

# Legalism and License

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

*~Eph. 2:8-9*

*“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God”  
that is with me.*

*~1 Cor. 15:10*

## Introduction

**T**oo often legalism is not really legalism but a mere copout. If we are confronted with something difficult we know we should do (or shouldn't do) it is easier to label it legalism and thus not have to worry about doing it. We could look at the above categories and simply label them legalism but that is not the correct response to God's grace. We often, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, excuse “ourselves from single-minded obedience to the word of Jesus on the pretext of legalism and a supposed preference for an obedience ‘in faith.’”<sup>1</sup> We should not use are freedom as a cover-up, or copout, but we should live as servants of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:16) and servants do whatever it is their master tells them to do.

In Romans, there were two ditches that Paul wanted those on the gospel road to avoid; the ditch of legalism and the ditch of antinomianism (anti-law<sup>\*</sup>). One of the main things Paul was addressing in his letter to the Romans was legalism and the opposite of legalism, antinomianism. Thomas Schreiner points out that “the Jews of Paul's day had distorted the law and used it for legalistic purposes.”<sup>2</sup> He was writing to Jews and Gentiles and defending his gospel to them. Some of them, to whom Paul wrote, believed that they were saved by works of the law while others believed that instead of keeping the law, even the law of Christ, they should sin and let grace abound.

Paul told the two groups that they were both wrong. He told them that no one is saved by works but that salvation comes by faith in Christ. He told them that people are saved by faith but faith is not passive, it is active. He told them that they are not to sin that

---

<sup>\*</sup> Law in Greek is the word *nomos* (Greek: *νομος*) so antinomianism (anti *nomos*) literally means against law or anti law.

grace may abound. He told them that none are saved by works but he called them all to works. This chapter will seek to apply Paul's dealing with the Jews and Gentiles to the problem of legalism and antinomianism in our present day. Often times in today's day we go over the rumble strip on the gospel road and then we overcorrect and go into the ditch of legalism or the ditch of antinomianism but Paul exhorts us to stay out of the ditches and keep to the gospel.

### **Legalism**

There are two types of legalism: salvation by works and extra-biblical commands that are not found in scripture.\* The first, salvation by works, is a grave and damning doctrine. Robertson McQuilkin says that:

“Relying on obedience to moral law or observance of ceremonial law for salvation (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 21) has been the historic theological meaning of legalism. Much of what Paul wrote to the churches in Rome and Galatia was to combat this deadly heresy... It has ever been man's method of attempted salvation.”<sup>3</sup>

This type of legalism is grave and damning because, as Thomas Schreiner says, it “has its origin in self-worship. If people are justified through their obedience to the law, then they merit praise, honor, and glory. Legalism, in other words, means the glory goes to people rather than God.”<sup>4</sup>

“Legalism claims that the death of Jesus on the cross was either unnecessary or insufficient. It essentially says to God, ‘Your plan didn't work. The cross wasn't enough and I need to add my good works to it to be saved.’”<sup>5</sup> This is a despicable thing. Imagine going to a king who you have severely rebelled against and offering a dirty, nasty, bloody rag, as payment to fix your rebellion. This king would surely be insulted and not forgive you your rebellion but rather count that as further rebellion. He would send you, the rebel, to the racks to be tortured. The insult to the king would be all the more insulting if he had provided a way for you, the rebel, to go free from your due punishment by suffering the punishment himself. We serve a King who suffered the death and punishment we deserved; we can but except His gift of righteousness. We cannot offer our own righteousness to Him. Our righteousness is but bloody rags.<sup>†</sup> However, praise the Lord, Jesus canceled our debt and nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:14)!

The second form of legalism is extra-biblical commands that lead to “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5). This type of legalism doesn't

---

\* The second type may or may not be implied by scripture because peoples understanding of the application of scripture is different. The culture in which we live may be different and therefore reflect differently how we are to respond to different scenarios. Note Paul's argument on food offered to idols in Romans 14 and first Corinthians 8.

<sup>†</sup> Isaiah 64:6: Bloody rags refer to rags that women would use when they were on their menstrual cycle.

come right out and say your saved by works but it does teach as doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15: 1-9; Mk. 7:1-7). To say that we must obey things that scripture doesn't say we must obey is the second form of legalism that I am addressing. Many in this camp, as Bryan Chapell has said, think of God as a "perpetual Santa Clause who is making a list and checking it twice to punish the naughty and reward the nice."<sup>6</sup>

McQuilkin points out that "it is quite possible to teach salvation by grace through faith alone and yet be legalistic."<sup>7</sup> This is the group of Christians who are known more for what they are against rather than what they are for; namely, the good news of Jesus Christ. This group's slogan tends to be something like; "we don't dance, we don't chew, and we don't go with girls that do." Paul would rebuke both of these groups.

We find in scripture that the law was made to increase transgression so the power is not in more laws but in Christ who has fulfilled the law perfectly. It is in and through Christ that we keep the law. It is also by God the Spirit's empowerment that we can work to fulfill the law of Christ. We do not need more commands or works to make us righteous, rather we need Christ our King to make us righteous.

### **Antinomianism**

Antinomianism in our present day is at least partially an *overcorrection* to legalism. Legalism is a grave teaching, in part, because it casts a long dark shadow over the implicit and explicit commands in scripture. "Legalism" as Randy Alcorn says "can be a convenient label to cover our unwillingness to obey God."<sup>8</sup>

Antinomianism is often a reaction and repulsion to legalism; however, antinomianism does not get the gospel right either. Antinomianism also stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the gospel just as legalism does; however, they are different misunderstandings. Often times our reaction to being saved by faith alone is to leave it alone but as we know true faith is never alone. We, in fact, are saved by faith alone but true faith can never be left alone. Legalism gets the "faith alone" part wrong, whereas, antinomianism gets the "never alone" part wrong.

