

(Romans) Faith or Works?

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon explores the critical distinction between justification by faith and works, emphasizing its historical and contemporary significance.

Duration: 49:11

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 2:8-9, Romans 4:9-16, Ephesians 2:8-10, James 2:18

Topics: "Salvation By Faith", "Righteousness By Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the lack of understanding among Roman Catholics about how to attain salvation. He highlights the fact that many Catholic leaders are also unaware of the true gospel and salvation by grace. The speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing how to respond to those who believe in salvation by works. The sermon then transitions to a study of Romans chapter 4, focusing on verses 9-16, which provide insight into the topic of salvation and righteousness.

Transcript

All right, well, let's open up to Romans chapter 4 tonight. And as we continue here in our study in Romans, we're going to look tonight at verses 9 through 16. Last week, we actually went through the 22nd verse, but I want to come back tonight and look at it from just a slightly different angle.

And verses 9 through 16, we will read over them and then just sort of use that as a basis to go into the particular thing that I want to talk about tonight. But let's ask the Lord's help. Lord, we do pray you'd help us to really understand tonight your word and its application to our lives personally, and Lord, also that we might understand it to the extent that we can help others who maybe are confused over some of these things.

So speak to us, we pray. Give us an ear to hear what the Spirit would say to us tonight. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

So as you remember, Paul has laid out his case for justification by faith, showing us that a man is justified by believing in Jesus Christ and by that alone. And because it was so ingrained within the minds of particularly the Jews, but also just man in general, because that idea of a work salvation was so ingrained in their minds, Paul tackles this thing from every conceivable angle. And so as we pick up tonight, we're going to look again at his addressing of this particular situation.

But I want to show you how this doctrine has played a major role in the history of the church and the revitalization of the church back in what we call the Reformation period, when Christianity had to a large extent been lost for many centuries. True biblical Christianity, salvation by grace through faith, was lost for literally centuries. And it was recovered in the 16th century.

And it was recovered because people got back into the Bible and particularly into this epistle of Paul to the Romans. But let me read from verses 9 on through to 16. Paul says, does this blessedness, this blessedness of having your sins forgiven and having the assurance of salvation, does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only or upon the Jew only? Or does it come upon the uncircumcised or the Gentile also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also. And the father of the circumcision, to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect because the law brings about wrath for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore, it is of faith that it might be according to grace so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

Now, the question that Paul is thoroughly answering in these verses is whether salvation is indeed by faith alone, or is it faith plus something else? You see, because that was the teaching of the Judaizers, these people who came in and they were corrupting the gospel. They were saying, well, the gospel is okay, and it's good as far as it goes, but don't forget the law. The law is also vitally important, and so they were tacking the law onto the end of the gospel and making the law a necessity for salvation.

So they were basically bringing salvation back over into the realm of works. Now, this is a most vital issue and one of the main issues, if not the main issue, that the Protestant Reformation centered around. And this is one of the key distinctions still to this very day between Roman Catholic and Protestant theology.

Now, we've come a long way since Martin Luther tacked his 95 thesis on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. That was in 1520 that he did that. We've come a long way from there, but I think you will all agree, some of you maybe because you came from that background, others of you because you know people that are still there.

Catholicism is still alive and well on planet Earth and still opposing the gospel and still teaching salvation by works rather than by grace. So this is a very relevant topic because you're going to come across people that you work with, your neighbors, your acquaintances, whatever. You're going to find people that are holding fast to these systems that teach that salvation is something that you work for.

And so we need to know how to respond to those people. We need to know how to give them an answer. And that's what Paul enables us to do here in these verses.

You know, this past weekend, were any of you here for the Mission Awareness Day? Some of you guys? Yeah, great. You remember Frank Drown? Yeah, thanks. I'm just getting so old, I can't remember anything.

Frank Drown, I spent the whole week with him last week and I, you know, I can't remember his name. But anyway, Frank was telling me, interestingly, in his 37 years of ministry in Ecuador, he was ministering to the Shuar Indians there. But he was telling me something that I didn't know.

It wasn't included in his book. He was telling me some of their greatest opposition to their ministry came from the Roman Catholic Church down there. And the priest would come.

