



Chapter 11: Of Justification

Now we come to the great biblical and Protestant doctrine of justification. Calvin said that "Justification is the main hinge on which salvation turns." There is no salvation without a proper understanding of justification. This is not a secondary issue, it is a foremost essential of true and biblical Christianity. It is one of the things which separates confessional Protestantism from Roman Catholicism. There will be a lot of things which I will point the interested reader to previous chapters, rather than expound again here.

§1 Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth

1. Those whom God effectually calleth, he also **freely justifieth**, **1** not by infusing righteousness into them, but by **pardoning their sins**, and by **accounting and accepting their persons as righteous**; **2** not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but **for Christ's sake alone**; **3** not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but **by imputing Christ's active obedience** unto the whole law, and **passive obedience in his death** for their whole and sole righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves; it is the **gift of God**. **4**
 1. Rom. 8:30; 3:24^[1]
 2. Rom. 4:5-8; Eph. 1:7
 3. 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Rom. 5:17-19
 4. 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Titus 3:5, 7; Rom. 3:22-28; Jer. 23:6; Phil. 3:9; Acts 13:38-39; Eph. 2:7-9; Phil 1:29; 2Pet 1:1

Now that we've dealt with the first three things in Romans 8:29-30, namely God (1) foreknowing us and (2) electing us in [chapter 3](#) and (3) effectually calling us in [chapter 10](#) we come to the to the 4th point in the five-pointed chain-justification. What is justification? Dr. Wayne Grudem defines it in this way:

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.^[2]

Section one first deals with a distortion about justification and then gives the biblical position.

Not Infusion of Righteousness

Roman Catholics believe what may be called "infused righteousness." That means that at salvation the merits of the Lord Jesus on the cross are infused with the righteousness of the sinner and together they constitute the basis of salvation. Meaning, Christ's righteousness is not enough, rather it is given to help us with our own righteousness through works and obedience to God and the Roman Catholic Church. In their words:

1999 The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the sanctifying or deifying

grace received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:^[3]

This “infused righteousness” is attained by a work, namely *baptism*. That is the way you get this righteousness. Basically, this position teaches that salvation by grace alone is not enough. You have to add your works and obedience to the work of Christ. It is wrong to think that Roman Catholics do not believe in the *necessity* of grace. Rather, they don’t believe in the *sufficiency* of grace. Grace alone is not enough to justify. In their own words from the Council of Trent:

"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," (Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 9).^[4]

Rome, in these words, has denied the Gospel of Christ. They place their curse upon the Protestant and biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. which is the Gospel of our salvation. They have denied justification by faith alone, which I will seek to make a case for below. They confess that faith is necessary, but it is not enough. They confess that grace is necessary, but it is, again, not enough. I assert and will seek to prove that the Bible teaches that faith alone is that which justifies the wicked and not grace/faith *plus* anything in us.

Imputed Righteousness

Christ's *active obedience* is what was imputed to us, which we discussed in chapter 8 ([see here](#)). His *active obedience* refers Lord's keeping the Law of God perfectly for us and in our place. All that righteousness which the Lord Jesus earned, the Father credits to us. It is as though we had lived the perfect life of Christ in complete obedience to God. That is how God sees His children. But it is not only His active but also *passive obedience* which justifies us. His *passive obedience* refers to His obedience to the Father even to the point of death and torture. It is through Christ's righteousness and death that we are justified and are in the right with God. Christ provided us a perfect righteousness by perfectly obeying and living the Law of God in our place and He took the penalty of the Law, which was ours upon Himself. Christ’s righteousness is *given* and *credited* to us. It is not mixed and infused with our own righteousness. The Apostle Paul says:

Phil. 3:9 and 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**—

Paul does not find comfort in his own righteousness, which comes through the law and doing "good" things which the law commands. But he finds his comfort, peace, and rest in the righteousness which comes through faith in Christ.

