
Justification By Faith Alone?

Analyzing the Federal Vision
Lecture 3

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Scripture and Standards: First & Last Adam

Covenant of Works (First Adam)

Covenant of Grace (Last Adam)

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Covenant of Works

Rom 5:12-20, Gen 2-3

Adam and his ordinary posterity:

“the guilt of Adam’s first sin”

“the want of that righteousness wherein
he was created”

“the corruption of his nature...” (WLC 25)

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Covenant of Works: Man's Predicament

Guilty!

Failure to do all that the law commands
("personal, perfect, and perpetual
obedience," WLC 20)

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Covenant of Grace: God's Solution

The Last Adam – Servant

Obedience

Exaltation the reward of humiliation

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The Righteousness of God (Justification)

WLC 70

Q. What Is Justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in his sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

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WLC 73

Q. How does faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?

A. Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument by which he receives and applies Christ and his righteousness.

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The FV: Covenant of Works

“...What is required of Adam is that he persevere in the covenant by being faithful, living out his faith in God by doing works that correspond with it. In this way, though Adam has no sin nature and is not in a covenant of redeeming grace, he is in a position similar to ours. He is in covenant with God and what is required of him is just perseverance, faithfulness to the covenant.”

Ralph Smith

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Rich Lusk

Rejection of the “works” principle of the covenant of works

Rejection of Christ’s work in terms of “merit.”

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Implications for justification

1. First Adam → Last Adam
Immaturity → Maturity
2. Rejection of imputation of Christ's active obedience

So how will the law's requirement be fulfilled?

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The FV and Justification

1. "Righteousness"

By overemphasizing the "courtroom" metaphor, Protestants have "illegitimately narrowed and to some extent distorted the biblical doctrine"

Peter Leithart

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“The Protestant doctrine has been too rigid in separating justification and sanctification ... I argue below that, when examined under a military-conflictual metaphor rather than solely under the imagery of the ‘courtroom,’ justification and *definitive* sanctification are not merely simultaneous, nor merely twin effects of the single event of union with Christ (though I believe that is the case). Rather, they are the same act. God’s declaration that we are justified *takes the form of* deliverance from sin, death, and Satan. God declares us righteous by delivering us from all our enemies.”

Peter Leithart

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Leithart on Rom 6:7 (“for he who has died is freed from sin”

“is freed” = “liberate,” “deliver”

“our vindication takes the form of deliverance from accusing and attacking enemies”

“deliverance from [sin’s] hand, from his lordship and mastery.”

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2. "Faith"

"When we say that Gentiles are incorporated into Israel by faith 'alone,' the word 'alone' is not used to set faith against covenantal obedience. It is rather used to distinguish the true means of covenantal inclusion from three erroneous ones: 1) That one must become a Jew to have access to God in Christ. 2) That one must approach God through the Levitical priesthood, offerings, and Temple. 3) That one is made right with God by one's own merit."

Steve Schlissel

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The “deeds of the law” are “something uniquely *Jewish*” and “not ... something uniquely *convicting*,” for “Paul *never* sets faith against obedience.”

Steve Schlissel,
commenting on Rom 3:28
 (“for we maintain that a man is
justified by faith apart from
works of the Law”)

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“This statement is not a theoretical proposition concerning some meritorious method of being righteous before God. The presuppositions undergirding Paul’s statement include the facts that the Law is “obeyable,” that truly responding to the Law (the Word) in faith does justify, and that such justification *is not an exclusively Jewish possession.*”

Steve Schlissel,
commenting on Rom 2:13
 (“for it is not the hearers of the law
 who are just before God, but the
 doers of the law will be justified”)

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(Notice that *final justification* and *salvation* are used interchangeably):

“Works of faith-filled obedience, in a secondary way, *cause* our final justification and salvation. Works are the *means* through which we come into possession of eternal life. The path of obedience is the way we must trod if we are to be justified at the last day. For Calvin, works are *non-contributory instruments* and *non-meritorious conditions* of final salvation.”

Rich Lusk

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“Works do not justify in their own right since they can never withstand the scrutiny of God’s inspection. But we will not be justified without them either. They are not merely evidential (e.g., proof of our faith), but even causal or instrumental (“means”) in our final salvation. Faith is the sole instrument of initial justification, but faith comes to be perfected by good works. At the last day, faith, as the solitary instrument of union with Christ, and obedience, as the fruit of our union with Christ, will be one and the same – distinguishable, yes, but separable, no.”

Rich Lusk

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On James 2:14-26:

“[It] cannot be referring to a *demonstration* of justification, e.g., justification does [not] and cannot mean something like “show to be justified.” Rather, James has in view the same kind of justification as Paul – forensic, soteric justification. Good works justify *persons* in James 2, not *faith* or one’s *status* as a justified sinner. James is not telling his readers how to “justify their justification” or how to “give evidence of a true and lively faith.” Instead he says their persons will *not* be justified by faith alone, but *also* by good works of obedience they have done.

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On James 2:14-26, ctd.:

“The use of the preposition “by” is important since it indicates a sort of dual instrumentality in justification. In other words, in some sense, James is speaking of a justification in which faith and works *combine together* to justify. Future justification is according to one’s life pattern. No one dare [*sic*] claim these works to be meritorious, but they are necessary...”

Rich Lusk

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“Baptism is the instrument through which Christ is applied to us unto justification.”

“Faith is the instrument of justification on our end, while baptism is the instrument on God’s side. God offers Christ and applies Christ to us through the instrument of baptism. We receive Christ as he is offered in the sacrament with the outstretched and open hand of faith. Baptism is not a good work we do to earn justification; it is a gift of grace through which God grants justification to faith.”

Rich Lusk

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Series Conclusion

The seriousness of these issues

What is at stake?

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Series Conclusion

These are *practical* and *pastoral* issues

These are issues that *go to the heart of the Christian life*