And he said the priest would come and actually solicit, you know, sexual favors from the children in the tribes. And they would come and they would, you know, do all kinds of vulgar and vile things. But he told me that the Indians, once they were converted and they began to go out and preach the gospel, it was the Roman Catholic priest that would attack them or incite the people to come against them and try to stop them from preaching the gospel.

So why do I tell you that? Not to pick on Catholics, but to just show you that this is still a very real challenge to the gospel of grace. And so we need to know how to answer these guys when they come against us in these areas. So now in verse 22, or excuse me, in verse nine, Paul says that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

And then he says, how was it then accounted? So the question that Paul is asking is this, was there anything other than faith that led to Abraham being accounted as righteous? Was there anything added onto his faith or was it faith and faith alone? So he deals with the issue of circumcision. What about circumcision? Because the Jew, of course, would say, well, Abraham was circumcised. That's why he's saved.

Paul says no. When he received the promise and was pronounced righteous, he wasn't circumcised at that point. Circumcision came later.

So okay, Paul refutes them on that level. Now the Jews had the idea and still hold to it today that the law that Moses received actually came from heaven in the sense that it was already written. It had already been passed on from Adam on through the patriarchs.

The rabbis are so obsessed with the study of the law, they taught that God spent his spare time in heaven studying the law himself. That's how committed these guys are to the law being part of the whole system. So Paul says no, circumcision wasn't a factor.

Abraham wasn't circumcised. Okay, so they say, but surely the other aspects of the law, Paul goes on to show no. If that's the case, then the promise is void because the law didn't come along till 400 years later.

God gave Abraham a promise. And if the promise had anything to do with the law, God really, you know, he really fumbled because it took him 400 years to finally get the law to the people. So his point, of course, is to go on and show that the law does not play a role in a man's justification.

Now, the reformers and when we talk about the reformers, we're talking about people like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Zurich Zwingli, people like this. And now these were men like us. They were men who loved God.

They were men who studied the word. They were men who lived in very challenging times. They were men who certainly made some mistakes, no question about it.

And so when we refer to people like this, we want to make sure we don't elevate them beyond what is proper. You know, some people today you ask some people and they'll tell you, I'm a Calvinist instead of I'm a Christian. Well, that to me is elevating Calvin far beyond what you ought to do.

There are, of course, are people who will tell you they're Lutherans. I wouldn't want to be a Lutheran. I'm happy to be a Christian and maybe go to a Lutheran church.

That's fine. But I wouldn't want to be a Lutheran. I don't think Luther would have wanted anybody to be a Lutheran either.

And, uh, but these guys, they were used by God at a strategic time in history to basically restore the biblical gospel. And we have it today because of what they did. You know, I recently saw, um, a little chart it's put out by some publishing company, a little church history chart.

And it goes back to the apostolic period. And then it just shows how each of the different groups historically developed and Calvary Chapel happens to be on that chart. And it's interesting as you trace the lineage of Calvary Chapel back, you go directly from Calvary back to the holiness movement.

And from there you go back to the Methodist movement. And of course, Wesley was the founders of the Methodist movement. And then, of course, Wesley was converted.

He was influenced by Luther. Remember when we first started our study in Romans, it was Luther's commentary on Romans that Wesley was reading when he got converted. And so it's amazing, you know, to trace this genealogy back and to find that here we are today, we are literally the spiritual descendants of these people.

So they did us a huge favor by restoring the true gospel. So the Reformers, they ask this question. This was the question that they began to consider.

And this is the question they ultimately brought before Rome. And this is the issue that divided the church. Is there anything other than faith that results in a man being justified? That was their question.

The Reformation, there were three things primarily that the Reformers fought for. They didn't go far enough in many people's estimation. And I think that's probably true.

But there were three critical things that they fought for. And the first was this particular issue here. Justification by faith alone.

Salvation comes by grace through faith alone. The second one was the authority of the scripture alone as the standard for Christian life and practice. So they wanted to bring the Bible back as the authority in the church rather than the pope and the cardinals and the various canons and things of the church.

