

Faith Alone Part 2: The Apostolic Gospel

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[0 : 00] So if you'd like to take a seat then we'll dive into this deep topic, simple topic and yet a very deep one. So we're looking at justification or salvation through faith alone and last week I tried to show you that this is not something that Paul had made up as he's sometimes accused of.

That this gospel of justification by faith alone was what Jesus himself taught. The key message of Jesus was to believe in the one that God had sent and that of course was Jesus himself. But still the apostles did also teach about salvation and indeed in some ways say more about it than perhaps Jesus himself did and that's what we're going to look at this evening.

But first of all, just a little note on semantics because it does matter. English is quite a subtle language, well so is Greek actually but not always in the same way.

And words have shades of meaning. So in English we have a word, faith, but we don't have any corresponding verb to faith.

[1 : 26] We have to use the term believe. So if we want to tell somebody to have faith we have to say believe. But on the other hand there's another noun that comes from the verb to believe and that is the, not faith, but belief.

And it's true that in English these have subtly different meanings and I think it's worth noting this. So for instance I might say I believe the bus will come in five minutes.

And that means something like, well I've looked at the timetable and I've looked online on the computer and I've not heard there are any roadworks or accidents to delay it. So it seems reasonable to expect the bus to come.

But I'm not going to rely on it totally. I'm going to make sure I have now plenty of time to get to my job interview. So that's what we mean by believe in English. If I said something like I have faith that the bus will come in five minutes, then I'm saying something a lot stronger, aren't I?

I'm saying something like I have every confidence in the bus company that they will overcome any obstacles that impede the bus and I trust absolutely that it will arrive when they promised it would.

[2 : 43] Now of course that level of trust, even the bus company itself doesn't tell us to have in them so that would rather be a rather misplaced level of trust.

Now the thing is in Greek that the same word does for both. The verb to believe is something like pistio or pistio.

I'm never good at correct Greek pronunciation. I think it's pistio, something like that. And the corresponding noun is pistis. That's where we get the word epistemology from of course.

Now what does that mean in the New Testament? Well generally speaking, it does mean faith in the English sense.

It generally implies a belief that we're putting our trust in, that we're relying on. But sometimes it doesn't always mean faith in the full English sense.

[3 : 38] So for instance in James 2, 19 to 21, you can look at this if you like. We will come back to this passage later. But at the moment I just want to point out the word there.

James 2, 19 to 21 says the following. Well the translators have translated the word faith there.

But I think you could perhaps argue that the correct translation there might be belief. Because he says some people believe that there are many gods.

Well you don't, you believe there are one God, well that's good. But even the demons admit that.

They will admit to the proposition that there is only one God. And yet they've no intention of putting their trust in that belief.

So I would suggest there that the meaning in that particular case is not perhaps faith in the full English sense. But rather belief. Something we admit to be true but we don't necessarily want to put our trust in.

[5 : 00] Now this is of, oh yes I was going to say. He does of course, just to make clear what he does mean there. Because he doesn't have these two words in Greek. James actually gives us two examples, doesn't he?

He compares the belief of the demons, which they don't put trust in God, with the belief of Abraham, who did trust in God. So what Abraham had faith, what the demons had, was in a sense belief. It does matter because when we talk about justification by faith alone, we have to look at the meaning of the word pistos, belief in its scriptural context. And of course we do need to be clear what we mean by faith ourselves.

And I will come back to that James passage, which is an important one later on. But at this point I just wanted to point out there are two meanings, two possible translations of the Greek word into English.

So I want to look at this topic under three headings. First of all the apostolic preaching.

[6 : 06] Secondly the apostolic theology. And thirdly the apostolic warning. Or if you like, I could call it the easy bit, the hard bit and the scary bit.

But anyway that's the way I want to do it. And what we'll do is we'll look at the apostolic preaching and then we'll have a slight break and you can get your brains back into gear and we'll dive into the more complex bit.

So apostolic preaching. Yeah, new slide. There are several examples of Peter's preaching given in the book of Acts.

Acts 2, 32 to 40. Acts 3, 11 to 20. I'm going to look particularly at Acts 10, starting at verse 34.

Now this is Peter preaching at the home of Cornelius, who was a Roman, or at least some sort of official, probably a Roman.

