

Justification by Faith

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Date: 14 February 2016

[0:00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. So in my earlier years, sometimes heard the phrase, I see you back there laughing, Joe.

I sometimes heard the phrase, generally from Christians, I don't drink, don't smoke, and don't chew, and don't go with girls who do. Now, it goes without saying, of course, that I grew up in the Bible Belt.

Now, Anglicans, of course, have been drinking in moderation and smoking pipes for centuries. We haven't generally seen it as a problem in our Christian walks. We don't usually regard such things as a violation of the rules, so to speak.

Indeed, certain of our heroes, like C.S. Lewis, for example, saw no problem with meeting at the pub with a few of his friends to talk about the faith over a pint. Now, it can be really easy, unfortunately, I think, as these kind of issues raise for us, to turn to treating our faith as a series of rules and laws. But our epistle reading this morning is a reminder to us that our salvation isn't found in keeping the rules. It isn't found in the works of the law.

[1:34] Our salvation is found in Jesus Christ and in him alone. Now, while I do think that certain approaches to the Christian life can be legalistic, I'm not intending to single out and attack other Christians here.

While the don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, don't go with girls who do approach can lead to legalism, I don't mean to single that out. Now, in reality, that approach is just one example of a problem that all of us have to face.

The temptation to think of our salvation as being according to the works of the law, instead of thinking of our salvation as it's presented biblically, is coming by grace alone through faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ alone.

The contrast between salvation by works, salvation by grace through faith, that contrast is real. And that difference is at the core of our epistle reading for this morning.

We have to ask the question, are we saved through the good works that we do? Or are we saved through the good works that Jesus did? Are we saved through our own merits?

[2:54] Or are we saved through the merits of Christ? And ultimately, it's one or the other. Now, in Romans 10, from which our epistle reading for this morning was taken, the Apostle Paul is concerned overall with the issue of why some of his fellow Jews hadn't received the gospel of Jesus Christ when they heard it.

Now, if we're reading Romans 10 in context, if we're following Paul's argument here, we see that the basic problem is that those who didn't receive Jesus were seeking after salvation, seeking after the righteousness of God through their own obedience to the law, instead of seeking after salvation through Jesus Christ, God's promised Savior.

Instead of seeking salvation through Christ's obedience to the law, by which he fulfilled the law.

Now, looking in Romans 10, that contrast is really seriously obvious.

If you look there with me, you'll see that. Speaking of those of Israel who hadn't believed the gospel, Paul writes in verses 1-2, Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Now, what we see here is that Paul's desire for his Jewish brothers, those among them who didn't believe in Christ, is that they would be saved.

[4:33] Now, Paul describes their basic problem as this. They care about the things of God, but they approach it in a way that's mistaken.

Well, how is it mistaken? We see that in verses 3 and 4. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. So the problem is this.

They sought salvation through trying their best to be righteous. And that, of course, isn't a problem that's unique to the Jews who had rejected Christ.

That's a common human problem. We're often tempted into thinking that salvation is something that we can earn through our own obedience.

[5:36] That if we can just try hard enough, it will be pleasing to God. We'll appear righteous before God because of how obedient we've been. Now, the problem that Paul identifies here is that when we do that, we are ignoring the righteousness of God and not submitting to the righteousness of God.

We're ignoring that Christ is the end of the law to all who believe. We are ignoring that Jesus Christ and Him alone is our righteousness.

That His righteousness, not our righteousness, is where salvation is found. Well, why can't our obedience to the law be our salvation?

Why doesn't that work? Well, look at verse 5. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

The person who does the commandments shall live by them. Sounds good enough until we consider this. Have any of us lived by the commandments of God perfectly?

[6:50] Well, now Paul spells out this problem in greater detail in Galatians 3, started in verse 10.

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

Now, it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law. For the righteous shall live by faith. But the law is not of faith.

Rather, the one who does them shall 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 hanged on a tree. So that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

[8:03] Cannot be said plainly enough. We cannot be justified by works of the law. Cannot be made right with God through our obedience to God's commandments.

Why not? Because cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them. By that standard, brothers and sisters, we are cursed.

have you been perfectly obedient to the commandments of God?

Anyone here who has? Well, there goes your chance of being made right with God, of being accepted before God through your own obedience.

You've been disobedient and I've been disobedient. According to the law, we are cursed. If that's all there is to it, we have no hope whatsoever.

[9:13] We are condemned. We are on that wide road that leads to destruction. We were condemned. We were without hope. But God gave us his son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We failed to keep God's commandments perfectly. But Jesus kept God's commandments perfectly. We were disobedient, but Jesus was not.

He was perfectly obedient. We deserved the death and the curse that comes from disobedience. But Jesus was perfectly obedient, even unto death for us.