And then the third issue was the priesthood of all believers. They wanted to restore that biblical picture of every believer is a priest. Every believer offers the sacrifice of praise to God.

And every believer has that ability to intercede for others and all that. So those were the three primary things that they fought for in the Reformation. But it all originally hinged on this particular issue right here

of justification by faith.

So in answering that question, is there anything other than faith that results in a man being justified? Their answer was emphatically no. There's nothing else that's needed. A man need only to believe in Jesus Christ.

That is what saves a man eternally. That is what causes a man to be declared righteous before God. But the Roman Catholic Church did say and still says today that faith alone is not enough.

Now I want to quote to you from the Council of Trent. Now the Council of Trent, Trent is a city in Italy, and a council convened that was called for the sole purpose of counteracting the results of the Reformation. So the Council of Trent was the outcome of what's known as the Counter-Reformation.

The Catholic Church recognized that they needed to reform themselves to some extent. They certainly were not going to go as far as Luther and these guys suggested. So they got together and over a period of time they stated the faith once again, sort of a fresh statement of the faith.

Back in 1962 I think it was, the Second Vatican Council came along and did that again. But they left intact for the most part the conclusions of the Council of Trent. So when I quote from the Council of Trent, although it took place in the 1600s, the Council of Trent, their conclusions are still the conclusions of the Roman Catholic Church today.

So in other words, what I'm quoting from the Council of Trent is exactly what they still believe. Now listen to some of the statements from the Council of Trent. And in light of what we're talking about, justification by faith.

If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be accursed. So their pronouncement is for anyone who says, the reformers of course is who they were responding to, anyone who says that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, they said let them be accursed. Let them be eternally condemned.

If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing more than confidence in divine mercy which remits sin for Christ's sake, let him be accursed. Now did you hear that? Because this is a statement that is in direct contradiction to the New Testament. Because that's exactly what the New Testament says, doesn't it? It says that God has mercy on us and remits our sins.

Why? Because of what we do? No, for Christ's sake, because of what he did. They said anyone who believes that is under an eternal curse. Then again, if anyone shall say that the good works of man, of the man justified, are in such a way the gift of God that they are not also the good merits of him who is justified, let him be accursed.

So when you say in response to somebody who might comment on your good works, when you say, oh well this is just the Lord working in my life, they say, oh no, this is you. Don't say that. Don't attribute that to God.

You need to attribute that to yourself. So you see that they are promoting a human righteousness. And they're promoting still to this very day the idea that you make a major contribution to your salvation.

That you are saved because of what you do. Now, of course, they will admit that Christ certainly plays a part in this. And he did die on the cross, and that was important.

And salvation probably couldn't happen without that. But nevertheless, don't say that that's all there is to it. And so today, what you will find is that the vast majority of Roman Catholics on the planet, and there are a billion or so, don't have the slightest idea how to get to heaven.

And the great tragedy is because the leaders of their church don't have the slightest idea how to get to heaven because they don't know the gospel. Some years ago, somebody put together a video where they interviewed dozens and dozens of priests, and they asked them a simple question, what is the gospel? How do you get to heaven? And not a single one of them could give you a biblical answer. It was absolutely amazing.

And that's where we are today. Now, one more quote, and this is a more recent quote from the current Catholic encyclopedia. And there it states that primarily and simply justification is the possession of sanctifying grace in its Christian theological meaning.

However, this possession, or however, before this possession can be accomplished, there must be baptism. So if nothing else, they teach that salvation is contingent upon baptism. And of course, they do believe in baptismal regeneration.

If you talk to a Roman Catholic about being born again, if they know anything, they'll say, oh, well, that happened to me at my baptism. Now, it's certainly possible that a person could be converted during a baptismal, and we've seen that happen at times, but baptism itself doesn't convert anybody. Baptism is not the means of a person becoming saved or justified, born again.

Baptism is really the public demonstration that you've put your faith in Jesus, and therefore, you have become born again. So all of these quotes show that the Church of Rome is in opposition still to this very day to the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. And I say this, guys, not because I'm anti-Catholic, but we do have to, I think we have to be wise in these days, because there's a ton of pressure today in moving more and more toward an ecumenical perspective.