[7 : 16] Not a Jew, certainly a Gentile, because Peter is very clear on that. And indeed that's why he starts by saying that God does not show favoritism.

So this was Peter's address. Then Peter began to speak. I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good, and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree. But God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

[8 : 25] He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen, by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and dead. All the prophets testify about him, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. So what does Peter do here? First of all, he gives them the facts about Jesus, and then he remarks that Jesus had commanded him to preach and testify that that was who Jesus was.

And then he comes to the punchline, as it were, and he said, Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Clear enough, isn't it?

Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. There's one thing, actually, he doesn't say here, and if you look back to Acts 2.38, you don't need to look it up, but in Acts 2.38, his form is slightly different.

[9 : 45] Acts 2.38 says, Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that in Acts 2, he did say, Repent. That's not explicit in Acts 10, but I'm sure it's implicit. If we're to receive forgiveness of sins, then we have to repent from them first.

We have to acknowledge that they need forgiving and turn away from them. The central idea there is that sins may be found through believing in Jesus Christ. Sorry, forgiveness of sins may be found through believing in Jesus Christ, but this does involve a change of mind and heart.

Repent means to give up on the things you were doing and relying on and start in a new direction. In Acts 13, we have a good example of Paul's preaching, so let's look at that.

Acts 13, starting at verse 32. Acts 13, 32.

[11:04] We tell you the good news. What God promised our fathers, he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm, You are my son.

Today I have become your father. The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words. I will give you the holy and sure blessing promised to David.

So it is stated elsewhere. You will not let your holy one see decay. For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep.

He was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed for you.

Through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. So Paul puts a bit more emphasis on the resurrection or the meaning of the resurrection there.

[12:13] But his message, you know, is very much the same thing. I want you to know that Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. However, he does say a bit more.

He says, through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. So Paul also preaches forgiveness of sins, but he goes one stage further. He uses this word justified, dikio, I think it is in Greek. And it is a legal term and it means to be declared innocent. It means a bit more than just forgiveness.

So for example, you might say to a child, oh, I see you've just crayoned over my new wallpaper. You're, obviously you're guilty, you've still got the crayon in your hand. But I'm going to forgive you. So instead of punishing you, I'll give you a big hug. So that's forgiveness. But justification goes further. It says, I'm going to declare you innocent of any wrongdoing.

[13:16] As if the crime had never happened. Now you almost have to say, you can, almost, you can't get your head around it.

I mean, if you're declared innocent, you don't need forgiveness, do you? But Paul seems to think we need both of those. When we, you know, because we can't see it perhaps from God's point of view, but he says we do need repentance and forgiveness of sins.

But we get more than that. Not just God says, oh, well, never mind, I'll give you a hug. But rather, actually, he says, we're declared innocent. And how that happens, is this business of justification by faith alone, which is what we're going to look at.

But let me be clear at this point that the apostolic gospel is simple. Repent and put your whole trust in Jesus and your sins are put aside.

Your relationship with God is reestablished. And so, just as Phil was saying this morning, I have to give you warning, I have to say, if you haven't done that yet, then the time to do it is now.

[14:30] To turn away from your sins and put your trust in him now. But we are going to get into the theological teaching of the apostles a bit more.

You might ask, why, if the gospel is so simple, why do we need to do that? Well, let me give you a few reasons. The first one is that God doesn't waste words if he, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit told the apostles to explain these things to us, then surely it must be something we need to understand.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have bothered, would he? And there are a couple of more, well, the pragmatic reason is that if you don't understand it in a bit of depth, you will start to overlay it and get the wrong idea about things and you will drift.

You may drift in your own life or over the generations, the church will drift away from this simple truth. And that is really what had happened to the Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation. The Catholic Church does, of course, teach justification by faith. But they had overlaid it with things because they weren't totally clear on it. They had overlaid it by things like penance and intercession of the saints and indulgences even, which were sort of, say, get out of jail free cards that the Pope would sell.

[16:07] And so, it does, we really do have to understand some of it. Now, of course, we're trying to understand the wisdom of God in terms of human logic. And we're not going to get our head

around it entirely.

I think we have to be prepared for that. But at least we can try and understand what the scripture tells us and try and understand what God thinks we need to know.

If we understand, we fall less likely to make wrong decisions. You don't have to know how an internal combustion engine works to drive a car, but you're certainly less likely to do something stupid if you do know.

