

Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine

Salvation by Grace through Faith

January 1, 2006

Salvation by Grace through Faith

VII. Salvation by Grace through Faith

We believe that sinners are saved by grace through faith alone and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God, not of works. We further believe that every saved person is “justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Acts 13:39; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1, 3:25-26; Titus 2:11-14

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **AGC article touching on**
 - **conversion**
 - **our willing response to the Gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation**
 - **justification**
 - **an instantaneous legal act of God in which He declares us to be righteous in His sight**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Conversion**

- **conversion = “turning”**

- **turning from sin = repentance**

- **turning to Christ = faith**

- **both elements (repentance & faith) occur together in true conversion**

- i.e. simultaneous turning from sin & turning to Christ

- “two sides of the same coin”

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Conversion**

- **conversion = “turning”**

- **both elements (repentance & faith) occur together in true conversion**

- placed side by side in Scripture

- e.g. “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must *turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*” (Acts 20:21)

- e.g. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...” (Acts 3:19)

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- **Repentance**

- heartfelt sorrow for sin, renouncing of it, and sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ
- involves
 - intellectual understanding - **i.e. that I am a sinner and that sin is wrong**
 - emotional approval - **agreement with Scripture's teaching that I am a sinner, resulting in sorrow and turning**
 - personal decision - **commitment to forsake sin and to obey Christ**

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- **Faith**

- “saving faith” likewise involves

- intellectual understanding - of who Christ is, and of what He’s done for me
 - emotional approval/assent - believing the truths of who Christ is and what He’s done for me
 - personal decision - personal trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life

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- **Saving Faith**

- **knowledge/intellectual understanding alone is not enough**

- **it's possible to know the truth but reject/rebel against it**

- “*Although they know* God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”
(Romans 1:32)

- “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that -- and shudder.” (James 2:19)

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- **Saving Faith**

- **knowledge + approval/assent is not enough**

- “**King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? *I know you do***’.

- Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’” (Acts 26:27-28)**

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- **Conversion**

- **involves**

- **intellectual understanding - of Scripture's teaching that I am a sinner in need of salvation through Christ**
 - **emotional approval/assent - agreement with Scripture's teaching that I am a sinner in need of salvation through Christ**
 - **personal decision - commitment to forsake sin and to obey Christ, with personal trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Conversion**
 - “**Lordship salvation**” controversy (1980s-90s)
 - **some evangelicals argued that salvation only involves trusting Christ for salvation**
 - repentance and obedience to Christ (in the traditional sense) considered optional
 - defined repentance as a ‘change of mind’
 - reduced saving faith largely to intellectual assent with the facts of the Gospel
 - good rebuttal in *The Gospel According to Jesus*, by John MacArthur

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- an instantaneous legal act of God in which He declares us to be righteous in His sight

- the primary issue of the Reformation

- Protestant view: **an instantaneous, irrevocable act that is by God's grace *alone*, through faith *alone***

- Roman Catholic view: **a progressive process that is by God's grace and involves faith, but that also requires man's co-operation in good works (i.e. *not* by grace through faith alone)**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- a legal declaration by God that we are righteous in His sight

- i.e. a judgment/verdict of God with respect to us

- a change of status that does not in itself change our nature or character internally

- justification is inevitably accompanied by a change (i.e. regeneration & sanctification; Titus 2:11-14), but must not be confused with regeneration & sanctification

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- a legal declaration by God that we are righteous in His sight

- **demonstrates God's perfect holiness and justice**

- God is perfectly holy - cannot turn a blind eye to sin
 - He cannot just “let it slide”, but must punish sin

“God presented Him [Jesus Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:25-26)

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- **Justification**

- occurs “by grace through faith alone”

- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” (Titus 2:11)

- **not of ourselves (owing to total depravity)**
 - **the gift of God (i.e. by grace alone)**
 - **not of works**

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- Justification

- occurs “through faith alone”

- i.e. “saving faith” (not mere intellectual assent)

- “Therefore, since we have been *justified through faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:1)

- “This righteousness from God comes *through faith in Jesus Christ* to all who believe...” (Rom. 3:22)

- “God presented Him [Jesus Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement *through faith in His blood*... He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies *those who have faith in Jesus*.” (Rom. 3:25-26)

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- **Justification**

- **is not by works (i.e. not by obedience to the Law)**

- **Scripture clear that no one will be justified by observing the Law (i.e. by works)**

- “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law...” (Rom. 3:20)

- “...a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.” (Gal. 2:16)

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **is not by works (i.e. not by obedience to the Law)**

- “**All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...**” (Gal. 3:10-13)

- “**Through Him [i.e. Jesus Christ] everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.**” (Acts 13:39)

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- **Justification**

- is not by works

- **but what about James 2:24?**

- “You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” (James 2:24)

- context of James 2:14-24 shows that “justified” is used in a different sense, i.e. that a person is ‘shown to be righteous’ - i.e. what he does demonstrates the reality of his faith

- true faith will always show itself in good works (i.e. justification leads to sanctification)

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- **Justification**

- is not by works

- **but what about James 2:24?**

- “We are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.”

- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. *For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*”
(Eph. 2:8-10)

- but justification should not be confused with sanctification so as to require ‘faith + works’ for justification

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- **Justification**

- is not by faith + works, but through faith alone

- **the Galatian heresy**

- **salvation by faith + circumcision (works of the Law)**

- **Paul states forcefully that this is a different gospel that is really no gospel at all, and that does not save:**

- “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all...” (Gal. 1:6-7)

- “...if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.” (Gal. 5:3)

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- an instantaneous legal act of God in which He declares us to be righteous in His sight

How does it happen?

1. Our sins are imputed to Christ

- God thinks of our sin as belonging to Christ; i.e. “credits” them to Christ

“...the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)

- we are forgiven because our sins have been fully punished in Christ’s sufferings and death on the Cross

“...the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.” (Isaiah 53:5)

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

How does it happen?

2. Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed to us

- Christ lived a perfectly righteous, totally sinless life
- God thinks of Christ's perfect righteousness as belonging to us; i.e. "credits" Christ's righteousness to us through faith in Him

"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. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works..." (Romans 4:4-6)

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

How does it happen?

3. God declares us righteous in His sight

- our sins are forgiven in Christ; thus, we have no penalty to pay for sin, past, present, or future

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 8:1)

- God declares us righteous because of Christ’s imputed righteousness

“It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” (1 Cor. 1:30)

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**
 - the primary issue of the Reformation
 - Protestant view: **an instantaneous, irrevocable act that is by God's grace *alone*, through faith *alone***
 - Roman Catholic view: **a progressive process that is by God's grace and involves faith, but that also requires man's co-operation in good works (i.e. not by grace alone, through faith alone)**
 - justification can be lost, e.g. through mortal sins

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification is not just a legal declaration, but includes inward change, i.e. regeneration and sanctification**

- “Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.” - Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1991.

- **not ‘*declared* righteous,’ but ‘*made* righteous’**

- **not ‘imputed’ righteousness, but ‘infused’ righteousness**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification is by God's grace through faith, but also requires man's co-operation in preparing and disposing himself to receive the grace of justification (i.e. not by grace through faith *alone*)**

“If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.” - Canon IX, Council of Trent, 6th session, On Justification

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification is by God's grace through faith, but also requires man's co-operation in preparing and disposing himself to receive the grace of justification (i.e. not by grace through faith *alone*)**

- **derives from semi-Pelagian view of Man, in which Man is weakened, but not totally depraved by the Fall (see lesson on the Fall & Total Depravity of Man)**

- **thus, able to co-operate in justification**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification is first received in baptism**

- includes forgiveness of sins committed prior to Baptism and infusion of righteousness from on high

“Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of His mercy.” - Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1992.

- sacrament of penance required for sins committed after baptism

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification ‘establishes cooperation between God’s grace and Man’s freedom,’ and enables Man, moved by the Holy Spirit, to merit other graces and eternal life**

“Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom.” - Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2010.

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification is preserved and increased by good works**

“If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema.” - Canon XXIV, Council of Trent, 6th session, On Justification

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **Justification**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **Justification may be lost through unbelief or sin, but recovered through the sacrament of Penance**

“If any one saith, that he, who has fallen after baptism, is not able by the grace of God to rise again; or, that he is able indeed to recover the justice which he has lost, but by faith alone without the sacrament of Penance, contrary to what the holy Roman and universal Church-instructed by Christ and his Apostles-has hitherto professed, observed, and taught; let him be anathema.” - Canon XXIX, Council of Trent, 6th session, On Justification

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- **Justification - a simplified summary**
 - **Roman Catholic view**
 - **Faith + Works = Justification**
 - **Protestant view**
 - **Faith = Justification + Works**

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- **What's at stake?**
 - **the heart of the Gospel**
 - **'sinners are saved by grace through faith *alone*, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God, not of works.'**
 - **any 'different gospel' is really no gospel at all (Galatians 1:6-9)**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **What's at stake?**
 - **the heart of the Gospel**
 - **Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) (1994)**
 - *“We affirm together that we are Justified by grace through faith on account of Christ.”*
 - **signed by many prominent evangelical leaders**
 - **ambiguous statement that compromised justification by grace through faith *alone***
 - **on the basis of this ‘agreement,’ called on evangelicals to stop ‘proselytizing’ Catholics (and vice versa)**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **What's at stake?**
 - **implications for evangelism**
 - **need to call people to true repentance and faith (2 sides of conversion)**
 - need to deal seriously with issue of sin
 - **need to call all people to trust in Christ alone for their salvation**

Salvation by Grace through Faith

- **What's at stake?**
 - assurance of salvation
 - **assurance of salvation possible only with justification by grace through faith alone**
 - under Roman Catholic system, how could you ever know if you were good enough to preserve your justification?
 - the 'insanity of Luther'

Next class

The Atonement of the Blood of Christ

January 8, 2006

References

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