The *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* says,

"Generally, Christian theology has rejected antinomianism on the basis that although Christians are not saved through keeping the law, we still have a responsibility to live uprightly, that is, in obedience to God's law of love in service to one another (Gal 5:13-14) as we walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16) who continually works to transform us into the image of Christ the Creator (Col 3:1, 7-10)."<sup>9</sup>

So, typically within evangelicalism antinomianism is denied. It is denied on paper

but often times in our hearts and heads we reject not anti-law but the law of Christ.\* It is because it is too difficult to live and love as Christ that we are anti-law of Christ. We often feel it is too hard to live radically and be like Christ so we do not even heed the exhortations to be like him we instead deny them as legalistic. What we do not realize is that by Christ's death and resurrection we do have the power because we have God the Spirit indwelling us.

Often those that are anti-law (though, they may not say they are anti-law) say that to uphold biblical commands, especially, some of the more radical commands is legalism, however, this does not fit either definition of legalism. We are in fact to uphold all the biblical commands and admonishments, however uncomfortable they are and however radical they are.† McQuilkin similarly says, "The term *legalism* is applied by most people to attitudes and activities that are thoroughly biblical or at least legitimate."<sup>10</sup> It is antinomian to label things legalistic that are legitimate mandates for the Christian. This reaction to what we are called to as Christians has given us an excuse to avoid a life of joyful conformity to the life of the cross, the Christ-like life. McQuilkin further points out that:

"The existence of a set of rules and regulations or a code of law does not constitute legalism (Gal. 6:2; 1 Tim. 3:2; Rom. 8:2). If on the basis of our spiritual blessing in Christ we are expected to walk worthy of our calling and obey the commands of God, then a desire to obey God does not constitute legalism (Eph. 1:3; 4:1; 5:8; Phil. 1:27). Having to do something is not legalism (1 Tim. 3:2; Eph 5:28; 2 Thess. 1:3; Rom. 15:27). Paul spoke of owing, being indebted, obligated-having to do something. Having a list of don'ts is not legalism (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:9; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 4:25-5:18; 1 John 2:13)."<sup>11</sup>

If we feel as though we do not have to obey God's Law, we *will* disobey God's Law; the opposite of the law is lawlessness. We must obey because to not obey is to disobey. The problem we face in our discussion of legalism is people's misunderstanding of what and why we are to obey. I cannot tell you everything that you must obey but I do believe that far too often we label things as legalistic when they are rather legitimate commands and exhortations from scripture.

Two groups are anti-law. The first group is against any law and only believes in grace and freedom to do whatever the heart desires; this extreme is not very common. The second form is much less extreme; they simply do not believe that it is necessary to live out the commands and admonishments of scripture and often instead paint them as

---

\* Note: Gal. 6:2; 5:14.

† It should be noted here that not all commands still apply to us New Testament believers and I also realize that there will be various understandings of these commands and thus various ways and degrees to which these commands will be lived out.

legalistic although they are legitimate and do not claim to bring justification in any form. Just like legalism both of these groups that are anti-law would be rebuked by Paul. What then is the answer that Paul gives to the two opposing ditches of the gospel? In the next section, we will see his solution.

### **Paul's Answer**

How did Paul deal with those that insisted that people are saved by works and how did Paul deal with those saying that works are of no significance? This is what we hope to discover, explain and apply to our present situation. I hope to apply this to the two groups of legalists and the two groups that are anti-law.

Paul repeatedly says that no one is justified by works and in fact if people were than Christ would have died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21). If one reads and rightly understands Romans 3:9-19 they will understand what Paul says next; that “by works of the law no human being will be justified” (Rom. 3:20). Part of the reason why we cannot be justified by works is that nothing good dwells in us, that is, in our flesh. For even if we have the desire to do what is right, we do not have the ability to carry it out (from Rom. 7:18). Schreiner says that “Paul rejected the law as a way of salvation because human inability to obey it. No one can be justified by works of the law because no one can keep the law perfectly.”<sup>12</sup>

Paul says that salvation is by grace, which is *unmerited* favor, so it is not on the basis of works, otherwise grace would not be grace; it would not be *unmerited* (from Rom. 11:6). Paul says that no one is saved by works but that anyone that is saved is saved by Jesus Christ's work on the cross. The righteousness of God is obtained not by our obtaining it on our own but rather it is through faith in Jesus Christ (3:22). We are justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus as a *gift* (3:22) and gifts are given, they are not worked for. Through Jesus, we have obtained access *by faith* into the grace in which we stand (5:2); it is through Jesus by faith not by our works. “There is no salvation by balancing the records. There is only salvation by canceling records.”<sup>13</sup> It is the very fact that God the Son once and for all balanced our records that causes us to live radical God-exalting lives. It is not the other way around. God does not balance our records because we live for him, we live for him because he eternally balanced our records.

We have been justified by *his blood* (5:9) and *not our works*. That is why Schreiner says “we do not gain righteousness by working for God, but by letting him work for us.”<sup>14</sup> Paul who had been a Pharisee of Pharisees or you may even say legalist of legalists, exclaimed, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (7:24). Paul, a formal legalist, saw that he could not merit God's favor so he answers his

question in praise “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (7:25). Salvation is through Christ and Christ alone can deliver us from our bodies of death.