You don't have to know about processes, what central processor does to use a computer. But if you do have some idea, you're much less likely to do something silly or to misunderstand what it does. So we do need to dive into these things. So what we're going to do is look at the apostolic theology. I'll put the next slide up.

[17 : 15] But before we dive into it, let's give our chance to get our brains in gear and remind ourselves of, once again, of what God is about, of the simple gospel, as it were.

We sung this last week and only those of us who are over 60 know the tune. But there's a few of us here, so we'll try it again. The rest of you can learn it.

You might want to have a look later. But he doesn't actually, it's not a thing that Peter focuses on in his letters. And I'm not really going to have time to go into the epistle to the Hebrews either, but I would just like to remind you of one verse of the epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 11, verse 6. Hebrews 11, verse 6 says the following, without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists, so believe, that's the part of it, but also rewards those who earnestly seek him.

faith involves not just belief, but earnest seeking. So that's all I'm going to do for Hebrews, but it is worth reminding ourselves of that verse.

[18 : 46] Now what about the other apostles? Well, James certainly gives us warnings about misrepresentation of the doctrine, and we will come back to that at the end, but I'm going to come back to that later. The main writers on this doctrine of justification by faith alone are, of course, the apostles John and Paul.

So we'll look first at what John has to say, and then we'll think about this covenant idea which has become significant in late recent thinking on the subject, and then we'll see how that relates to what Paul has to say.

So first of all, what is it that John has to say? So John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 9 to 13.

Verse The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

[20 : 08] Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or husband's will, but born of God.

To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. This idea of adoption is very important. In John's thinking.

Again, it's a legal term, but not necessarily declaring a prisoner innocent, but rather saying, well, you're not physically my child, but I'm going to declare you before the law, and in every other way that matters, to declare you to be my child.

That's what adoption means. Right, and it says he gave them right to become the children of God. God. So, those children who are orphans or illegitimate are declared legitimate children, are allowed to become the true children of God.

John 3, verse 16, well-known verse, of course. In my view, these words are the words of John the Baptist, John the Apostle, rather than of Jesus himself, but it doesn't matter too much.

[21 : 36] If they are the words of Jesus himself, then the apostle is quoting them here for a particular purpose anyway. So, John 3, chapter 16 to 21, very well-known passage.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son.

This is the verdict light has come into the world that men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear

that his deeds will be exposed.

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. There's an awful lot in that short two verses isn't there?

[22 : 47] Let me just pick out a few things. That whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Adopted as sons we have the life of the father.

And of course earlier he actually talked about new birth. He quotes Jesus as talking about new birth. This idea of light is important in John's theology as well.

He talks a lot about light. Light in the sense of understanding but more than that light in the sense of the grace of God shining into people's hearts.

But he does also talk here about justification. He says whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son.

The word that's condemned there is the literal meaning is something like marked out but it is used as a legal term as a prisoner who is marked out for punishment.

[23 : 54] And there's not really any other meaning of the word that would make sense there so this has to be the correct translation. He is condemned. If you have not believed you're condemned already or marked out for God's wrath and punishment.

But conversely if you have believed you are not condemned. It doesn't use the word justification but the idea is exactly the same. And what is the dividing line?

Those who believe or those who have not believed. Nothing else. The other main picture that John uses is that of new birth and imparting that heavenly life into those who are dead.

So let's just look at that John chapter 3 same chapter in fact just later on verse 31. The one who comes from above is above all.

The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard but no one accepts his testimony.

[25 : 11] The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the word of God for God gives the spirit without limit. The father loves the son and has placed everything in his hands.

Whoever believes in the son has eternal life but whoever rejects the son will not see life for God's wrath remains on him. So the opposites there are life or wrath, the destruction of God or God declaring the sinner worthy of life.

Whoever believes in the son has eternal life. And notice again the personal nature here by the way, you may wonder why I point that out but it is important that it's you, it's a person, not some group of people, whoever rejects the son is still under the wrath of God is what he says.

Now there are some other passages that are worth a look if you've got the time but we won't have time to go into them. They say quite similar things to the ones we've looked at. I'll put them on the sheet there if you want them.

But Paul again is often the case, Paul goes a bit further. He attempts to explain how it works. And that's that's when it can get quite somewhat complicated.

