righteousness: "*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is **created** in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24).*" The new man is created in righteousness! There is nothing wicked in the new man! The new man has it's own righteousness because it is created in righteousness.

The ministers who say we can never have our own righteousness, and who tell us we must settle for having the imputed righteousness of Christ, are doing Satan's bidding for him. They are actively working against the kingdom of God because they are helping the enemy to keep believers in a *perpetual state* of unrighteousness.

It's a very sad situation because these people are convinced they're protecting the glory of God. They're convinced they're exposing and thwarting the flesh's attempt to steal God's glory. They're convinced they're preaching the gospel Jesus and Paul preached. They're convinced they're "*resting in Christ and His saving work*" for them and that they have a "*simple trust in Christ that gives us a right standing*". They'll certainly be shocked when they find out they have been deceived!

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