

# Justification

by Ian Paisley

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*The Protestant view of justification is by faith alone, through the righteousness of Christ, and not by works or sacraments.*

**Scripture:** Micah 6:6, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 3:28, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 2:8, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 3:14

**Topics:** "Justification By Faith", "Sola Fide"

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## Description

Ian Paisley preaches about the crucial topic of a sinner's justification before God, emphasizing the stark contrast between Protestantism and Popery in their views on acceptance with God. While Protestantism teaches that justification comes solely through the work of Christ by faith, Popery leans towards relying on human works and merits, leading to a denial of the righteousness of Christ. The establishment of the doctrine of justification by faith alone was a pivotal moment in history, challenging the Papal system and emphasizing the importance of this foundational belief. Paisley urges listeners to examine their faith and ensure that they are truly living a life of faith upon the Son of God, experiencing the transformative power of the Gospel in their hearts and actions.

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## Transcript

The ground of a sinner's justification before God, is the most important subject within the whole circle of human inquiry, and none ever more beautifully and strikingly expresses it than the Prophet, in the following words: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?" Popery answers this question in one way, and Protestantism in another, and on the difference depends their respective characters; every other point between the two systems as it relates to man, is comparatively unimportant, since none other comes so near to his heart and his hopes.

Now the difference between Protestantism and Popery is here so great that it admits, of neither reconciliation nor compromise. The difference is just that which subsists between the creature and the Creator; in the one case, the sinner is taught to rest for acceptance with God on his own works, and in the other, on the work of Christ.

Here, however, the peril is increased, from the fact of the use which is apparently made of the work of Christ. Entering on such a subject, it is easy to deal with Jews, Turks, or Infidels, whose systems exclude all regard to the person and offices of the Messiah; it is not so with Popery, which affects to make much of

his atoning blood and righteousness, dealing most abundantly in the execration of all those who dare to deviate an iota from its dogmas.

It allows to Christ, as the Lamb of God, in words, the honour of taking away the sins of the world, but so combines these words with others as at once to divest them of their legitimate and vital import. It allows the doctrine a place, but a place such as to dishonour Him, and to show that his work is only as the dust in the balance compared with that of the sinner himself. We appeal to the highest Romish standards, the Decrees of the Council of Trent; to which the whole Papal world bows as to an authority from which there is no appeal.

According to Protestant views, the Scriptures teach that men "are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and not for their own works or deserving; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only in the most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." Thus spoke the authors of the Articles. Such was the doctrine of the first ages; but as Popery rose, this view gradually disappeared through the teaching of the Priesthood, till at length it was denied, and its abettors pronounced "accursed."

It was under these circumstances that Luther arose, and having found the doctrine in the Sacred Scriptures, with trumpet tongue he published it to the ends of the world. To no other subject did he give such prominence; this was the very soul and essence of his system.

The Romish edifice was throughout one stupendous pile of human works, inscribed in all its parts with human merit all pointing to the right they give to the sinner to stand on his own foundation before his God. All these works were intended to effect his justification, so that to attempt to compass that justification by any other means was to reduce the whole edifice to ruin, and utterly to destroy, root and branch, the Papal system.

Luther clave to this point as to life--"It is," said he, "the head corner-stone which supports, nay, gives existence and life to the Church of God, so that without it the Church cannot subsist for an hour." According to him, "this Christian article can never be handled and inculcated enough. If this doctrine fall and perish, the knowledge of every truth in religion will fall and perish with it. On the contrary, if this doctrine flourish, all good things will also flourish namely, true religion, the true worship of God, and the right knowledge of everything which it becomes a Christian to know."

The establishment of this doctrine was the certain destruction of the Popedom. The Papists knew it, and acted accordingly; they were prepared to move earth and hell to prevent the propagation and reception of Luther's doctrine of justification. Great were their differences in adjusting a system of error, but in fiercely opposing and vehemently denouncing both him and his doctrine, they presented the most marvellous unanimity.