[26 : 48] It requires us really to think about what Paul is actually saying. So just to summarize, all the New Testament writers agree that salvation and forgiveness of sins come through faith in Jesus Christ and that idea of justification through faith is certainly there in the writings of John.

But as I've said here, it's Paul. Paul puts this idea center stage in his explanation of the gospel. Even in his basic sermon that we looked at, he emphasizes justification.

And there are two key and rather long passages in which Paul expounds his doctrine of justification. Though Romans 3, from verse, well, from Romans 3, 24 right through to Romans 5, verse 18, which we did a few months back with Phil and a passage that Chris quoted just a few weeks or two ago, Galatians 2, 16, through to chapter 5, verse 4.

Now, in one sense things have got even slightly more complicated as late because the traditional reform view of these has recently been challenged not by sort of theological radicals, as often been the case, but from a more conservative style of exposition, which is called the new perspective on Paul.

And particularly the teaching of N.T. Wright, former bishop of Durham, now dean of some cathedral somewhere, but an academic at heart. and he has looked at this again and come up with some

helpful insights, but unfortunately some seem to be less helpful.

[28 : 38] So I think it is worth actually looking at what N.T. Wright and the new perspective has to say about it before we actually look at the Pauline passages themselves.

And this new perspective is based on some studies of first century Judaism. And we tended to think of the Jews of the period as being rather legalistic.

But this study has suggested they're not so much legalistic as sectarian. What was it that marked you out as a member of the covenant people? Now what is a covenant?

We need to be clear on that first of all. The covenant is an agreement between two parties. And in this context it means a covenant between God and his people.

In the Old Testament we find several covenants of this sort. But there are two most important ones. The covenant with Abraham where he was told that his descendants would be a great nation and through him all nations will be blessed.

[29 : 46] And the covenant of the Mosaic law where that law was what if the Jews agreed to serve the Lord and have him as their God.

then the blessings of the law Mosaic law would mark out the Jews as a distinctive people. But there was also a promise of another covenant in Jeremiah Jeremiah 31 31 and you didn't look it up but Jeremiah promises that there would be a new covenant and a covenant not just written on parchment or even tablets of stone as the Mosaic covenant was but written in human hearts.

So what was it that marked you out as part of the covenant people, a member of the covenant? And of course we know there were various sects in the Bible we read of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Zealots.

There was another sect, I don't think it's mentioned explicitly in the scripture because they tended to go and hide themselves away in caves but a sect called the Essenes who were also quite influential and they would argue about what it was that marked you out as one of the covenant people.

But they all agreed it had something to do with the law and if you're thinking of what it is that marked you out of the covenant people you would focus on those aspects of the law which made the Jews distinctive wouldn't you?

[31 : 25] That would be the natural thing to focus on. You would think about circumcision and the food laws other more general laws of sort of laws of property laws right laws and so on laws of helping the poor which other nations might have as well would be less distinctive of the Jews and so you would tend to focus on those things that made the Jewish covenant distinctive.

Wright calls these covenant boundary markers which I suppose isn't a bad term what is it that marks those within the covenant from those who are outside the covenant these markers were marks of God's covenant relationship with his people and so the suggestion is and this is debated but the suggestion is that keeping the law didn't so much accrue credit with God directly but rather keeping the law marked you out as a member of the covenant people and actually if you read some of the discussions that Jesus had with the Pharisees and the other sects that is an interesting insight on it it does seem to give some understanding why they may have particularly argued about the food laws and washing hands before they ate and so on things like that and Jesus said you focus on the unimportant aspects of the law and neglect the weighty matters now of course in any case the point of being in the covenant people was to show that you possess the favour of God so you could overstate the case but still it is a slightly different slant and it probably is one that's worth keeping an eye on that the laws they were really interested in were those laws that marked them out as a covenant people and so far this is a helpful insight I think it does give us a deeper understanding into the sort of dynamics of some of those New Testament arguments that we read in both the gospel and letters so Paul's debates with the circumcision party you can think of as being about what marked what was it that marked the people who God approved the people with whom God had made his covenant his promise it is quite a useful way in some ways of looking at it but of course Paul wants to show that both Jews and non-Jews are included in the new covenant and so mapping the boundary of that covenant is a useful thing to do and so we'll look at the implications of this insight and also some of the problems with it in a couple of key passages and see what we can whether we think this is the right way to look at it or not or how we should look at it I think it's worth doing although I hope we will conclude that it doesn't go the whole way so let's look at some of these passages but let's also of course not get too hung up on the new perspective let's first of all see what they actually do say as well so Romans 3 21 to 31 is part of that long passage on justification but possibly the actual centre of it the core of it Romans 3 21 but now a

righteousness from God apart from law has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe there is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ

Jesus God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood he did this to demonstrate his justice because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus where then is boasting it is excluded on what principle on that of observing the law no but on that of faith for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law is God the God of the Jews only is he not the God of the Gentiles too yes the Gentiles too since there is only one God those who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith do we then nullify the law by this faith not at all rather we uphold the law and then if we just go on a few verses to chapter 4 verse 3 he says what does the scripture say

[36 : 26] Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness so first of all what is clear here is we are justified freely by his grace and how does it work a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law now you can indeed if you like think of that in terms of covenant boundary markers what was the badge of the covenant with Moses it was the law law and those particularly those things that's made the people set the people out as distinctive what is it that sets the people of God as distinctive in the new covenant it is the people of faith that's what he says isn't it the righteousness by God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe there's no difference what do he mean there's no difference there well there's no difference between Jew and Gentile we often misquote that verse of course when it says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God what he's actually saying there in that particular verse really is that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile because they both sinned they both come short of the glory of God and so the law doesn't justify either of them what justifies either of them is faith so I think that far we can say yes we are justified by faith and if you want to put it in those terms faith becomes the boundary marker of the new covenant faith is what marks out the people of God separate from the world that's a helpful way of describing it the problem arises though when Wright tries to take this idea into the realm of justification it becomes more problematic but I think it's worth looking at the different views of this the key issue as far as that's concerned is this righteousness of God which is mentioned in verse 21 right at the beginning of that passage what is this righteousness that Paul is talking about what is this righteousness of God well it's a good question actually isn't it it's not immediately obvious in fact the Roman

Catholic view was and still is that the righteousness of God is Christ's righteousness but it's imparted to or infused into as you might say the believer and because of that the believer is in a sense made practically righteous and on the basis of the resulting good works God justifies the sinner you are justified the moment you repent and believe but in a sense you have to kind of top that up with actual good works but in the end this does lead to a gospel of good works rather than grace and all these overlayings of the gospel that we've been talking about Luther when he had a kind of his eureka moment said oh no it's not that's not what it means he says that Christ's righteousness is imputed or credited as we might say to the believer by union with Christ and on this basis God justifies the sinner just as the sacrifice of atonement in the old covenant served to clear a sinner's guilt before God now I could just stop there but I think I will tell you what Wright's view is although I don't believe it's correct but you may well hear of it so I think it's worth mentioning Wright doesn't like the idea of imputation and he points out that it doesn't say Christ's righteousness here but a righteousness from God well that's true that is what it says and he interprets this to mean I think covenant faithfulness or something like that in other words he interprets this to saying the righteousness from God is the new covenant covenant and Christ's death has fulfilled the old covenant of law and instituted the new covenant the boundary marker of this covenant is faith or indeed perhaps more accurately belief and that is an issue one of the problems with this is that I think Wright himself even has suggested that perhaps we should talk about justification by belief rather than justification by faith and that rings alarm bells I think but this is what determines if you're in and out so Wright in a sense does believe justification by faith but he does mean something subtly different from what Luther meant by it justification becomes less a matter of legal status and more a matter of covenant status and so we could put it in these terms it's not so much that God

declares you innocent as that he declares you in not that you're innocent but you're in the covenant so it doesn't remove the penal nature of