In other words, there's all kinds of pressure for people to drop any serious doctrinal position and just let's get along with everybody, let's try to agree and work together as much as we can. A few years back, there was an agreement that was made between some evangelicals and some Roman Catholics, and the agreement was called Roman Catholics and Evangelicals Together. And they got together and they decided, you know, there are so many issues in the culture, there's so much going on in our society, we can't be divided against one another, we've got to be united, and so let's unite and let's work together for the greater cause of morality in the community and spreading a Christian worldview and all that.

The problem with that was in signing the agreement, they had to agree not to attempt to proselytize one another. So, in other words, the evangelical has to be content that the Roman Catholics don't need to be evangelized, they're just fine, they're Roman Catholics and they're going to get to heaven through their connection with Catholicism. Now, this caused a pretty good-sized rift within the evangelical community, because there were a number of evangelicals who stood up and said, you can't do that.

And I would agree with them. I mean, half the attendees of Calvary Chapel are former Catholics, myself being included. So, I wouldn't agree at all that you can't evangelize.

But now, am I saying that there are not Roman Catholics who are saved? I'm not saying that. I believe that there are Roman Catholics who are saved, who are still in the Roman Catholic Church, but I'll tell you this right now, they're saved despite the system, not because of it. They're not saved because of the system.

You don't get saved because of that system. That system will prevent you from getting saved. You get saved in spite of it.

And I know people who have truly become genuine believers, they've stayed in the church, they felt God's called them there to be witnesses and to try to bring others to Christ. And that's not only true with lay people, but there are certainly some people within the leadership of the church, priests and probably even people higher up. I did an interview quite a few years ago now when I was living in London.

I did a debate on the radio with the archdeacon of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain. And I found him to be a genuine Christian and a godly, wonderful guy. And we had tremendous fellowship.

And off the air, he conceded that I actually had a better position than his church did when it came to the issue of salvation. So there are people there, but they're few and far between. And let us never be duped into thinking that, oh, well, Roman Catholicism is just another wing of the Christian church, and we don't have to worry about them or think about them or we shouldn't try to share Christ with them because they're all fine.

They're not. Most of them have never heard the true gospel. They don't know the slightest thing about being born again.

They don't know Christ personally. They don't have the confidence they're going to heaven. That's a reality with Catholics.

And so again, I'm not trying to be disrespectful or hard, but let's just be straightforward with where things are really at. Now, here's where there's a bit of a wrench thrown into the whole thing. And the Catholics who know their doctrine will be the first ones to throw this one into the works and to try to unsettle our position.

They bring up the epistle of James. What about James? I've had Catholics say that to me when we're talking about justification by grace through faith alone. What about James? Doesn't James contradict that whole idea? And of course, the Roman Catholic Church, they base their teaching that works are a necessary part of salvation to some extent on the statements that James made and other statements of Jesus and things that are generally taken out of context.

So how do we answer that? Now, here's one problem. This is where Luther made a critical mistake. Because for whatever reason, Luther didn't take the time to sit down and come up with a good apologetic in regard to what James said.

Luther actually suggested that James was not an inspired epistle and should not be referred to. He spoke of it as being stubble and you ought to just chuck it out of the cannon. That was Luther's way of saying it.

I don't understand why he did that because he was a totally brilliant guy and could have dealt with it more properly. He was probably just frustrated and exasperated. But anyway, having done that and a few other things that were not all that wise, the Roman Catholic Church to this day, you know what Roman Catholicism thinks of Martin Luther? They think he was a lunatic and a heretic.

And so if you start talking to him about what Luther said, oftentimes they'll bring this stuff up. Oh, well, Luther didn't even believe in the book of James. So the solution to James is not to throw James out of the Bible.

The solution to James is to go back and let's see what James is really saying. Let's understand what James is actually talking about. And in doing so, we will see that James and Paul are not in a conflict at all.

They're talking about something from two different viewpoints. That's why it seems like on the surface they're contradicting each other, but when you look closely, you find that they're not contradicting one another in the slightest. So certain things we need to know.

