

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
 107 East Austin
 Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
 830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

C0542 – 11/2/2005 – The Terms of Salvation
Lordship Salvation-Part 4

Quiz: True or Falseⁱ

1. Justification means that God makes the believer righteous.
2. In justification, God infuses righteousness into the believer’s heart.
3. In justification, God imputes righteousness to the believer.
4. Justification is a process.
5. We are justified not *without*, yet not *by* works.
6. All believers are “saints.”
7. Experiential sanctification is a necessary result of justification.
8. We can judge whether we are justified by looking at our experiential sanctification.
9. A genuine believer may fall temporarily but will always come back to Christ before death.
10. Fruit is a necessary result of justification.
11. The primary source of assurance of salvation is the Holy Spirit.
12. We may use our works as a basis for determining if we are saved.
13. A person may know that Christ died for him.
14. A genuine believer cannot doubt his salvation.

Issue	Agreement	Disagreement	Free Grace	Lordship
Faith	Required for salvation	What is the nature of faith?	“reliance, trust, confidence”	“absolute submission, obedience, forsaking oneself, unconditional surrender, complete resignation of self”

Repentance	Required for salvation	What is the nature of repentance?	“change of mind”	“change of mind and turning from sin”
Christ’s Lordship	Christ is “Lord” meaning He is God	Must a person submit to Christ’s Lordship in order to be saved?	No. A person must only place their faith in Christ who is Lord	Yes. A person must submit to Christ’s Lordship in order to be saved
Discipleship	It is costly and important	Is the call to discipleship the call to salvation?	No. The call to discipleship follows salvation.	Yes. The call to discipleship is the same as the call to salvation.
Perseverance of the Saints and Eternal Security	Genuine Christians are eternally secure	Can a genuine Christian utterly fail?	Yes. A Christian may sin and not recover. There is a sin unto physical death. The Christian has a sin nature. The Christian is eternally secure.	No. A Christian may sin but he will always recover and advance. One who does not recover is a professing Christian. There is no sin unto physical death. The Christian has no sin nature.
Justification and Sanctification		What is the relationship between justification and sanctification?	Justification is by faith alone and is the basis of sanctification.	No one is justified <i>without</i> works and yet no one is justified <i>by</i> works.

I. The Issue Stated

What is the relationship between justification and sanctification? Formally Protestants agree that justification is a legal declaration. However, differences arise in the details of how one is justified. On the surface most Protestants will say we are justified by faith alone. However, as we studied in previous weeks there are differences in how people define faith. Is it simple reliance, trust, confidence in someone or something? Or is it absolute

submission, forsaking oneself, unconditional surrender, complete resignation of self? So, right off the bat there is confusion as to what justification by faith alone really entails. This confusion over faith has really resulted in two views as to how a man is justified. It has also confused the relationship between justification and experiential sanctification. Free Grace adherents teach that justification is by faith alone and must be kept distinct from experiential sanctification. Lordship and Reformed adherents teach that “no one is justified *without* works and yet no one is justified *by* works”. This catchy slogan closely connects justification with works so that many have concluded that Lordship and Reformed teachers logically make justification by faith *and* works rather than by faith alone.

II. The Controversy

The controversy over justification by faith really began at the Reformation with Martin Luther. Luther stated that justification by faith alone is the

“article upon which the church stands or falls.”

He saw in justification by faith alone the essential difference between the Romanist concept of justification and the biblical concept of justification in Romans and Galatians. John Calvin stated that justification by faith alone is

“the principal ground on which religion must be supported.”

At the time of the Reformation those who turned to Protestantism were simply admitting that the Bible was God’s word and was the final authority, not church tradition. So, the root of the Protestant system was a strong view of biblical inspiration and inerrancy. However, in the late 1800’s early 1900’s the modernist-fundamentalist controversy changed everything! Now, most Protestant denominations do not hold to a biblical doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. When a strong view of biblical inspiration and inerrancy is rejected then the Bible becomes just a play-thing that we can twist any which way we want. As a result, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which is at the core of the gospel, has diminished. In its place has come a man-centered concept of justification by faith and works, which is, incidentally, a return to Rome. The modern Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) phenomena is evidence of this and is at the center of the ecumenical movement that has surged in the 20th century. The ECT’s first announcement came in March 1994 and called for Roman Catholic and evangelical cooperation on social and cultural issues (such as abortion). Justification according to this document was

“by faith because of Christ.”ⁱⁱ

That is, Christ makes justification possible. Any Roman Catholic could sign this statement because Rome teaches that justification is possible because grace is mediated through the sacraments and aided by the works of the believer! No Reformer could sign this statement! But evangelicals like Pat Robertson, Bill Bright, J.I. Packer, Os Guinness, Richard Mouw, Mark Knoll, and others signed this statement anyway. What is stunning is that those of both Arminian (Bright) and high Calvinist (Packer) colors signed the statement. Does that say anything about the doctrine of justification in those systems? Yes, tonight and in following weeks I’ll show that it does.ⁱⁱⁱ

