

July 10th, 2016

VIDEO: -OLOGY INTRO

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INTRODUCTION

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

We have been looking at the -ologies of the Bible. What we believe. The last time I preached we began talking about what we believe about salvation and we talked about Law and Grace.

If you remember, there are two ways into heaven ... law and grace. The problem with law though is that it depends on our perfection, it depends on us perfectly following the law. Law is all about what we have done to deserve to be in heaven. But since we have sinned, we do not deserve to enter heaven. We do not deserve to be in the presence of God.

Grace is not earned, grace cannot be earned, grace cannot be worked for, grace is not deserved, grace is not fair. Grace is a free gift from Christ. We are able to be in God's presence, we are able to enter eternal life, because Jesus is offering us grace.

That being said, we have sinned. Because of that we are under the burden of sin. So how does grace, how does God through His grace, relieve us of the burdens of sin?

BURDENS OF SIN

We talked about sin earlier in this series and we said that sin has a double trouble effect on the sinner, or a double burden.

First, it burdens the sinner with guilt and makes them liable for a punishment.

JAMES 2:10

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¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

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¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

If you commit one sin, you are accountable for all sin and you will stand before God in judgment, and since you have sinned you are liable for the punishment. That is the first burden of sin.

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Second, it burdens the sinner with a depraved nature ... it infects the soul with spiritual weakness and corruption.

God relieves us of these burdens of sin in two ways; First He justifies us. Second, He sanctifies us and restores us from our depraved sinful nature.

This week we are going to focus on the first part of the double cure, justification. Then next week we will look at the second part of the cure, sanctification and restoration.

JUSTIFICATION

Robert Horn said that “Justification means something God does, it means a very specific thing God does.”

Justification has a very specific meaning, what is it?

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Justification (diakaiosis) or to justify (dikaioo) are part of the same word family as

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righteous (dikaios) and righteousness (dikaiosyne). This suggests that justification and righteousness are related, but what is the proper connection between them?

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There are really two main competing views of how justification relates to righteousness.

IMPARTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

One view says that justification means that God imparts righteousness to us or He makes us righteous. This is the personal obedience and good works that God enables us to do by the power of His grace working in us. Justification would then be God’s ongoing processes of making us more and more righteous.

We believe that God in fact works in us making us holy, but we call this sanctification and we will talk about this more next week.

In this view, justification would be a process that takes place within the individual and justification would be tied directly to one's works. Because it is a process, we can never be quite sure when we have reached a level of justification that is acceptable to God.

IMPUTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

The other view says that justification means that God imputes righteousness to us or He declares us righteous. In this view the state of justification is not an ever increasing holiness of character, but a complete right legal standing before the law of God.

That justification means to declare righteous rather than to make righteous is seen in the use of the verb (dikaioo) in Luke 7:29

LUKE 7:29

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²⁹(When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John,

This could very well be translated "they justified God", but if justification is a process of making someone righteous ... then we could not possibly justify God. But, if justification is the

declaration that something is righteous ... then we could justify God.

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When God justifies us He is not making us righteous, rather He is declaring us righteous.

Scripturally justification is basically a legal or judicial concept. In the Bible it is the judges verdict after he has considered the evidence and found a person to be innocent. "To justify" is the opposite of "to condemn."

DEUTERONOMY 25:1

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¹"If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,

ROMANS 8:33-34

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³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

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³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Justification and condemnation are opposites and obviously when a judge condemns someone he does not make that person guilty. Rather, he is declaring him to be so. Likewise, when a judge justifies someone he does not make that person innocent or righteous; he simply declares him to be so.

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There is a difference between human justification and the justification that comes from God though. Human judges justify the innocent. Unless they are corrupt or misled, they justify the innocent. God justifies guilty sinners.

ROMANS 4:5

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⁵And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

God declares the unrighteous to be righteous.

The best way to understand what is happening here is to remember that with law comes penalty. And we, sinners, are deserving of penalty because we are guilty of breaking God's laws.

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Now imagine yourself standing before God, the judge. God does not look at you and say ... "not guilty" because you are in fact are guilty. Instead, God looks at you and says "there is no penalty for you." God does not remove the guilt of individual

sins, rather He forgives the entire person by declaring that your penalty has already been paid.

BASIS OF JUSTIFICATION

How can God declare us righteous? Well there are only three ways.

- If we have shown perfect obedience, then He can declare us righteous. But we haven't, so He can't
- If we have paid for our own sins, then He can declare us righteous. But the penalty is eternal punishment, and that kind of suffering for us does not end. So we obviously haven't paid for our own sins.
- If someone else pays for our sins, then He can declare us righteous. Jesus paid for our sins. Not through His life but through His death. I often hear people say that Jesus' perfect life paid for their sins. Jesus' perfect life was the result of perfect obedience, it was what God required. His death though was not required because of His perfect obedience. So it is Jesus death that pays for our sins. God credits the sacrifice of Christ as payment for our sins. Because of this God is able to look at us and say, "there is no penalty for you, because your penalty has already been paid. You are justified."

MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION

This gift of justification is not given automatically to everyone. Rather, it is given only to those who possess the proper and

necessary means of receiving it. What? Well what is this means that is needed for receiving justification?