Now, if you want to just flip over to James chapter 2, because we're going to end up there. James chapter 2, but before we get to looking specifically at James, there are a few things we need to know when we come to this issue. The issue is, are Paul and James contradicting one another? First thing we need to know is that scripture doesn't contradict itself.

We need to just know that going into it. Therefore, if there appears to be a contradiction, then we have to go back and look at it more closely. And you will find that when you do that, or when you take the time to do your research and follow up on what other people have done, so many things that seem to be contradictory on the surface are easily resolved, easily resolved.

Once in a while, I will sit down and thumb through books written by atheists just to kind of see, you know, some of their arguments, read some of their arguments. And I'll tell you honestly, their arguments are so, um, they're really elementary and they're all generally speaking based on apparent contradictions on the surface. But all you have to do in most cases, you don't even have to dig very deep to find the answer is simple.

It's right. It's right in the next verse. As a matter of fact, sometimes what they'll do is they'll build a whole case on something that said, and if they would have just read the next verse, they'd find that their case had no validity whatsoever.

Sometimes you got to go a little further than the next verse. Sometimes you might have to go all the way through, you know, the section, or sometimes you might have to look at it in the, uh, entire context of the scripture. But this is just something that we know as we approach the scriptures, the scriptures do not contradict themselves.

So if there appears to be a contradiction, we know that our understanding is limited and we need to keep doing our research and we will find the right answer. Secondly, we need to remember that grace and works are mutually exclusive. You cannot mingle the two together.

Once you add works to grace, then you no longer have grace. You now have works and vice versa. Once you, you know, you, you can try to throw some grace on some works, but in the end it still works.

It's either all grace or it's works. It can't be a merging of the two things. Now, when it comes to James, here's one of the first things we have to understand.

James, his entire purpose in his epistle is entirely different than Paul's purposes in his epistles and particularly in his epistle to the Romans. Now, James deals primarily with behavior. James is a very practical epistle.

You do not turn to the epistle of James to establish New Testament doctrine per se. James didn't write from a doctrinal point of view. He wrote from a practical point of view.

He was very concerned about how people were living their lives. Now, Paul, of course, he had that concern as well, but he wrote many of his epistles and particularly Romans, he wrote it from a doctrinal point of view. Paul is laying out theology.

James is talking about practical living. So, if you understand that, then you're going to see immediately that James and Paul are coming from two different perspectives. Now, James is writing to those who have misinterpreted the implication of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, because just like there has always been, there was right back to the very beginning, those who would say that, well, since we're saved only by grace through faith, that means that there are no works involved in the picture at all.

People misinterpreted Paul in Paul's day, and you could do that if you took certain of Paul's statements out of context. But if you follow through with Paul far enough, you find that Paul never teaches a salvation that doesn't manifest itself in action. Paul doesn't teach that at all.

Paul doesn't teach that you just believe in Jesus and go on your merry way, and your life doesn't change, and you never do anything different. You just, now you believe in Jesus, and you're going to heaven, and that's all there is to it. Paul doesn't teach that at all, does he? You remember we looked at Ephesians 2, for by grace you're saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it's a gift of God, it's not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Then what does he say? The very next verse, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God ordained beforehand for us to walk in. But somebody just looking at 2, 8, 9, and forgetting to go on to verse 10, might say, look, Paul teaches right here that it's not of works, that means there are no works involved. And again, this is where Luther made a mistake.

Luther had lived under that superstition of Roman Catholicism, and he had lived under this work system where he actually would abuse himself physically, and you know he would wear sackcloth, and he would crawl on his knees for great distances to try to please God, and he was under that heavy work system, so when he came out of it, he did kind of go a little bit to the other extreme. That's why he said James was stubble, because James talked about works. Luther said, no way, there are no works.

But it was, you know, it was unfortunate that he he couldn't strike the balance. But of course, in the end, I don't really care what Luther said or didn't say, I just go right back to Paul, and he made it clear that we are saved by grace through faith alone, but that translates into a changed life, translates into deeds, actions. So, James is writing to those who have misinterpreted the implications of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Now, here's another thing. James does not use the term justify in the same way that Paul does. Now, let me read to you James 2, 18 through 26, just so we can get a good picture here of what is actually being stated.