If people are not in Christ no matter how sincere their good works are they are still condemned but there is no longer condemnation for those that are in Christ who trust in Him for salvation and not their works (8:1). It says in Romans 10:9 that “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” We are justified by faith alone apart from works (3:28) but then what place do works play? Should we sin that grace may abound (6:1)? If our good works do not save us, why should we perform good works?

The law for Israel was a blessing but part of the reason it existed was to bring knowledge of sin. Paul himself said that without the law he would not have known that coveting was sin (7:7). The law increased knowledge of sin (3:31) and the amount of sins (the more rules there are the more rules there are to break). Schreiner similarly says, “Sin’s tyranny holds sway through the law and is maximized through the law.”<sup>15</sup> According to McQuilkin until a person

“Understands the just requirements of the law, a person will not seek salvation. So long as there is no great problem, one is not concerned about a solution. Until the ears of the heart are opened by the thunders of Sinai, one does not truly hear the beautiful grace note of Calvary. Thus the law and grace are two sides of the single coin of God’s salvation. Without grace, law is a terrifying destroyer. Without law, grace is meaningless.”<sup>16</sup>

The law points us to our need for Christ because we cannot uphold the law; however, Christ perfectly fulfilled the law and brought to us a new covenant. Augustine said, “The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.”<sup>17</sup> Christ changed the law, and I believe in doing so upped the ante. For we have always been commanded by God to be holy as He is holy but now after His incarnation, after His life on earth, we see more clearly what that means. We are to be like Him in His life and in His death.

We are now released from the law and now we serve in the new way of the Spirit (7:6). We still serve but now we serve by the empowerment of the Spirit. Douglas Moo points out that some Christians have taken the fact that we are not under law, but under grace “to mean that believers are no longer obliged to any set of commandments. But again, Paul is talking about *the* law—the law of Moses—and not *any* law in general.”<sup>18</sup> Romans 7:4 says, “you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him [Jesus] who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.” We are now released from the law but we now belong to Jesus and we are called to bear fruit for God or you could say we are called to good works for God.

We fulfill the law ultimately because we are in Christ and he has fulfilled the law. We have fulfilled the law because Christ has taken our sin upon himself and given us his righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) but we are still to uphold the law, that is, the law of Christ. We are still commanded to do good works. We fulfill the law because we are in Christ but we are also told to, by the Spirit, fulfill the law by loving. Love is fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10).<sup>\*</sup> We fulfill the law by loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and our neighbor as our own self (Matt. 22:37-38). Jesus said in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you.” We are to love others just as Jesus has loved us (1 John 3:16-18; 4:9-12). This is no easy charge but by the power of God the Spirit indwelling us we can be equipped and transformed to love as Christ loved.

Romans 3:31, has been a difficult verse for commentators to understand, it says “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” Various understandings have been put forward about what it means to “uphold the law.” Moo says;

“Most interpreters think that the very next chapter supplies the answer. Paul’s stress on faith upholds the law because the law itself teaches that Abraham was justified by faith (Gn 15:6, quoted in 4:3). This might be right. But note that the word “law” is not being given its usual meaning... We therefore are encouraged to look for other possible interpretations.”<sup>19</sup>

Schreiner says that this verse “recalls (Rom. 2:26-27) and anticipates his [Paul’s] positive comments on keeping the law (8:2-4; 13:8-10). The moral norms of the law still function as the authoritative will of God for the believer.”<sup>20</sup>

Moo adds that this verse

“might mean that Christians uphold the law by obeying the command of love that Christ made the heart of new covenant ethics. But a better alternative is to look to Romans 8:4 for elaboration of 3:31. In this verse, Paul claims that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in believers. How is it fulfilled? Not by us, for we always fall short of the law’s demands, but by Christ, who perfectly obeys the law. Those who are “in Christ” therefore fulfill the demand of the law.”<sup>21</sup>

Schreiner chimes in again and says, “The idea is not precisely that the law is fulfilled by faith in Christ (contra Moo 1991: 257), but rather that those who have faith in Christ will keep the law. Schreiner points out that Paul

“Wants to guard against a common misunderstanding here: some may have objected that if righteousness is not through the law, then the law is abolished...”

---

<sup>\*</sup> Note: 1 Cor. 13.

but "...righteousness apart from the law's commands does not mean that believers can dispense with moral norms of the law."<sup>22</sup>

I believe the point is that those who have faith will keep the law. "The work of the Spirit (8:2) and the work of Christ on the cross (8:3) enable believers to obey the law."<sup>23</sup> The believer is empowered by the Spirit to keep the law (7:6 cf. John 14:16-17; Gal. 5:16; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27) and in fact has kept the law perfectly in Christ. "Obedience to the... law has never been intended as the way of salvation but as the appropriate response to salvation already received."<sup>24</sup> When Paul, in Romans, proclaims the gospel he is not saying that people are saved by works or that works are not important but he is saying that because Christ saved us we should offer our very lives to God in worship. Moo says it this way, "The 'indicative' of what God has done for us does not render unnecessary the 'imperative' of what we are to do; rather, it stimulates it and makes it possible."<sup>25</sup>

Even in the Old Testament obeying God's laws was not a means of obtaining salvation but rather an act of praise for salvation.