He fulfilled the law through his obedience and he took the curse of the law for us by his death on the cross. Jesus and Jesus alone is the righteousness of those who have faith in him.

Jesus and Jesus alone took the curse of the law for us. He took the death that we justly deserve and by his stripes we are healed.

[10:23] we are forgiven. God looks at us and he sees the righteousness of his son the Lord Jesus.

He is pleased with us not because of our works but because of Christ. Why? The righteousness of Christ has been given to us, has been imputed to us through faith in him.

We have been adopted as the father's beloved children not because of what we have done but because of what Jesus has done. Adopted by grace alone through faith in Christ alone and thanks be to God we have life in Jesus.

Now looking at verses 6 and 7 back in our epistle reading for this morning in Romans 10 the righteousness based on faith says do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven that is to bring Christ down or who will descend into the abyss that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

So here's the deal we can't do what Christ did Christ in him alone fulfilled the commandments of God Christ Christ alone died for the salvation of all who trust in him Christ and Christ alone rose from the dead to secure eternal life for us Christ and Christ alone ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the father making intercession for us and pleading his blood for us we can't do what Christ did we can only trust in what Christ did for us for our salvation our only hope is in what Christ has done given to us through faith in him it's what we see in our next verses what does it say the word is near you in your mouth and in your heart that is the word of faith that we proclaim because if you confess with your mouth that

[12 : 48] Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved 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 that my brothers and sisters is a guarantee something we can be certain of now we so often fail we so often drop the ball we so often sin and fall short of the glory of God but our hope is not in ourselves our hope is in the promises of God not in ourselves but in the grace of God given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord as Paul writes elsewhere in

Ephesians 2 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 from beginning to end my brothers and sisters salvation is a total and complete gift of grace we are saved by grace through faith and even that isn't of ourselves it's all grace it's all a gift from the beginning to the end and that should encourage us why because it's God and not us who is doing the saving Jesus is the author of our salvation and the finisher of our salvation so we can have confidence that just as he started it so he can and will finish it we all stumble in many ways if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves so if our hopes were in ourselves we would fall into despair rightly but our hope is in the grace of God in Christ only his grace is so much greater than our sin we have complete we have total confidence in Jesus why is that well for the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same

Lord is Lord of all bestowing his riches on all who call on him for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame it's what God's word tells us do we believe it do we trust in God's promises now if there's anyone who hears this message who has never placed their faith in Jesus know this everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved the offer of the gospel goes out to you today the offer of free and total salvation forgiveness healing the promise of eternal life given by grace through faith in

Christ that offer goes out to you if there's anyone here this morning in that in that boat would you come to Christ in faith today now for those who do know Jesus be encouraged because sometimes our Christian walk can be hard sometimes we struggle with doubt sometimes our sins accuse us and weigh us down sometimes we're tempted but wasn't Jesus tempted in every way we are but without sin we see his temptation in our gospel text for this morning in Luke 4 as he's tempted by the devil in the wilderness what does Jesus do when he's tempted and what example does he set for us he relies on the word of God and the promises of God when he's tempted doesn't he isn't that our example for when things get tough when we're attacked by temptation when we struggle when we unlike

Jesus in this regard stumble into sin the word and the promises of God are our refuge what is the word what do God's promises tell us everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame so we trust in Jesus we cling to Jesus as Savior we follow Jesus as Lord trusting that the same Lord who is the author of our salvation is able to finish what he started that's what we believe isn't it now in light of that let's think for a second about Lent about our Lenten disciplines our fasting our practices of self denial we need to be clear that we are not doing these things to make up for our sins we don't have to do these things to earn God's favor it's not how it works

[19 : 11] Jesus has already atoned for our sins and we have God's favor already in him now we do take up our cross and follow Jesus as his disciples denying ourselves not in order to be forgiven but because we have been forgiven because since we have been forgiven God through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit is transforming us into the image of his son as we walk with the Lord day by day think also for a second about all of this in light of our mission as a congregation what our salvation by grace through faith means for the mission of our congregation as we seek to reach out to our community to our city with the message of the gospel people we're not doing that as the

self-appointed self-righteous holy ones we're doing so as sinners who have found forgiveness at the foot of the cross called to invite other sinners to find forgiveness at the foot of the cross we're not the elite and we're not going out to the worthy we're not telling people to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps we're calling all to come to christ just as they are with all of their sin their guilt their imperfection to find all the righteousness and holiness they need in christ and in him alone bearing witness to the promise that everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame that is what we're called to do scriptures tell us everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved and by grace we have been saved through faith we praise god doesn't that change everything in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit amen