Verse 18 of chapter 2, but someone will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God, you do well.

Even the demons believe and tremble. But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you

see that faith was working together with his works, and that by works faith was made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.

Likewise was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way. For as a body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. Now, just reading that on the surface you think, oh my goodness, uh-oh, kind of does sound like there's a little bit of a contradiction here.

It sounds like Paul and James were having a little bit of an argument. Paul said one thing, James came along and said, nope, I'm going to tell you the truth about it. No, this is the way it is.

But of course, then we have a contradiction in scripture, and then we have a huge problem. Because if Paul and James are the author of scripture, then okay, we can have a contradiction. If God's the author of scripture, then we can't have a contradiction.

But there is no contradiction. James, it's clear when you read through his epistle, James uses the term justify in a different way than Paul does. Now, this is not exclusively something that James did.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the 10th chapter, the 10th verse, the author there also uses justify in a way that Paul, or excuse me, he uses the word sanctify in the way that Paul would normally use the word justify. You see, Paul is very precise in his terms. When Paul says justify, he means to be declared righteous.

When Paul says sanctified, he means to be set apart for God's purposes. When Paul says glorified, he means going into the heavenly state. The other writers of the New Testament were not as precise with their terminology as Paul was.

But they were consistent. Because when James used justify, he doesn't mean being declared righteous. James uses justify like Paul uses sanctify.

And it's very easy to see once you start really looking at what they are both saying. So, James does not use the term justify in the same way that Paul does. He uses it like Paul would use the term sanctify.

Now, when Paul speaks of justification, and this is where it becomes to me crystal clear. When Paul speaks of justification, he is referring to how one is seen by God. When James uses the term justification, he is referring to how one is seen by man.

You see, that's the difference right there. When Paul is talking about justification, he's always talking about how God sees you. God says you're justified.

What does that mean? He sees me as perfectly righteous. Now, when you look at me, you don't see me as perfectly righteous. But God does.

And that's always what Paul means when he uses the term justify. When James uses justify, he doesn't use it in the same way. He uses it as a man would see another man.

You could also translate the word vindicate. You see, and what James is saying is that the only way to vindicate yourself before your fellow man is for them to see something in your life. You can't see my heart.

I can't see your heart. I can't look into your soul and say, yes, I see that spirit that's born in there. So how do I know you're saved? I only know you're saved by that working itself out into a lifestyle.

And then I look at your life and yes, you see your works testify to the reality of your faith. Oh yeah, I'm sure that person's a believer. Yeah, I know that guy's a brother.

I've observed his life. And that is the difference between what these two men are saying. Now, when you look at James closely, it's clear that James does not think that you work for your salvation.

Listen to what he says. Look at verses 18 and 23, particularly in verse 18. Notice he says in the latter part, or he says, but someone will say, you have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith without your works and listen, and I will show you my faith by my works. What is he saying? Faith is already there. It's not going to come as a result of works.

It's already there. He says, I'm going to show you the faith that I have by my works. That's how I'm going to show you that I have faith.

He doesn't say I'm going to work and then that's going to produce faith. And that's how I'm going to get saved. He's speaking from the place of possessing faith already, but he recognizes that in order for you to see it, I've got to display it to you through my actions.

Look in verse 23 regarding, um, Abraham. Remember back in verse 21, was not Abraham our father justified. Now listen to this.

Was he not justified by works and replace the word justified for a moment, just replace it with vindicate or vindicated. Was not Abraham our father vindicated by works when he offered Isaac, his son on the altar. Now remember this, when you look at the Genesis account in Genesis chapter 15, verse six, that's where we read and Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Do you know how long it was from that point until, um, Isaac was offered upon the altar? It was a minimum of, well, what was it? It was 70 years, 50 years, 50 to 70 years, something like that. So when Abraham believes God, God declares him righteous, but then God is going to vindicate Abraham before his fellow men. God is going to demonstrate.

God says, this is a righteous man. And then God is going to give an opportunity for that to be demonstrated publicly. And that's what happens when Abraham offers up Isaac.