1Cor. 1:30-31 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, **righteousness** and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The Lord Christ is our righteousness. We do not have a righteousness of our own. Indeed, Isaiah says that all our good works are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6) and Paul says that none is righteous, no not one (Rom. 3:10). How could we, with our "righteousness", stand before a thrice holy God?! This is the promise of God since of old. Jeremiah speaks of a time when the LORD will become our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). It is He who forms the basis of our right-standing before and with God. That which will enable us to stand

before the throne of God and not be consumed in His wrath is the fact that we have the righteousness of Christ credited to us, which is able to make us stand before the “holy, holy, holy” God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is inescapable on this point:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him **we might become the righteousness of God.**

See our discussion of [this passage](#) in [chapter 8](#) for the [substitutionary atonement](#).

God was pleased (Isa. 53:10 KJV) to place our sins upon Christ and treat Him as though the Righteous and Sinless had done every sin we have done. There was a purpose for this (“so that”). The purpose is that we should become righteous and this righteousness would be the righteousness of God, not of our own in accordance with the promise of Jeremiah 23:6. In Romans 4 Paul largely argues for justification by faith alone by taking the example of David and Abraham. The theses which he is trying to establish is that justification by faith has always been the way people were saved. Concerning Abraham he says:

Rom. 4:22-24 That is why his faith was “**counted to him as righteousness.**” 23 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be **counted to us who believe in him** who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

This refers to the episode in Genesis 15 where the Lord promises Abram descendants as many as the stars of heaven and Abram believes the promise and then the words which Paul is referring to are written:

Gen. 15:6 And he believed the LORD, and he **counted it to him as righteousness.**

Logizomai and Dikaioo

The Lord counted Abram’s faith as righteousness, not any deed he had done and Paul argues that this was the case under the OT and likewise now that Christ has been raised. It is important for us to note the concept of imputed/credited righteousness in Romans 4 and elsewhere. The Greek word used in these instances is verb λογίζομαι (*logizomai*, G3049), which means “to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over”^[5]. Dr. William D. Mounce says that the “basic meaning of *logizomai* has to do with counting or thinking”^[6]. The important distinction between the Protestant and Roman Catholic doctrine of justification has to do with the fact that the Protestant doctrine of justification *declares* the sinner to be righteous although he is not fully righteous, because of Christ's merits. While the Roman Catholic doctrine seeks to make the sinner *righteous* and only then will he be really justified and righteous. But notice that the word which the Apostle Paul uses, *logizomai*, has to do with *counting* and *thinking* of someone as righteous instead of *making* them righteous (e.g. Rom. 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

The same is true of the word for justification, δικαίω (dikaioo, G1344). The word is defined by Thayer as “to render righteous or such he ought to be” and “to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be”^[5]. Mounce gives it the basic definition of “to declare righteous, justify”^[7]. Again we notice in these definitions that the idea is absent of making someone righteous and just through infusion or change of nature. Paul uses this word a lot in his epistles. It is also used Romans 4, which we were looking at. For example, Romans 4:5 says that “the one who does not work but believes in him who **justifies the ungodly**, his faith is counted as righteousness”. Because of faith, which counted (*logizomai*) as righteousness, the Lord God King of the Universe, declares righteous those who have put their faith in Christ. This is not because they are practically righteous, for God is justifying the *ungodly*. But because of

the perfect righteousness of Christ which was imputed to their account whereby God credits to them and thinks of them as righteous because they are united to Christ, the perfectly righteous Man. In further support for our point that *dikaioo* means *declaring* and *counting* one righteous, rather than *making* we call upon Luke 7:29. There, the text literally says that the people "justified God" (KJV). Now, what does this mean? Does anyone think that the people *made* God to be righteous? Absolutely not! Rather, as the ESV renders the passage, "they *declared* God just".

The Judge of the Universe, because of the *atoning* death of His Beloved Son on our behalf, declares us to be righteous. Our union with Christ makes it so that His death becomes our death, His resurrection our resurrection, His life our life, His righteousness our righteousness. Although we have not yet been perfectly conformed to His image, we are certainly predestined to that end (Rom. 8:29). In other words, God will *make* us righteous, but this is not what the New Testament speaks about for our salvation. Rather, this is sanctification in which the Holy Spirit works to change us into Christ's image, but it is a life-long process of ups and downs ([see here](#)).