III. Justification Defined

The Greek word for “justification” in the NT is *dikaioein* and means “to declare righteous”. It should have been translated this way rather than “to justify”. The Greek word is a forensic, legal word and is used in the language of the courts. Thus, when Paul used the word *dikaioein* he meant it in the forensic sense of “to declare righteous”. When Luther saw this by studying Romans it changed his whole view of God! The Roman Catholic Church was teaching that “justify” meant “to make righteous”. Since converts to Romanism still sinned and thus needed confession, they were not yet “made righteous”. Thus, justification was a process that continued even into purgatory. When the person was totally cleansed of all sin then they were justified and not before. What Luther saw was that God declares a sinner righteous at the moment of faith in Christ which is the beginning of our journey and this declaration is made before we are actually righteous at our resurrection. Thus, justification is a legal declaration made by God when a person exercises faith in Christ.

Romans 3:21-22 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

There are two phrases I want you to underline in your Bibles here: “*the* righteousness of God” in verse 21 and 22. This is a very important phrase to understanding justification. How many of you have a Bible that has the word *the* in italics? The italics indicate that the word is not in the original Greek text. The way it is written makes it sound like when a person has faith in Jesus Christ, he is given the attribute of God. In fact, Luther struggled with the righteousness of God as an attribute of God because of this very fact. And it is

absurd to think that when we believe we are given the attribute of God's righteousness. The definite article *the* in italics is not present in the Greek and this could very well be an attributive rather than a genitive. Thus, it should be translated as the NIV "a righteousness from God". That changes the sense completely!

" <i>the</i> righteousness <u>of</u> God"	Genitive	the righteousness is the attribute of God
"a righteousness <u>from</u> God"	Ablative	the righteousness is sourced in God

The cold hard fact is that we are not given God's attribute of righteousness when we believe. We are never given any of God's attributes. We will never be omniscient, omnipresent, sovereign, etc. We will never become God. We will always remain creatures and the Creator-creature distinction will always remain intact. The righteousness that is imputed to our account is the righteousness that Jesus Christ generated in His humanity (Heb 5:7-9). Jesus Christ "learned obedience" and was "made perfect" in the flesh. This does not presuppose that He was sinful (Heb 4:15). Jesus Christ had to be sanctified. Just like Adam and Eve were created sinless and had to learn obedience so Christ had to learn obedience and be sanctified. In His sanctification He generated space-time-historic righteousness and it is this righteousness which comes from God and is imputed to your account when you believe! It is Christ's righteousness generated by His perfect life that is credited to your account not God's attribute of righteousness. However, this righteousness is in harmony with God's attribute of righteousness and is a finite replica of it. It simply is not identical to it!

IV. Justification by Faith Alone

This declaration of righteousness is, of course, by faith alone. And faith must be defined as simple reliance, trust, or confidence in Jesus Christ alone.

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Romans 3:30 God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

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

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

“But what about James 2” some say? “Doesn’t James 2 teach that we are justified by works and not by faith alone? (Js 2:24)” Yes. But Paul’s context in Romans 4 is teaching that justification *before God* is by faith while James’ context in James 2 is teaching that justification *before men* is by works. Abram was already justified by faith *before God* (Gen 15:6; cf Js 2:23) forty years before he was justified by works *before men* (Gen 22:9; Js 2:21). What we are concerned with here is the once for all declaration of God that a man is righteous. That declaration is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Rom 4:16)!

V. Sanctification Defined

The Greek words for “sanctify”/“sanctification” are *hagios* and *hagiazō*. Both mean “to separate, to set apart”. These words are used in two tenses in the NT. First, they are used in the past tense of positional sanctification. Even the carnal Corinthians (1 Cor 3:1-3) are said to be sanctified.

1 Corinthians 6:11 you were washed, but you were *sanctified* (aorist passive indicative), but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Second, they are used in the present tense of experiential growth.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 ³ For this is the will of God, your *sanctification*; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in *sanctification* and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

Positional sanctification happens at the moment of faith and sets us apart as instruments of God. Over 60 times in the NT believers are called “saints” reflecting the truth that at the point of initial faith we were positionally set apart for God. Regardless of our lifestyle the word “saint” applies to all believers. However, there is also an experiential sanctification in which the believer is to be set apart from those “who do not know God”. Our lifestyle is to differ radically from unbelievers. But it should be emphasized that our lifestyle in no way affects our positional sanctification or our justification!

VI. Relationship of Justification & Sanctification

While positional sanctification occurs at the time of initial faith, just like regeneration and justification, and is distinct from both, experiential sanctification must be kept far more distinct in our thinking. Experiential sanctification is not always uphill for all believers. I hasten to say it has never been always uphill for any believer. We all have lapses of faith and commit sin. How can one be going uphill when he is sinning?