It's there that Abraham shows publicly, outwardly, the reality that had been in his life for decades. The fact that he was a righteous man. And that's what he says there.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which says Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. So now you see when Abraham believed God and God said he's righteous, that was God and Abraham. Now the whole world can see what God has known for a long time, that Abraham is a righteous man.

He's a man of faith. The whole world gets to see it because then Abraham goes and obeys God in offering up Isaac. So you see, there isn't a contradiction at all.

And there's nowhere in the Bible that you can support the idea that you have to add something to what Jesus did in order to be saved. When Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross, what were his final words before he committed his spirit to the father? His final words were, it is finished, paid in full. There is not a single thing that you can add to that.

And when a person comes along and tries to add to that, that is highly offensive to God. Because what a person is indirectly saying is that what Christ did was not enough. I need to make a contribution to improve it.

And that is highly offensive to God. So all through the scripture, going all the way back to Abraham himself, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord if we want to go back further. But all the way along, you find that it's through faith in God's revelation that men are justified, declared righteous.

And when a man truly puts his faith in God's word and in the person of his son, this then will of course result in a changed life, will result in a transformation. It will result in a new lifestyle. It will result in new behavior.

Thus, the works are there. The works do not cause the salvation. They are the byproduct of the salvation.

Works are not the root of salvation. They're the fruit of salvation. That's clear, isn't it? And I thank God for that.

There was a time in my life where I didn't know that. Because growing up in Roman Catholicism, I was convinced I had to work my way into God's favor. And there was an actual time in my life when I made an attempt to do it.

And I'll tell you, after a year or so, I was exhausted. I was just, I couldn't go on any further. I had tried my best and I just, it seemed like I might do good in one area for a while, but as soon as I would get one area under control, another thing would pop up.

And that's the problem with trying to be right with God on a works basis. You never know if you're right. You might be right for a few hours a day and you think, okay, Lord, you can take me right now.

This, it'll work right now. I can make it. But after lunch, you never know what's going to happen.

You know, you could have a bad afternoon and you lose it all. And oh Lord, don't come now because if you come now, I'm not going. And the, you know, if, if you have a works mentality, that's the way it's going to be.

And here's how you can maybe discover whether or not you have a works mentality. Because you know, it's possible to be saved by grace, but still have this works thing lodged in your head to the point where you're walking around all the time, worried that I don't know if I'm going to make it today. If you're walking around with that kind of anxiety, then know this, you need to get a better grip on the grace of God.

Because God doesn't want you under that anxiety. Now, of course, never misinterpret the grace of God as a license to go out and just, I don't need to do anything because Hey, there's no work. So I can just go on and live my old sinful life.

No, of course not. And Paul's going to deal with that when we get to chapter six, because after he lays out this whole thing of grace, people will come along and say, Oh, Paul, Paul, he teaches that you can just be

a Christian and keep on sending all you want. And Paul says, God forbid, God forbid, I'm not saying anything like that.

How could we who have died to sin possibly go on living in it? But we'll get to that a bit later. But as we close tonight, remember that a man is declared righteous by faith alone. That faith will show itself by works of righteousness.

And this is the scriptural teaching. Salvation is God's gift. It's not of works, lest anyone bows.

And if for some reason or another, you have not received that gift, don't leave here tonight. Before you do that, just open your heart and say, Lord, I'm a sinner. And I know you died to save me of my sins.

So forgive me, come into my life, take my life. And he will do that. And he will take and work a miracle in you.

He'll plant his salvation in you. And that salvation will begin to work itself out into your life. And your own mind will be blown at what God will do and the great change that he'll bring.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this great salvation. And Lord, that it's free.

It's free to us, but it cost you everything. It cost you the most precious and valuable thing in all of eternity, your son. And how we thank you, Jesus, that you laid down your life so we could be declared righteous.

And Lord, we thank you that tonight, when you look at us, you don't see us in our sin and separated from you, but you see us in Christ and reconcile to you. And may we rest in that. And may we from that position of righteousness, Lord, may we live a life that will glorify you.

Help us, Lord, in Jesus name. Amen.

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