"God and Moses perceived obedience to the laws, not as a way of precondition to salvation, but as the grateful response of those who had already been saved. God did not reveal the law to Israelites in Egypt and then tell them that as soon as they had measured up to this standard He would rescue them. On the contrary, by grace alone, through faith they crossed the Red Sea to freedom. All that was required was belief in God's promise that He would hold up the walls of water on either side and see them safely through to the other shore."<sup>26</sup>

It is precisely because we can never measure up to God's holy and perfect standard that we offer our lives as worship because in Christ we now can measure up. Paul solves the problem of legalism and antinomianism by showing that good works are a response to salvation not the precursor to salvation. The legalist should now perform good works not because it will make him righteous but because Christ has made him righteous and likewise those who are anti-law should live by the law of Christ because Christ has set them free from the damning affects of the law.

Peter said to "live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (1 Peter 2:16). Similarly, Paul said, "You were called to freedom brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). In Christ, yes, we are freed from the damning affects of the law but it does not say we are freed from obeying the law (Rom. 3:31). On the contrary, we are now free to obey the law. We are now, in Christ and by the Spirit, free to serve Him because we are now *free* from the slavery of sin, and are now slaves of righteousness (cf. Rom. 6:18-22). So freedom does not merely mean that the restrictions and commands are gone, though praise the Lord many are, but it means that we have power and joy in living within the

purposeful, so called, “restrictions”<sup>\*</sup> and commands. We no longer must obey the written code but we must follow the law of Christ and bear the fruits of the Spirit “against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:23).

In Romans Chapter six, essentially the same question is asked twice “are we to sin that grace may abound?” (6:6; 15) and both times Paul’s response was “By no means!” Paul basically gives Jesus’ argument that a good tree bears good fruit. Paul said that you are slaves to whom you obey, either to sin which leads to death or obedience that leads to righteousness (6:16). In other words, if you are a good slave, you will serve God, the good master, and if you are bad slave, you will serve Satan, the bad master. Schreiner rightly adds:

“The illustration from slavery is inadequate because the relationship believers have with God is shorn of all the negative elements present in slavery. We should not conclude, though, that the slavery illustration is a poor one (cf. Schlatter 1995: 149; Moo 1991:619). For the image of slavery rightly denotes that God is our master, to whom we owe total commitment.”<sup>27</sup>

Paul “is not here teaching that a Christian *ought to be* a slave of righteousness but that every Christian, by divine creation, *is made* a slave of righteousness and cannot be anything else.”<sup>28</sup> You will know a slave by the master they serve. John MacArthur says, “All men are either mastered by sin, which is to say they are under the lordship of Satan, or they are mastered by righteousness, which is to say they are under the lordship of Jesus Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

We were once slaves of sin but now are slaves of righteousness so we serve God not because it saves us but because we have a new Master and this loving Master gives us the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“Those who live under grace show that they are under grace because they have a new master (God) and are liberated from their old master (sin). Paul refuses to accept any abstract understanding of grace separated from concrete daily living. Grace does not merely involve the forgiveness of sins. It also involves power in which the mastery and dominion of sin is broken.”<sup>30</sup>

John Stott says, “Conversion is an act of self-surrender; self-surrender leads inevitably to slavery; and slavery demands a total, radical, exclusive obedience.”<sup>31</sup> Paul does not appeal to the Romans to obey God and perform good works to earn salvation but

---

\* I say it this way because if a kid was playing in the front yard and was “restricted” from playing in the road it is not merely a restriction but a loving restriction or loving bondrey. If we have the outlook that the rules that God gives us are simply commands and restrictions it takes the fatherly love out of the equation; something that is very important to have for any child to obey his parents. So, God’s commands and restrictions should rather be looked at as loving wisdom, though, at times harsh, that a father shares with his child.

because in Christ they have obtained salvation. “Obedience neither produces nor maintains salvation, but it is an inevitable characteristic of those who are saved.”<sup>32</sup>

Paul is obviously not legalistic because he defends passionately that salvation is by grace alone and through faith alone; it is a gift of God so that no one can boast. He also tells the Romans that they are not to sin that grace may abound and he calls them to radical gospel living. “Only the Son of God could have paid the cost of salvation. But He calls His followers to pay the cost of discipleship”<sup>33</sup> (Note: Matt. 16:24-25).

In the same place, that Paul says that salvation is not by good works (against legalism) he calls them to good works (against antinomianism). So what is meant by good works? Good works:

“Conduct or actions that may be deemed good or morally upright. In Christian thought, such acts are motivated by love for God and flow out of the desire to obey God’s will. They are not intended as means to merit divine favor or means for personal gain, but are expressions of gratitude to God for the divine unmerited favor already received, and they are an integral part of the life of devotion to God and imitation of Christ. Finally, good works are not the products of human effort alone, but are the outworking of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>34</sup>

McQuilkin rightly adds to the definition by saying “God appeals to his children to obey both from a hope of a reward and a fear of loss (Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:7-9; Dan. 12:3; 1 Cor. 3:10-15). But the highest motive is love. Obedience out of gratitude for all the gifts of grace is the best antidote to the virus of legalism.”<sup>35</sup>

In Romans 6:19, Paul says “present your members as slaves to righteousness.” John Stott has said, “Conversion is an act of self-surrender; self-surrender leads inevitably to slavery; and slavery demands a total, radical, exclusive obedience.”<sup>36</sup> We were slaves to sin, we obeyed it as our master, but now we are slaves to righteousness, to God, now we serve a new Master (Rom. 6:15-22). We *must* obey our Master. However, we must be further reminded that our Master made it possible to serve Him, by serving us on the cross, whereby we our obedient slaves (justified) and capable of obedience (sanctification).