Christ's death but it does downgrade it somewhat and I think this is the problem and in fact if you look at the Galatians passage and take it to its logical conclusion it does seem to come up with a rather odd conclusion so let's look at this other passage anyway because it's certainly worth reading generally Galatians 3 verse 6 yeah that's one thing I've corrected on the final version it shouldn't say Deuteronomy 21 2 23 it's Deuteronomy chapter 21 verse 23 it's one of the corrections I've made Galatians 3 verse 6 consider Abraham he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness understand then that those who believe are children of Abraham the scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham all nations will be blessed through you so those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith all who rely on observing the law under a curse for it is written cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law clearly no one is justified before God by the law because the righteous will live by faith the law is not based on faith on the contrary the man who does these things will live by them Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree he redeemed us that in order the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the spirit so again he's telling us that through Abraham all nations will be blessed through Abraham the man of faith but it does come up with a slightly strange understanding of verse 13 because it says cursed well it says Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree now if you insist on seeing everything in terms of covenants that becomes a bit complicated because what is this curse where does this quote come from when it comes it's [44 : 15] Deuteronomy 21 verse 23 and you didn't bother to look it up but if you look it up you find it's about not polluting the land it's about the curse that drove the people from the land into exile and so if you insist that that's what that curse that that covenant has to be about that sorry that curse has to be about that covenant you come up with a rather strange conclusion that when he says he redeemed us that well sorry when he says where's the one about the curse I've lost it yeah when he says Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us it is written cursed is everyone who's hung on the tree logically you would have to say that the us in that verse was not all believers but just the Jews and you would have to take it to mean that that Christ took the curse of the Mosaic covenant covenant and therefore that abrogated the

Mosaic covenant and let the covenant with Abraham come into play and therefore they promised that all nations will be blessed through Abraham could then take its effect well you could interpret it that way but it is a rather strange conclusion that when he says the Christ became a curse for us only applies to the Jews and it also makes it a curse not so much on the individual sinner but on a sinning nation and again that is a subtle difference that one wants to be a bit careful of and some of the new perspective people do say that well you know this obsession with individual sin is a sort of medieval obsession not found in the scripture and there I think you just can't say that it is found in the scripture and of course

I suppose you could interpret that way but one it seems very strange because it downgrades the wrath of God in one sense as if it only applies to the Jews and it although Wright himself doesn't take this view you could it does give a kind of platform for people who want to remove the idea of atoning sacrifice from Christian theology so I think you know we can't I don't think we should try and push this idea of covenant too far and make it a basis for justification I think it really doesn't work and of course there are other passages that do certainly teach as the death of Christ as applying to all believers so just in case I've confused you by that let me point out that there are other passages that certainly do claim that the death of Christ applies to all believers and here's one of them 2

Corinthians chapter 5 starting at verse 20 we that means we there is obviously Paul and the other apostles and evangelists we are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us we implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God God made him who had no sin to be sin or perhaps as you've got the footnote says to be a sin offering for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God as God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain for he says in the time of my favour I heard you and in the day of salvation I helped you I tell you now is the time of God's favour now is the day of salvation now the we at the beginning is clearly Paul and the other apostles and the God's fellow workers the

we is perhaps perhaps Paul and the other apostles but in the middle there we implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God God made him who had no sin to be a sin offering for us but it would make no sense at all would it if the us there was anything other than all believers so clearly Paul there is saying Christ's death is a sin offering not just for the Jewish believers but for all believers and that is why we can be reconciled to God because a sin offering was made for us and to be fair I have to say that Wright himself accepts that Jesus died as a covenant representative for Jew and Gentile the like but even so I think he changes the meaning of justification that's my next slide and we have to ask then is justification does it mean imputed righteousness as Luther taught or does it mean covenant righteousness well I think to this extent when you apply it to justification this idea of covenant righteousness really doesn't work it doesn't hold up to the teaching of the scriptures so let me recommend to you

[49 : 53] Luther's interpretation that the righteousness that comes from God is the righteousness of the one who had no sin but was made a sin offering of course it does in a sense mean that is why the new covenant comes but the righteousness that comes from God is credited to us that after all was what a sin offering was just think of the Passover you probably know the story of the Passover when the Jews were escaping from Egypt they had to kill a lamb and put a blood the blood of the lamb on their door and then when judgment came to the families of Egypt the angel talks about an angel of death rather graphically we don't know what it was exactly but we can think of it as personified as an angel of death and the angel came to that house with the blood on there and said oh no a death has already occurred there so I have no business here and that's what it means isn't it that death of that sheep was credited to the family how does that not imputation

I can't see it I think I can't go with right at all here I think Luther was right that it is that the the righteousness of God is credited to us through the sin offering of Christ so I think I'd let Paul again have the final word Titus 3 verses 5 to 7 he saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy he saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour so that having been justified by his grace we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life he saved us not because of the righteous things we had done but because of his mercy he saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the

