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*“By Faith, Alone Pt. 2”*

ROMANS 3:29-31

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## BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

There is One God and one way to salvation – faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved by faith alone, but saving faith does not remain alone. It will produce life change! Join us on our second-part of a two-part sermon, *“By Faith, Alone.”*

## INTRODUCTION

I would have you recall that this is part two of a two-part sermon and encourage you to listen, watch, or read the first part so you have the full context. I’m glad I was able to split this into two parts because it allows me to expand my thoughts just a little and add in some fun elements. Let’s jump right into Romans 3:29-31.

## ROMANS 3:29-31

**<sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

**Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,** Using the word **Or** indicates he’s beginning a new argument. He now appeals to the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4, the best-known verse in the Old Testament and links it to Zechariah 14:9, the prophesy that this one God would be king over all the earth, and by implication over all peoples.

Paul reminds the reader that God does not belong to Israel. From the covenant with Abraham, God made it clear He was going to bless the nations.

Paul continues in **verse 30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.** Just as there is one God, there is only one salvation – we are justified by **faith**, alone. Jew and Gentile are both saved by faith. Religious and irreligious. The morally pious and the blatantly immoral. The religiously **circumcised** and the **uncircumcised**. **By** and **through faith**. With his double use of **faith** here, Paul emphasizes that the way to God is simply believing the Gospel.

Paul is pushing back against their confidence in circumcision – and circumcision was symbolic of one’s connection to the covenant people of God. If you were circumcised, you were “in like Flynn.” Now Paul says, if you’re circumcised, you’re in by faith. Just like everyone else in the world.

You’re baptized? You’ll be justified by faith. You’re not baptized? You’ll be justified through faith.

You’re a third, fourth, fifth generation church-goer? You’ll be justified by faith.

You just stepped into church for the first time today? You’ll be justified through faith.

You’ve kept yourself free from all the “big sins”? You’ll be justified by faith.

You're currently in over your head in "big sin"? You'll be justified through faith.

No matter who you are or what you've done, no matter how you've lived your life, there is one way to be saved – believe in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin – it is by faith, alone.

When you are born-again by the Holy Spirit, evidenced by genuine faith in Christ, there is nothing you can ever do to reverse God's declaration of your righteousness. How can this be? It is because your righteousness is not based on your goodness, but on Jesus's.

When God sees a born-again believer, He sees him clothed in the perfect righteousness of His Son. He does not base His declaration of your righteousness on your works at all.

### IS GOD OK WITH US LIVING HOWEVER WE WANT?

Does it mean God is ok with people living however they want? Does justification by faith alone nullify God's holy standard? That seems the next obvious question. Paul was accused of being an antinomian. He was accused of preaching a message that sin doesn't matter and obedience to God doesn't matter.

In **Verse 31** he deals with that charge. **Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

Faith says, "There is no way I can achieve the demands of the Law myself; I need Jesus to achieve it for me." Then Jesus begins to work in me to make me righteous indeed just as I am righteous in identity.

He begins to mold me to His holy standard by His Spirit who dwells with me. We don't **overthrow the law by this faith, we uphold the law**. We love the law because the law shows us God's character and nature and how we ought to live.

### TWO WAYS TO ERR WITH THE LAW

I want to talk about two ways we get the Law wrong:

The first is *moralism* – seeking to obtain one's righteousness by observing the Law. This is obeying in order to obtain God's favor. Even for those who have been justified by faith in Jesus, there can be a tendency to treat the Law as if somehow you must maintain your own righteousness by good works.

Last week I referred to Paul's letter to the Galatians. He was rebuking them for resorting to legalism of the Judaizers who taught that to be saved you had to also be circumcised and observe the Mosaic Law.

Paul taught that you are justified the moment of faith. You are made right by God through faith and then from an internal desire and love for God, you seek to obey Him.

The Judaizers had all those components, but they got them out of order. They taught that you have faith in Jesus Christ and you obey the Law and then you are made right with God.

It's the horse before the cart scenario. And listen to Paul's rebuke, "...*Did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*" *Galatians 3:2-3*

But how bad is that really? This doesn't seem all *that* bad. Like it may not exactly be right, but how could it be wrong? We're just adding good to good, right?

Hear what Paul had to say earlier in his letter, "*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*" *Galatians 1:8*

The + something is demonic, and Paul says let anyone who teaches this be accursed to hell. Even if an angel teaches it, let him be accursed. This is another way of saying, “We don’t trust that what Jesus did was enough. We have to do something, too.”

Your righteousness always and forever was given to you the moment you genuinely believed the Gospel. The moment you realized how corrupt you were and confessed that there is nothing acceptable in you.

Therefore, resist the inclination to pride yourself in your victories and shame yourself in your failures. Instead, thank the Lord that He is gracious to guide you and discipline you toward holy living. Normalize repentance of sin, normalize apologizing for your mistakes and failures, and rejoice visibly knowing that you are forgiven.

The second way to err is *licentiousness* – the result of detaching yourself from the Law as if God simply changed His mind on what He expects of His people. Once Paul completed the foundation of our depravity in chapters 1-3 and justification by faith alone in chapters 4-5, he asked the question, “*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*” *Romans 6:1*

That is an obvious question once you have apprehended the full weight of the Gospel. Nothing you can ever do will separate you from the love of Christ! (cf. *Romans 8:38-39*) However, to hear this and imagine you have license to sin and then act on that impulse suggests that you may not have come to saving faith in Christ in the first place.