Paul reminds the Romans that though they use to belong to another and they used to serve the sinful flesh, now they serve God and are told to bear good fruit (7:4). Paul calls the Romans to present their bodies as living sacrifices but he grounds it in worship (12:1). Martin Luther adds we “owe (*God*) a reasonable sacrifice and not animal sacrifices, for this is proper according to the new Law (*of love*).”<sup>37</sup> Radical living out the gospel is a result of worship of God and not trying to earn worth from God. In Romans 12:6-21 we see that Paul is clearly not against the law. He calls the Romans too many good works but once again not to merit grace but because of the grace that God has shown. He calls them to hate what is evil (12:9), contribute to the needs of the saints (12:13), and not to be slothful in zeal but be fervent in spirit (12:11) among other things.

There is almost a paradoxical nature to salvation. We are saved by faith alone but faith is never alone. A good tree bears good fruit and a servant of righteousness will show he is a servant of righteousness by serving God and being righteous. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Luther had taught that man cannot stand before God, however religious his works and ways may be, because at the bottom he is always seeking his own interests...” yet “...grace had cost [Luther] his very life, and must continue to cost him the same price day by day.”<sup>38</sup> Also, look at what grace cost Paul, the author of Romans, himself. It cost him beatings... and his very life. What might grace “cost” us?

Bonhoeffer said:

“The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from the grace. But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves.”<sup>39</sup>

We are saved by faith alone and Jesus is our Savior but he is also our Lord. Christ cannot be our Savior if he is not also our Lord. “The gospel demands that we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and live out the implications of that lordship.”<sup>40</sup>

As we have seen in Romans, as in scripture in general, the author will have a moral command or some sort of admonishment but then will ground it in the gospel. You see this same thing in the Old Testament, for example in Leviticus 11:44-45, God calls the Israelites to be holy and then says for, or because, I brought you out of Egypt. We, as Christians, are not simply given bland commands that we are to follow; we are given reasons why we should joyfully and radically serve God. We are told in Romans 15:1-3 not to please ourselves but instead to please others because “Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.’”

### **Faith is *never* alone\***

James asks, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does

---

\* Someone may object that the thief beside Jesus on the cross (and all deathbed conversions) prove that to say that “faith is never alone” is wrong. However, the thief on the cross already began to demonstrate that he had faith and that demonstration would have continued had he lived. There is some fruit that we cannot see right away but in time if the tree is good *it will* bear good fruit. All fruit is begotten internally but if given time *will show* externally, that is inevitable.

not have works? Can that faith save him?” (2:14). No, that “faith” cannot, because it is no faith at all (cf. v. 17, 26). It is senseless to say to a brother or sister who is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled” (15-16). We may say we care about something but our actions can prove otherwise. We can *say* we care for our needy brother or sister, but unless we *show* it then it is likely not the case. It is the same way with faith. We can say we have faith but that does not mean that we do. “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (v.17).

We must seek to “show... faith by... works” (v.18) because even the demons believe but that obviously does not mean that they are in Christ; that Jesus is their Savior and Lord. Correct beliefs do not always translate into justifying faith. Abraham is an example of this. He showed his *justifying-faith* by his works.

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?” (v.22). Why did Abraham offer his son on the altar? Abraham offered his son on the altar because he truly believed. “The LORD said to Abram [later Abraham], ‘Go from your country... And I will make of you a great nation... So Abram went as the LORD had told him’” (cf. Gen. 12:1-4). Later on in chapter 15 it says, “He [Abram] believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness” (v. 6). He had faith that God would bless him so he moved (See Rom. 4:20-25; Heb. 11:8-9). Likewise, he had faith that the LORD God could even raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19) so he laid him upon the altar (cf. Gen. 22:1-19).

God tested Abraham’s faith (22:1; Heb. 11:17). Would Abraham’s works back up his faith? God told Abraham to offer his son, his only son, on the altar.\* When Abraham’s boy asked where the lamb for the burnt offering was. Abraham showed that he had faith by *saying*, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (22:8). But he also *showed* that he had faith. He placed his son on the altar and took the knife to slaughter him (9-10). But the angel of the LORD said, “Abraham, Abraham! Do not lay your hand on the boy... for *now I know that you fear God*” (cf. 11-12); or now I know that you have genuine faith.

“You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works” (James 2:22). We are saved by faith alone but faith is never alone; we must complete our faith by works. Will we pass the test and show we have faith by completing it; that is, living it out practically (will we sit in the chair)? “The Scripture was *fulfilled* that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’” (v. 23). That is, Abraham fulfilled or demonstrated his belief by his works. Abraham, “received the sign

---

\* Though this is not why we are looking at this passage, don’t miss that Jesus is the “only Son” that was slain on the cross for us. Jesus is the offspring in whom all the nations shall be blessed because He, God’s only Son, is the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world! God did not withhold His only Son! Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide!” And He did provide! Thank you Jesus!

of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith” (Rom. 4:11). He was righteous “while still uncircumcised” (v. 11) but he *fulfilled* or demonstrated his righteousness by receiving the sign (*good work*) of circumcision. He not only had faith but “walk[ed] in the footsteps of the faith” (v. 12).<sup>41</sup>

This is the context that this very controversial verse comes, “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24).<sup>\*</sup> It must first be noted that James and Paul addressed different audiences, with different problems.<sup>42</sup> Paul is coming at the question in an all-together different way than James. Paul’s letter to the Romans is more hypothetical in that Paul is predicting how he believes the Romans will react to what he says and then responds to that. So, in this process Paul assumes there will be those who will go towards legalism and also those who will go to antinomianism. However, James is not responding to those who have a tendency to legalism but those who are (at least in some ways) antinomian.