This is where you see a major disagreement among Christians.

Some will say that we are saved by faith apart from works

ROMANS 3:28

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²⁸For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Others will say that we are justified by works and not by faith alone

JAMES 2:24

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²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Ahh! Sometimes I read two scriptures like this and I immediately say ... what? This can't be. The Bible just contradicted itself. But, the Bible is God's inspired word. It can't contradict itself.

It can't contradict itself. Which means, I need to take a closer look so that I can understand this better. This isn't a pick a side type of thing. Instead, this is understanding what God has told us through His word.

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In order to do that, we need to define a couple things here.

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Works – When the Bible is speaking of works (at least in Paul's and James' letters) it is referring to works of the law, or our response to God's laws.

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Conditions – When we talk about conditions, we are referring to conditions for salvation. Salvation is not unconditional. There are conditions to salvation. These conditions are not works of the law, these conditions are not our response to the Creator's law, rather these conditions are our response to the Redeemer's instructions on how to receive the gift of salvation. In a couple weeks we are going to talk about the conditions for salvation.

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Means – When we talk about means of justification, we are referring to the method used to attain justification.

FAITH, NOT WORKS

So then, what is the one means by which the sinner is justified?

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It is faith in the saving work of Jesus. Faith is the means for our justification. Almost every agrees that faith is at least the primary means by which justification is received. Some attempt

to add works to faith as our means for justification. Others make faith and works equal as our means for justification.

But when we go to scripture we see a strong teaching that faith, not works, is the means of justification.

ROMANS 3:22

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²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

ROMANS 3:26

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²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

GENESIS 15:6

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⁶And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

GALATIANS 3:24

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²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

PHILIPPIANS 3:9

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⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

God's designation of faith, not works, as the means of justification is not an arbitrary decision. Instead it is determined by the very nature of the situation. Since justification is by grace, a gift, the means of receiving it must be consistent with that fact and cannot in any sense be regarded as earning or deserving it. Works as a means is then ruled out, leaving faith consistent with grace.

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Think of it like this ... we are justified by someone else's work. We are justified by Jesus' blood. Not our work, but His. We merely have faith in His work.

Imagine that you go to the doctor for a sore throat. The doctor will tell you things you can do to treat the sore throat; avoid certain foods, take pills, gargle something.

But ... if you go to the doctor because something is wrong with your heart and you need heart surgery, that is the only thing that will save you. No diet, no exercise, your heart is too bad and you need open heart surgery. There is no work you can do to save yourself. You can only passively surrender yourself to him and trust him to do what he has promised.

That is how it is with justification through Christ's blood. My own works can no more be the means of justification than a surgeon could require me to cut open my own chest and hold my split rib cage apart while he operated on my heart.

Faith in Christ's saving work is the sole means of justification and it is this faith that keeps us justified.

FAITH THAT WORKS

How then is James' teaching consistent with Paul's?

JAMES 2:24

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²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

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James is a legitimate part of the God breathed, inspired, scriptures. So we cannot declare that they contradict each other. We also cannot be satisfied with clever, brief summaries of the difference in the two.

- Paul opposes dead (false) works, James opposes dead (false) faith
- Paul opposes faithless works, while James opposes workless faith
- Paul opposes works produced for righteousness, while James advocates works produced by righteousness

These statements may be true but we are seeking more than a quick clever statement. We want to know, we want to understand what we believe. They cannot be sufficient for us.

So then, what is going on with James and Paul's teachings?

Some try to justify them as talking about different things.

- Different groups of people
 - Are they talking to two different groups of people?
 - James is talking to the Christians
 - Paul is talking to the unsaved sinners.
 - Paul says faith justifies us and James says that faith and works help us to remain justified?
 - This can't be the case or it would contradict Paul's teaching that justification comes by faith alone. Because if it comes by faith alone, it remains by faith alone. The Galatians struggled with this and Paul was strictly telling them that it is faith that justifies us.
- Different kinds of justification
 - Paul is talking about being justified before God
 - James is talking about being justified before men
 - This is just not consistent with what Paul and James are saying. Paul isn't just talking about works to please God because he talks about using works to boast. James isn't just talking about justification before men because his main example is Abraham being justified before men.
- Different kinds of works

- Paul is talking about OT law
- James is talking about NT law
- Again, this is inconsistent because Paul makes reference to ALL law, even the law written on the hearts of the Gentiles and James references the law of Moses.

So they are talking to all people about the same justification and the same works. So then, what is being said?

Paul says faith and works are not the means of justification. It is only by faith. Faith is the means to justification, not works.

James says that true saving faith by its very nature will produce works. It will desire to obey and will seek to obey God's laws. So James can say justification is seen or visible through our works because it is the product of our faith.

And Paul agrees ...

GALATIANS 5:6

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For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Faith without works? No says James. Faith plus works? No says Paul. Faith that works? Yes says Paul and James.

CHALLENGE

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We are declared to be free of the penalty of sin, this is a free gift from God, we just need to believe in the redeeming work of Jesus. We need to believe that because of His perfect life, He was able to take our place and take the full wrath of God for us. And if we believe that, then our faith will be expressed by our obedience to God and our desire to know His will for our lives.

PRAY

COMMUNION MEDITATION

Something here