Paul answers his own question in the next verse, “*By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*” *Romans 6:2* Have you died to sin? A born-again believer will continue to struggle with sin. However, even as they begin to see victory over sin, they will come to increasing awareness of and hatred toward sin that remains.

They will become more convicted of, and less satisfied in their sin. Sins that years ago they would have scoffed at or happily ignored now pierce their soft consciences driving them to their knees in repentance.

## THE LAW OF CHRIST

We are released from the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, but we still have the moral laws. These laws were summed up by Jesus, and referred to by Paul as the Law of Christ, as “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.” No one has ever *become* righteous by obeying the law, but the righteous obey by the power of the Holy Spirit because they are the authoritative will of God.

## THE FORMULA OF SALVATION

Last week we had a lesson on Greek and Latin and sprinkled in a little German and Spanish. This week let’s do some math. In *Romans 3:20* Paul says, “*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.*”

Works of the law are the good things we do in life and the avoidance of the bad things. Doing right & not doing wrong. Paul says that doing the right things and abstaining from the bad does not lead to anyone’s justification. No one is saved this way. So, do good works lead to salvation? No!

That’s a problem. We want to enter God’s kingdom and we want eternal life with God. So now let’s introduce faith. Faith is essential to salvation. “*For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*” *Romans 3:28*

Let's kick out works and see what that does. Does this "Faith" lead to salvation. Notice I put faith in quotation marks for a reason. In this equation there are no works whatsoever. No life change. No obedience to the Lord. No sanctification. No repentance of sin.

What do we do with what James says, *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?...So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* James 2:14, 17

There's a "faith" that is dead, and implied, leads to hell. But notice, James says if a person "says" he has faith but there is no change in his life, is that really saving faith? Faith in this formula is one of two things. Either it is death-bed faith, or it's dead faith. Unless we're talking about a person on their death bed who comes to faith and has absolutely no opportunity to demonstrate that faith – in which case that could be sincere faith that saves (think of the thief on the cross), it's a dead, meaningless, insincere faith.

So, works is also an important part of the equation. The question is where do we put works in this formula? Does Faith + works lead to salvation? No! We might deny this, but works-righteousness runs deep in the western church. And there is a tension, at least in my mind, maybe in yours, too.

You add something great to something good, certainly it will result in something amazing, right? Wrong. Faith + works leads to hell. Faith + anything leads to hell. The message that faith must be supplemented by anything we can do in order to be right with God is a false gospel that damns people to hell.

Good works leads to hell. "Faith" without any works leads to hell. Faith + works leads to hell. What is the right formulation, then? Where do we put works?

Faith leads to salvation + works! Faith, genuine faith that saves a person, will also produce works in that person's life. The kind of faith that leads to a person's salvation, will then subsequently lead that person to love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength and their neighbor as themselves.

Faith is what God uses to give us salvation. Loving obedience is the evidence that it has actually happened. Or you might think of this way, faith is the root of salvation, works of life change is the fruit of salvation.

## A WORD TO PARENTS

Parents, I want to spend a couple minutes here addressing the troubling statistic that most kids that grow up in the church leave it when they leave home. I want to know why and how to change that. As I reflect on my fifteen years in ministry, as I think about the kids who left the church when they left home, I've made some observations.

Before I share those, I want to note that just as *Proverbs 22:6*, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it"* is a probability, not a promise, it is possible for parents to do the right things here and their kids still abandon the church. However, when parents do what I'm about to describe, it's not just a possibility, but a probability they will leave the church.

Here's what I see in parents of children who abandon the church. They claim to have faith but demonstrate little to no life change in the home. They have a "faith" that supposedly leads to salvation, but there is no fruit of it. There is no difference in the home in how they parent, how they love their spouse, how they live the Gospel in real life. They claim to have faith but there are no works that follow.

Then they expect of their children a works-based righteousness. So they have a works-less faith and expect a works-based relationship with their kids. They expect their kids to perform. To be "good"

kids. To earn their approval and affection. This is blatant hypocrisy and the kids are right to reject it. Unfortunately, many reject not only this, but also the true Gospel. Thankfully, I have welcomed many back into the church years later once they've come to understand the difference between the Gospel and what their parents were modelling.

But woe to the parents who live this way and whose kids grow up under this kind of parenting. We have the opportunity to demonstrate the gospel with our lives, but only if we've got the formula right ourselves.

### WHICH FORMULA ARE YOU USING?

Which formula are you using today? There's only one that saves. We are justified by faith alone. But saving faith does not remain alone, it will be followed by a changed heart for God.

Do you want to know that you are saved? Do you want assurance of salvation?

Do you believe the Gospel? That's the question; do you believe what the bible says about you and what it says about God and about salvation? Do you trust in Jesus' righteousness alone?

And do you observe the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? Causing you to become more sensitive, less tolerant, and more disgusted by your sin that remains? Do you observe the fruit of the Holy Spirit increasing? More love for God and others?

We trust in Jesus alone for salvation, and we know we've come to trust Him in saving faith by the fruit He produces in our lives.

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