It is understood that we would confront the two groups differently and this is also the case with James and Paul. James is saying, “Faith and works are closely correlated, in fact, faith will inevitably produce works.” Thomas R. Schreiner has rightly said, “James does not disagree with Paul’s contention that faith alone justifies, but he defines carefully the kind of faith that justifies. Faith that truly justifies can never be separated from works.”<sup>43</sup> James does not mean that we are saved by works but he does not want people to be mere hearers of the word but doers also; in fact, if we are hearers only we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22-27).<sup>†</sup>

In Genesis chapter 22 Abraham was justified (that is, shown to be just)<sup>44</sup> by his works, by offering his son, but his work flowed from his faith because as we saw he had faith years earlier (Gen. 15:6). Faith and works go together. It was by faith that those immortalized in Hebrews 11 carried out their works.

“*By faith* Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain... *By faith* Noah... constructed an ark for the saving of his household... *By faith* Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance... *By faith* Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... *By faith* Moses... refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11: 4, 7, 8, 17, 24-26).<sup>45</sup>

Abraham was justified “in the same way” as Rehab. That is, they both had faith and *then* acted out that faith. They showed they had real faith because it “was active along

---

<sup>\*</sup> Paul and James are using the word “justified” in different ways (See endnote 43).

<sup>†</sup> True saving faith is like sitting in a chair. You have to have faith to sit down (believe that it will hold you) but you also have to do something (actually move and sit down). You will never sit unless you believe but if you believe you must sit down or it will show you don’t actually trust the chair.

with... works” (v. 22). Rehab had heard about the mighty works of the LORD and she had faith, the fear of the LORD had fallen upon her, but she also had works to demonstrate (or justify) her faith (she hid the spies. See Josh. 2; Heb. 11:31). If faith does not have works then it is no faith at all (James 2:17, 26). “Faith, in both Testaments, is hearing the word of God and doing it.”<sup>46</sup>

At times we see Jesus and the apostles saying, “repent”<sup>\*</sup> (cf. Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30) and Paul even told people to “repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with... repentance” (Acts 26:20). Jesus also said, “*come* to me (faith in action)... and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28-30). In repentance, faith and works are tightly connected. You cannot repent without faith and you do not have real faith unless you repent. No one turns from sin to Jesus unless they truly believe, but if they truly believe then they must turn from their sin to Jesus. Faith and works are intricately woven together (We must remember, however, that it is God who grants both faith and works).

Paul calls this the “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26 see also Acts 6:7) and we see this same concept throughout his writings. In Acts, Paul talks about performing deeds, or works, in keeping with repentance (Acts 26:20). James and Paul do not contradict each other.<sup>†</sup> They simply address different audiences, employ their own style, and explain things using different concepts. For example, Paul talks about us being dead to sin and alive to God. He says we are slaves of righteousness, slaves of God. He says that we must sow (work) to the Spirit if we want to reap eternal life. Paul is not as different from James as many think he is; Paul just emphasizes the importance of works in a different way (see also 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal.5:19-25).

Also, notice that in the Gospels there are examples of people acting in faith and thus being healed and saved. For instance, the woman that reached out and touched Jesus (Luke 8:42-48 see also Matt. 9:2; Luke 7:36-50; Jn. 6:35, 51; Mark 2:1-5) demonstrated “works” and faith. Jesus in a sense equated the two, the woman “*worked*” (reached out and touched

---

<sup>\*</sup> Repent (*μετανοειτε*) and repentance (*μετανοια*) means an alteration of mind and purpose that brings a change in life and practice. J. M. Lunde says, “The biblical notion of repentance refers to the radical turning away from anything which hinders one’s *wholehearted devotion* to God, and the corresponding turning to God in love and obedience” (*New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 726. Italics mine). Here, once again, we see the all-encompassing nature of Christianity. Repentance in a sense is to convert mind, body, soul, and strength (*i.e. total devotion*) to Christ. Similarly, baptism partly represents living in and for Christ. We have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3 see also Rom. 6:4, 11; Gal. 3:27). Romans 7:4 says, we “have died... through the body of Christ... [and have] been raised from the dead (notice baptism language) *in order that we may bear fruit for God.*” Baptism symbolizes “not only the putting off of sinful habits and passions, but actual death to a former life of evil, and also resurrection to a new life of purity and holiness” (Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to the Philemon* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, year unknown], 70.).

<sup>†</sup> John MacArthur says in his book *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* [(Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 153] that “James is not at odds with Paul. ‘They are not antagonists facing each other with crossed swords; they stand back to back, confronting different foes of the gospel’” [Alexander Ross, “The Epistles of James and John,” *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1954), 53.].

Jesus) and Jesus said your “*faith* has made you well.”\* These passages demonstrate the unity between faith and works. We must also remember that a tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 7:17-20; 12:35; Luke 6:43-45) just as faith is known by its works. Jesus also talks about us bearing much fruit and thus *proving* to be one of His disciples (John 15:9). John the baptizer, inspired by the Spirit, equates belief and obedience in John 3:36. He says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not *obey* (you expect to see “believe” here cf. v. 16, 18 but note v. 20-21) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” It is those who *do* the will of God that our heirs (Mark 3:35). We also see a similar thing in Hebrews, Jesus is “the source of eternal salvation to all who *obey* Him” (5:10).†

Jesus teaches that those who merely *say* they believe by saying “Lord, Lord” will not enter the kingdom of heaven but those that *do* the will of the Father will enter in (cf. Matt. 7:21). However, Jesus by no means teaches us that we are justified by works (cf. Luke 18:9-14) but that the faith that justifies will be a faith that will unavoidably produce good works (cf. Matt. 7:17-18). Jesus is not merely concerned with right belief because, as we have seen, even the demons belief is orthodox but their belief is obviously not justifying faith for it does not lead to right action or repentance.