In none of their many doings did they display more malignant ingenuity; nowhere did they draw more largely upon falsehood in support of error. They charged the Protestants with all sorts of absurdity, and in replying to the several objections, successively poured out their anathemas. Council succeeded Council, each adding to the error of its predecessors, till at length they completed their battlement around the Church, for entirely shutting out the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

The lessons that Popery taught to men, on this great and preeminent subject, are, primarily, to look to himself and his own works; and, secondly, to the merits of the saints; and, thirdly, should there still be any deficiency to the work of Jesus Christ. Such was the statement of their authorized standard of doctrine

upon this most momentous matter; but their practical administration of it was even worse than this, for it generally made nothing whatever of Christ's sacrifice and righteousness, but everything of man's works.

They rejected utterly and with scorn, the idea of imputing to man the righteousness of the Son of God, or in counting and treating an individual as righteous, solely for his sake. With them "to justify" was not "to declare righteous," but "to make righteous" and hence they found for both the people and themselves an abundance of work in their attempts to remove sin and cultivate virtue by sacraments and fastings, prayers and purgatory, and many other modes of rendering "heaven debtor to merit," as the only sure foundation of hope of eternal life.

The Council of Trent, speaking of the causes of justification, having correctly enough stated the meritorious cause, proceeds to say, "The instrumental cause, the sacrament of Baptism, is the sacrament of Faith, without which no one can ever obtain justification."

Here, then, the faith according to Popery, which justifies, comes out of Baptism; to be baptized is to be a believer, and to believe with such a faith as Baptism produces, is to be justified! The Papal Church, in its great standard of doctrine, the Decrees of the Council of Trent, follows up its deliverances by rules that "all may know not only what is to be held and followed, but also what is to be rejected and shunned." As examples, we may cite the following:

"Whoever shall affirm that the ungodly is justified by-faith only, so that it is to be understood that nothing else is to be required to co-operate therewith, in order to obtain justification; and that it is on no account necessary that he should preface and dispose himself by the effect of his own will; let him be accursed."

"Whoever shall affirm that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or the remission of sin to the exclusion of grace and charity, which is shed abroad in their hearts, and inheres in them; or that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God; let him be accursed."

"Whoever shall affirm that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy, by which sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence only by which we are justified; let him be accursed."

"Whoever shall affirm that justification received is not preserved, and even increased, in the sight of God by good works; but that works are only the fruits and evidences of justification received, and not the causes of its increase; let him be accursed."

"Whoever shall affirm that the good works of a justified man are in such sense the gifts of God, that they are not also his worthy merits; or that he, being justified by his good works, which are wrought by him through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not really deserve increase of grace, eternal life, the enjoyment of that eternal life if he dies in a state of grace, and even an increase of glory; let him be accursed."

Surely nothing can be more explicit than the language of these canons, so-called, by which, amid a flood of seeming zeal for the honour and glory of Christ, the utmost care is taken utterly to exclude his righteousness, and to deprive the sinner of all benefit from his work. Such are the lessons which, through all the earth, to the present hour, the Papal priesthood are communicating to their disciples. Is any other proof required that they teach another gospel than that which was taught by the Apostles? According to that, the sole and only foundation of the sinner's hope was the work of Jesus Christ.

As Protestants interpret the Sacred Scriptures, it is shown that men are justified not by infusing something called "righteousness," but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous in the sight of God, not for anything right or good in them, or done by them, but solely for the sake of Christ; not by imputing faith itself-the act of believing-as an act of the creature, or any other evangelical obedience due to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing to them, the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, the receiving the testimony of God concerning his Son, and trusting on Him and his work by faith, a faith which is not of themselves, but his gift.

That book tells us that "we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" that being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and that "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

From the whole strain of the Word of God, it is most clear that justification is purely an act of God's free grace, by which sin is pardoned, the sinner accepted, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by faith alone; and that in this way, and none other, he acquires a right to eternal life. This faith, by which he is justified, is the source of all good works, forasmuch as it infallibly and uniformly produces love, and hence that course of action which the Apostle designates works of faith and labours of love.

