

Getting Started

- We demonstrate “faith” all the time ...eating a meal in restaurant, flying on an airplane, or getting behind the wheel of a car. Share an exciting or daring story from your life where you placed your faith in someone or something that in hindsight may not have been the wisest thing to do.
- Have 1-2 people share their story of how they came to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
- Pick one or more of the statements about biblical faith and provide your thoughts ...
 - Biblical faith is not a blind leap into darkness, but a trust in God that moves you out of the darkness into the light.
 - Faith is simple but not simplistic.
 - Faith provides the substance of our future hope.
 - Faith involves trusting in what is unseen.
 - Faith means more than *believing in God*; it means *believing God* for all that He has promised through His Word.
 - Saving faith is childlike but not childish.
 - We are justified by faith alone but not by a *faith that is alone*. (think about James 2)
 - Faith that saves is faith *plus nothing*; faith that grows is faith *plus obedience*.
 - It is not the strength or size of our faith but rather the *object of our faith* that is most important.

Discussion

The teaching that we are declared righteous by God (justified) on the basis of our faith alone and not by works is a key doctrine of the Bible and a line that divides most cults from biblical Christianity. While most religions and cults teach what works people must do to be saved, the Bible teaches that we are not saved by works, but by God’s grace through His gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Biblical Christianity is distinct from every other religion in that it is centered on what God has accomplished through Christ’s finished work, while all other religions are based on human achievement. If we abandon the doctrine of justification by faith, we abandon the only way of salvation.

“Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5).

The Bible teaches that those who trust Jesus Christ for justification by faith alone are imputed with His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21), while those who try to establish their own righteousness or mix faith with works will receive the punishment due to all who fall short of God’s perfect standard.

- Why do you think so many people believe that they can be saved by their good works?

Justification by faith alone means justification by the righteousness or merit of Christ alone, not by our goodness or good deeds. From God’s perspective, being *justified* looks like “*just as if I’ve never sinned.*” When God justifies He declares the person to be righteous. He does not merely forgive our sins, but He sees us in Christ as having His perfect righteousness. Justification has to do with our standing before God. It does not make one personally righteous, but it declares him righteous in a legal sense, and brings him into a right relationship with God.

Paul had much to say about justification by faith in Christ in Romans ...

- Romans 3:22-24 ... This righteousness from God **comes through faith** in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.
 - Romans 3:28 ... or we maintain that man is **justified by faith** apart from observing the law.
 - Romans 4:4-5 ... Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who **justifies** the ungodly, their **faith** is credited as righteousness.
 - Romans 4:23-25 ... The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—**for us who believe** in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our **justification**.
 - Romans 5:1-2 ... **Therefore**, since we have been **justified through faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access **by faith** into this grace in which we now stand.
 - Romans 5:9-11 ... Since we have now been **justified** by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
- What does a Christian believe about Jesus if we have been justified by faith?
 - What amazes you most about God’s plan of salvation? Take note that each step involves God’s loving initiative. God initiates, God implements and God culminates His plan:
 - God calls one to salvation (Romans 8:29-30)
 - God draws one to Himself (John 6:44)
 - The Holy Spirit convicts one of sin (John 16:8-9)
 - God grants repentance (2 Tim 2:25; Acts 11:18)
 - God gives one the faith to believe (Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8-9)
 - God justifies the believer (Romans 4:25-5:1)
 - The Holy Spirit washes and regenerates (Titus 3:5)
 - God promises to glorify (Romans 8:30; Phil 3:20-21)

Man’s part in the salvation process is only to respond to the calling of God.

Yet, the Bible makes it clear that there is a connection between faith and good works. Here are just a few passages that seem to point to this connection. (John 15:1-15; Eph 2:8-10; Phil 2:12-13; 1 Tim 4:7-8; 1 Peter 1:13-2:12; 1 John 5:1-5).

Paul says (Romans 3:28), “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.” He also said (Romans 4:5), “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited to him as righteousness.” But James states that Abraham and Rahab were justified by works (James 2:21, 25). He plainly says (2:24), “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone”.

- Explain how to reconcile James’ words with Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith alone?
- What are some helpful illustrations you can use to help unbelievers see that no amount of good works can save them?

Prayer

Thank the Lord for His gift of faith and for receiving His righteousness by faith. Pray Collosians 1:9-14 into each other’s lives as you walk in a manner worthy of the gospel, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,