D.A. Carson has said,

“What, then, is the essential characteristic of the true believer, the genuine disciple of Jesus Christ? It is not loud profession, nor spectacular spiritual triumphs, nor protestations of great spiritual experience. Rather, his chief characteristic is obedience. The true believers perform the will of their Father... The Father’s will is not simply admired, discussed, praised, debated; it is done. It is not theologically analyzed, nor congratulated for its high ethical tones; it is done.”<sup>47</sup>

He goes on to say,

---

\* The Greek word *σέσωκεν* can mean “heal” or “save” but I believe it means both in this context; notice Jesus says “go in peace.”

† Jesus does say, “If anyone loves me, he *will* keep my word” (Jn. 14:23) but we don’t keep his word merely through white-knuckling and pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. Jesus gives us a Helper and empowers us (v. 16). Jesus only says we *will* keep His word because He first says that He *will* give us a Helper to enable us to do so. Salvation is God’s work from start to finish (Heb. 12:2). It is only when we abide in Jesus and He abides in us by grace that we bear fruit (Jn. 15:4-5). So although we must bear the fruits of faith even that fruit is a gracious gift and work of God. It is the direct result of being connected to Christ and does not come from good that is intrinsically in us. As Paul reminds us we work with all the power that God works within us (Phil. 2:13). We must be reminded that if we are in Christ there will necessarily be a work within us but this work is by *His* power. We were made alive by God (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13) by connection to Jesus the “true vine” through whom we, the branches, can *now* bear fruit. Apart from Him we can do *nothing* (Jn. 15:5)! Notice that we did not connect ourselves to the true vine, we were dead helpless branches on the ground, the vine dresser connected us (v. 1, 16). We did not chose God, He chose us (v. 16). Faith and fruit are both gracious gifts of God.

“It is true, of course, that no man enters the kingdom because of his obedience; but it is equally true that no man enters the kingdom who is not obedient. It is true that men are saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ; but it is equally true that God’s grace in a man’s life inevitably results in obedience.”<sup>48</sup>

Mark 16:16 is also another passage to look at, it says, “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”<sup>49</sup> This passage does not teach baptismal regeneration but it does show us that obedience must accompany saving faith. We must remember, however, that just as God speaks all things into existence, He also gives spiritual life *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. We were dead as dry bones and He spoke life into us through His word. We were dead in our trespasses and sins and desperately wicked and thus we can’t work for salvation (cf. John 1:13; 6:63; Rom. 9:16; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:1, 4-5; James 1:18; Ezek. 37:1-14) this is clear, but salvation will necessarily lead to good works. That is why obedience and belief can be so deeply tied together.

The Divines of the Westminster Confession of Faith accurately wrote that:

“Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone... Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: *yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.*”<sup>\*</sup>

We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, but the faith that justifies is *never* alone, “it is ever accompanied by all other graces.” Or as question 64 of the Heidelberg Catechism says, “It is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.”

The last passage I want to look at here is John 13. Peter tells Jesus that he does not want Him to wash his feet (v. 6). It is striking to me that Jesus says, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (v. 8) and then He goes on to say, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (v. 14). So Jesus is saying don’t try and work for your salvation (you can’t) but follow my example and serve others because I have served you.

Works do not save us. We are saved by accepting the work that Jesus did on our behalf, He washed us. And, in fact, if we try to work for our salvation we “have no share with [Jesus] (v. 8). However, that in no way negates the importance of works, to the

---

\* Taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith (italics mine). For scriptural grounds for this statement see: Rom. 8:30; 3:24; 5:15–16; 4:5–8; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Rom. 3:22–28; Titus 3:5, 7; Eph. 1:7; Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30–31; Rom. 5:17–19; John 1:12; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38; Phil. 3:9; Eph. 2:7–8; John 6:44–45, 65; Phil. 1:29; John 3:18, 36; Rom. 3:28; 5:1; James 2:17, 22, 26; Gal. 5:6. See also article 4, 6, and 20 of the Augsburg Confession.

contrary; it gives works deep significance. We are called to imitate Christ (v. 14-16). Jesus told Peter he could not work for salvation (v. 6-8) but works do have their place. Jesus served Peter (even enabling Peter to serve Him cf. John 1:13; 14:16; Gal. 5:16-24; 2 Peter 1:3; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:25-27) through the cross and thus Peter served Jesus imitating Him, even to death (cf. John 13:14-16); tradition says, death by upside down crucifixion (cf. John 21:18-19). Peter was saved by trusting Jesus Christ's all-sufficient service and yet Peter served and imitated Jesus out of a supreme joyous thankfulness (cf. 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:21-25; 4:13-14).

May we serve in the same way and with the same motivation that Peter did. May we work and serve Christ not to earn right standing before God but, to demonstrate that through Christ's atoning death we have right standing before God. If we have been *declared* righteous in Christ then let's *live* righteously before Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). Let's show our faith from our works, as Abraham did.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we, as Christians, should be disgusted by both legalism and antinomianism and instead should radically serve God out of an overflow of worship. It is because Christ served us by dying on *our* cross for *our* sin that we serve Him. Good works, even "radical" works, are not legalism. In fact, even if we were to do all that we are commanded to do (which no one does) we would still be unworthy servants because we would have only done our duty (cf. Luke 17:7-10).