Those works and labours are the tests of faith; if there be no labour, there is no love. The evidence of justification is sanctification; the proof that there is a title for heaven is that there is a growing meetness for it. There is no proof of a change of state in the absence of a change of character. Sanctification is the fruit and the evidence of justification.

Popery, on the contrary as we have seen, makes sanctification a part of justification, thus excluding grace to make way for works, and confounding the cause with the effect. It talks of the infusing of grace by baptism, as constituting the first justification, and of a subsequent increase of grace, as merited by good works, as forming a second justification positions, both at utter variance with the Word of God.

Reader, the subject in both lights is now before you, and the Book of God is in your hand; what say you? According to that Book, on whose side does the truth of God seem to lie? Suffer us to ask, have you given the subject the consideration which is due to it? Have you deliberately made up your mind as to the consistency of either view with the Word of God? Have you treated it as its importance demands? If it be the primary element of the great controversy between Protestants and r Papists, is it not because it is the primary concern of a lost world?

Have you made up your mind in favour of Protestantism as a system of doctrine? If so, then have you allowed it to take the personal turn which belongs to it? Have you, in good earnest, put the question already cited from the Prophet Micah, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" "What shall I give for my transgression, and what for the sin of my soul?"

Have you arrived at any answer? and is it in harmony with what we have been setting forth as the Protestant doctrine, solely and exclusively the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by faith in the divine testimony concerning Him?

Has your conscience felt the burden of its guilt? By this faith has that burden been removed? Does it now enjoy peace?

Are you reconciled to God? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Do you claim, call, and walk with God as your father? Do you love the rest of the heavenly family?

Will you abide the application of the test set forth by John, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you bear the further application of his own test on this point "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me?"

In a word, has the Gospel made you happy? Are you now living a life of faith upon the Son of God, as having loved you, and given himself for you? This is true religion. Happy he who can say, "This is mine!"

A moment's reflection will show you the need of this question being put by us, and answered by yourselves. The danger is very great, lest you should possess the Evangelical Protestant creed, to the exclusion of the Evangelical Protestant character. But it is to be remembered that the Sacred Scriptures are not less explicit concerning the character than concerning the creed: "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

Allowing that such language is figurative, can anything warrant such a figure but a mighty, an all-pervading, and a permanent change? This is the great salvation-the foundation of all real lasting felicity. We say felicity, for heaven is not merely a thing of place, but of character.

There can be no happiness without holiness; and holiness just means restoration to the knowledge, fervour, love, and service of God. Regeneration is that work of the Spirit upon the soul, whereby men become partakers of the Divine nature, and through that of the Divine character, and by that of the Divine blessing; hence, said Peter, addressing his countrymen, "God having raised his Son from the dead, hath sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from his iniquities."

Protestantism is beset with perils. Men satisfied in their judgment that they have the truth of God, may hold it in unrighteousness, making religion-that which constitutes the life-mainly to consist of a body of opinions. 'thus to act will certainly be to perish! Protestantism is not merely an opinion, it is a power, whereby the human soul is renovated and the character reformed. Doctrines have no value but as the instruments of the power of God, which thereby works to salvation. Here it is that Protestant communities are weak; their people are not worthy of their principles. They do not adequately represent their principles, they belie them!

Multitudes of Catholics, on the other hand, have been better than their creed, just as multitudes of Protestants have been worse. Many Catholics, in spite of the priest and the pool of lies into which they are plunged, have yet discovered and cleaved to the main truths of the Gospel, without having sufficient light to bring them out of their prison house, whereby their hearts have been purified and their souls saved.

The heartfelt scorn of Popery, and zealous efforts to obstruct its deadly march, must not be confounded with the life of truth and the life of piety with repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore conjure every reader who is enthralled by Popery to burst his fetters, and come forth into the glorious intellectual liberty that the Scripture brings; we at the same time implore him not to be satisfied with anything short of the liberty wherewith Christ Jesus makes his people free.

Once justified freely by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, filled with the peace that passeth understanding, richly replenished with the word of truth, and a supply of the spirit of grace, then let him come to the help of

the Lord against the mighty, and let him join in the war-cry of the righteous, "No peace with Rome!"

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