A question that has bothered every Christian is “does lack of experiential sanctification in the life of a believer in any way condition or cancel one’s justification?” (Olson, 263) Put another way, “if we don’t see fruit in a professing Christian’s life does that in any way serve as a basis for judging whether he is truly justified?” Since justification is through faith alone and is a legal declaration by God we must say “No!!!!” Lack of fruit in a professing Christian’s life may raise questions but finally only God has the answer as to the standing of that individual. We have the right to challenge a professing Christian to press on and produce fruit but we have no right to write them off as unbelievers as many tend to do! So, what of the slogan “no one is justified *without* works and yet no one is justified *by* works”?

Baseball provides a good analogy of how confused this slogan is and how sanctification is related to justification (like all analogies it will have some deficiencies). There are two basic things that can happen when a player goes to bat.

1. He may not hit (a hit is defined as getting safely to a base)
2. He may hit

In the same way there are different things that can happen in the course of a person’s life

1. He may not have faith in Christ
2. He may have faith in Christ

The analogy is this, the first guy who did not hit is like the guy who never had faith in Christ. Therefore, he was not justified and he is “out”! There is no question what his eternal destiny is (hell). The second guy who hit is like the guy who had faith in Christ. Therefore, he was justified and he is “safe”! There is no question what his eternal destiny is (heaven). In one sense it does not matter whether the batter hit a single, double, triple or home run, the fact is; he is “safe”. In the same way, in one sense, it does not matter whether the guy who had faith in Christ has great advances in the Christian life or not, the fact is; he is “justified”. Nothing that happens after a ball player gets a hit can change the fact that he got a hit. In the same way, nothing that happens after a person exercises faith in Christ can change the fact that he is justified.

What happens in our life after initial faith cannot affect that initial moment of faith and legal declaration of God. We are justified no matter if our life is a wreck or a huge success. It is dangerous to allow our experience to enter in on the once for all legal declaration of God that we are righteous.

If we allow our experience to serve as a measure for whether we or another professing Christian are justified or not then assurance of salvation is compromised. Like many others I am concerned about the way that legalistic Christians write off problem believers and the way that some legalistic Christians fall into extreme introspection which seriously undermines their own assurance (Olson). Both high Calvinists and Arminians struggle with assurance of salvation. Arminians struggle because they think that if they sin, they can lose their salvation. Olson recounts how he grew up in an Arminian church and was asked to substitute teach for the pastor on a midweek prayer meeting. His topic was eternal security. He began by asking the question,

“When you get to heaven to what will you be able to attribute your final salvation?”
All present (20-25) responded in the same vein, “Because of my faith in Christ and my persistence in living a Christian life.”

It was faith + persistence! I am convinced this is a common response in Arminian churches. What is clear is that they have back-loaded the gospel with human performance so that it is not faith alone but faith + persevering works! In this vein, Robert Shank, an Arminian author wrote,

“There is no saving faith apart from obedience...There is no valid assurance of election and final salvation for any man, apart from deliberate perseverance in faith.”

Interestingly, high Calvinists and Lordship adherents also struggle with assurance of salvation because they backload the gospel with the necessity of human performance as demonstrated in experiential sanctification. Michael Eaton observed a strong pattern of introspection and legalism, which he found unsettles the believer’s assurance of final salvation. I have observed that the Puritan writings from the mid-17th century through the 20th century were increasingly introspective. They developed legalistic tendencies to determine whether they had the right fruit. The whole point was to gain assurance of salvation, though many struggled to the end of their lives, not knowing on their death bed

whether they were truly saved or not. For example, Asahel Nettleton, a powerful 19th century Puritan preacher said,

“The most that I have ventured to say respecting myself is, that I think it possible I may get to heaven.”

This should not surprise you given the high Calvinist doctrine of Limited Atonement. “If Christ purchased salvation only for the elect, then how do I know if Christ died for me?” Assurance can only come by turning to human performance. Do I have the right stuff? This turns a person inward to self rather than outward to Christ. And when we turn inward and face the reality of our sin then it destroys our assurance? This doctrine is dangerous because it back-loads the doctrine of justification by faith with necessary human performance that follows. Thus, it is no longer faith alone but faith plus human performance that enters into justification. This confuses justification with experiential sanctification and is, quite frankly, a return to Rome.

VII. Conclusion

Justification is a legal declaration of God that the one who has faith in Jesus is “righteous”. Justification does not make a person righteous. Rather, it is Christ’s righteousness that He generated during His life that is credited to the believer’s account. Experiential sanctification must be sharply distinguished from justification. Any confusion of the two results in justification by faith plus human performance and undermines assurance of salvation. We must always remember that justification has to do with a legal declaration of God while experiential sanctification has to do with our progress in the Christian life.

ⁱ 1. F; 2. F; 3. T; 4. F; 5. F; 6. T; 7. T; 8. F; 9. F; 10. T; 11. F; 12. F; 13. T; 14. F

ⁱⁱ Ron Merryman, *Justification by Faith Alone and Its Historical Challenges* (Hermantown, MN: Merryman Ministries, 1999), 94ff.

ⁱⁱⁱ It should be noted that John MacArthur denounced the ECT statement on justification. He said the evangelical ECT signers should “recant”.

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