I hope that through this chapter you have seen that it is futile (and in my opinion heresy) to label the difficult and radical commands in scripture legalism. If Paul and others like him would have done the same and bought into the copout we would not know of Christ and would be bound for hell. Legalism is a heresy itself but it is also false to conveniently label everything heresy that does not suit our fancy. Will we use the excuse of legalism or will see that faith leads to radical works? Remember, Abraham offered his son on the altar. We will not be called to this demonstration of faith but we will very likely be called to other very radical, and easy to label legalistic, acts of faith. Will you act out your faith? Will I? Or will we brush it off as legalism?

## **Notes**

---

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 80. Elsewhere, he said,

---

“When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to his person. The grace of his call bursts all bonds of legalism. It is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. It transcends the difference between the law and the gospel. Christ calls, the disciple follows: that is grace and commandment in one. ‘I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments’ (Ps. 119:45)” [Ibid., 59].

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law & Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 93.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995), 54.

<sup>4</sup> Schreiner, *The Law & Its Fulfillment*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2002), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 298.

<sup>7</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995), 54.

<sup>8</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2003), 187.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, Cherith Fee Nordling *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995), 56.

<sup>11</sup> Robertson McQuilkin quotes Paul Wright from class notes on “Legalism” (Columbia, S.C.: Columbia Bible Seminary and Graduate School of Missions). Robertson McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995), 57-58.

<sup>12</sup> Schreiner, *The Law & Its Fulfillment*, 44

<sup>13</sup> John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 33.

<sup>14</sup> Schreiner, *The Law & Its Fulfillment*, 97-98.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>16</sup> McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>18</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 116.

<sup>19</sup> Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 207-08.

<sup>21</sup> Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 87-88.

<sup>22</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 208.

<sup>23</sup> Schreiner, *The Law & Its Fulfillment*, 151.

<sup>24</sup> Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England –Gen. Editors *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Reference, 2003), 1016.

<sup>25</sup> Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 116.

<sup>26</sup> Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England –Gen. Editors *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Reference, 2003), 1016.

<sup>27</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 333.

<sup>28</sup> John MacArthur *Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 344.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>30</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 332-33.

<sup>31</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 183.

<sup>32</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 347.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>34</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith, *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 48.

<sup>35</sup> McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 56.

<sup>36</sup> Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 183.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 151.

<sup>38</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 49.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 117.

<sup>41</sup> Here in Romans Paul is combating those that think they can be right before God because they are circumcised but Paul shows that it is not the act or work of circumcision that justifies but that it is faith, however; he never says that the *work* of circumcision was not crucial for Abraham. He shows that he was justified by faith but that circumcision naturally followed. Similarly works must naturally follow are faith although we, like Abraham, are justified before works (Rom. 4:10-11).

<sup>42</sup> “The issue for Paul was how a person is transferred from the realm of sin and death to the realm of grace and life, the issue for James is the nature of faith. Is it possible to have faith apart from works? Can such faith save a person? For James an abstract notion of faith has no power to save, and it will not stand the test of God’s judgment... James is not so much setting faith and works in opposition to each other as he is arguing a concept of faith that he views as barren because it expresses itself in words but not in deeds. Because this kind of faith cannot save or justify, James affirms that a person is justified by works that manifest faith” (Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 362). Thomas R. Schreiner says, “James addresses a situation different from that of Paul... James responds to antinomianism whereas Paul reacts to legalism” (*New Testament Theology*, 604).

<sup>43</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 604

<sup>44</sup> Note that we are saved by “*His* own will” (James 1:18) and not by our works because “*every* good and perfect *gift* is from above, coming down from the Father” (v. 17 see also Eph. 2:8-9). Also notice that when James uses “justified” (*δικαιωο*) in 2:21; 24 he does not use it with the same meaning that Paul typically does. James means “*demonstrated* to be righteous,” whereas Paul means, “*declared* to be righteous.” John MacArthur helps us here:

It is important to understand that the Greek verb *dikaioo* (justified) has two general meanings. The first pertains to acquittal, that is, to declaring and treating a person as righteous... the second meaning of *dikaioo* pertains to vindication, or proof of righteousness. It is used in that sense a number of times in the New Testament, in relation to God as well as men. Paul says, “Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, ‘That You may be justified in Your words, and prevail when You are judged’” (Rom. 3:4). He writes to Timothy that Jesus Christ “was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated [from *dikaioo*] in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). Jesus comments that “wisdom is vindicated [justified] by all her children” (Luke 7:35) (John

---

MacArthur, *James*, 137-38 see also Wayne Gudem's *Systematic Theology*, 731 and Calvin's *Institutes*, 2:115).

Here is an example the two types of justification. Imagine two men that were tried for a crime. One of the men is proven not guilty by his actions; he demonstrated that he did not commit the crime by who he is and how he lives. He showed that he was just. The other man is not guilty of the crime because a coworker attested that they were working together at the time of the crime. He was declared just. Obviously this analogy breaks down because we did commit the crime. We sinned against a holy God. Nevertheless, I believe we can still show that we are just, even though it is true that we've been made just, by living just lives.

<sup>45</sup> This point was brought to light by John Piper's book *Future Grace* (154). In the next chapter he goes on to explain that James' point "is not merely that saving faith is always accompanied by good works. The point is that the faith *produces* the works" (Ibid., 167-68). Real faith will produce works.

<sup>46</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 5.

<sup>47</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 130.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>49</sup> I realize that many people believe that the "long ending" of Mark was not included in the original autographs. Whether or not that is the case is not what I seek to answer here.