Holy Spirit poured out through Jesus Christ our Saviour so that being freely justified by his grace we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life now we got through a lot this evening but I can't finish without one more thing and this is the apostolic warning what is this faith that marks out the new covenant we need to be sure that it's the genuine article we need to accept no substitutes we need to make sure we're not being sold a fake one of the great problems with buying stuff online is you're so easily sold a fake I think Phil told you you were sold some fake software once I seem to remember you telling us that a while ago it's very easy if you don't look closely to be sold a fake we need to know that this faith that

Paul and Jesus and the other apostles were all talking about is the genuine article good works are not what justifies us before God but they are evidence of true faith and we shouldn't forget that 1 John 2 4 to 6 says the following the man who says I know him but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him but if anyone obeys his word God's love is truly made complete in him this is how we know we are in him whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did if you claim to have faith but it doesn't involve repentance it doesn't involve lip walking as Jesus did then that faith is a lie that's a thing strong words but that's what he says he who says I know him but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him and of course

James makes this the whole theme of his letter that your faith should be real we won't read all of it but James 2 verses 14 to 26 well I'll stick and I'll stick to the translation here as it's given in the NIV but I would suggest that it makes more sense if you mentally translate faith when I say faith mentally think of it as belief because I think that is what James is getting at here what good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds can such faith save him suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food if one of you says to him go I wish you well keep warm and well fed but does nothing about his physical needs what good is it in the same way faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action is dead but someone will say you have faith

[55 : 45] I have deeds show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do you believe there is one God good even the demons believe that and shudder you foolish man do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless!

not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar you see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did and the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness and he was called God's friend you see a person is justified by what he does and not by prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without deeds is dead well you either got to say that Paul and James contradict each other or you got to say that in this passage at least they mean different things by faith and I think that is the answer you see a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone the point James is making here is not saying faith doesn't save us he says

I will show you my faith by what I do he is keen to emphasize his faith but he says that faith that doesn't lead to action or perhaps as we might more accurately say belief that doesn't lead to action is not saving faith reformers never claimed it was and neither did Paul and Jesus certainly didn't he says I remember if you say to the goats on the day of judgment those on one hand if you called me Lord Lord but you didn't do what I said and he says I never knew you so if anyone makes such a claim faith is just a matter of belief rather than throwing yourself on the mercy of God and repenting of your sins then it's clearly unscriptural and it's worse than that it's deadly to the soul it's a gospel that's deadly and it has been such a gospel has been preached those of you who like names and labels it's called

Sandamianism the idea that faith is just belief acceptance of a set of propositions and one of the problems with the new perspective is that if you're saying it's a covenant badge then it kind of makes faith external and kind of makes it mean belief rather than faith in the sense that the Bible means it so I'm afraid this new perspective is a bit of a cure its egg it's good in parts but some of it seems very doubtful saving faith involves repentance and holy obedience you can't have saving faith without repentance it's either there explicitly when the gospel is preached in Acts or if not explicitly it's certainly there implicitly because it talks about forgiveness from sins and clearly you can't be forgiven from sins if you don't acknowledge you have them and want to turn aside from them you can't have

Christ as saviour but not as lord that's been another way this idea has been introduced into protestantism on several occasions Sanderman was a time of the enlightenment it's a sort of rationalist view of faith there have been those particularly among the southern baptists in America who have taught you can have Christ as saviour but not as lord!

[59 : 42] and indeed some of the Keswick teaching was along those lines as well but you can't John says if you say I know him but don't do what he commands then you're a liar and James says faith without deeds is dead it's no faith at all much use as a dead body so that is the warning that they give us make sure our faith is genuine show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do in putting my trust in Jesus Christ and trying as we fail so often to do what he wants us to do and yet we remember also that John who said man who says I know him but doesn't do what he commands is a liar also says that there is if we say we if we confess our sins we do have an advocate with the father he says I write to you that you will not sin and yet if we do sin we have an advocate with the father and so faith struggles with sin it's not what makes us right before God the obedience but it is the evidence that we have real faith so a lot to get through there I hope you've managed to stay awake through it all but it's worth looking at it is worth looking at

I think in detail to try and understand exactly what the Bible does say on this issue but we can go back now can't we to the simplicity of the gospel as we sing in hymn number 704 of the