Faith is a Gift

This is a controversial point, especially with Arminians and other non-Calvinists. Calvinists have always insisted that faith is a gift from God given to us and does not have its origin in us or our wills. We don't believe that God believes *for* us, but we believe that it is God who works faith in our heart and changes our nature so that we are made able to exercise faith in Christ. God gives us faith and we believe. Faith does not originate with us. It is a divine work which lasts until we see Him in heaven. Unless this work of grace takes place, Scripture teaches us that we are both unable and unwilling to come to Christ ([see chapter 6](#)). Let's take a look at a few passages which Calvinists have used to support the idea that faith is a gift and to see whether this is indeed biblical.

It would be pointless to point to verses which declare that people repented or believed. We do not dispute that. We simply believe that God is the One who works in us faith and gives us the true and lasting faith, which we exercise every day. Unless God works faith in man, man will never believe. That is our position.

Ephesians 2:8-9 states-

8 For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**. And **this** is not your own doing; it is the **gift of God**, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

We are saved by God's grace, which comes to us through the channel of faith. This is how we are justified, by grace through faith. Both are present. But the question here is to what does "this" refer to? The ESV Study Bible says:

this. The Greek pronoun is neuter, while "grace" and "faith" are feminine. Accordingly, "this" points to the whole process of "salvation by grace through faith" as being **the gift of God** and not something that we can accomplish ourselves. This use of the neuter pronoun to take in the whole of a complex idea is quite common in Greek (e.g., 6:1); its use here makes it clear that faith, no less than grace, is a gift of God. Salvation, therefore, in every respect, is **not your own doing**.^[8]

The "this" refers to the whole "by grace through faith"; it refers to the whole of our salvation. Neither our faith nor our repentance (2Tim. 2:26) did originate with us but were given to us by grace (*demerited favor*). Our entire salvation, including faith and repentance (Acts 20:21), was given to us as a gift with the purpose that we would have no ground to boast. In fact, Ephesians 2:10 even says that God beforehand prepared works for us to walk in them. This also is a gift so that we may glorify Him through them. So, even in our good works, we cannot actually boast. The next passage is **Philippians 1:29-**

For it has been **granted to you** that for the sake of Christ you should not only **believe in him** but also suffer for his sake,

The word *granted* is the Greek lexical form of $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ (*charizomai*, G5483), which is basically defined as “to grant as a favor, i.e. gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue”.^[9] God has not only graciously granted us to suffer for Christ’s sake, which is not a reproach, but an honor and an occasion of joy (Acts 5:41; 16:23-25; Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22; Rom. 5:3; 2Cor. 12:10; Heb. 10:34; Jam. 1:2; 1Pet. 4:13-16). He has also granted us to *believe in Him!* Just like God has granted and ordained that His children suffer according to His will (1Pet. 4:19), so likewise He has graciously granted us to believe in the Lord Christ. Our faith did not originate with us, but it was given to us by God for the sake of Christ. Christ has completely propitiated and pleased the Father on our behalf so that all the graces which the Father of mercy sends down upon us have their basis in Christ’s active and passive obedience. It has by grace been granted to us to believe in the Lord, but also to suffer for His sake because He is worthy!

While confronting the Jewish leaders, after Peter healed the lame beggar at the Temple, he said to them:

Acts 3:16 And his name—**by faith in his name**—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the **faith that is through Jesus** has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

It is by faith that the lame beggar was healed. Whether the faith was the Apostles’ or the beggar’s is irrelevant for my point. Notice that faith is said to be *in Jesus’ name*, but it is also the same faith which is *through Jesus*. The saving, healing and lasting faith were *in Jesus’s name*, but it also came *by and through* the Lord Jesus. It was something that He gave them to the man and of which He was the author. It originated with Him. It is not merely faith in His name, but also that faith came *through* Him. The Lord Jesus is indeed “the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). He gives it to us, works it in us and He by grace enables us to endure because He gives us a saving faith which endures. See also Acts 18:27.

Peter writes to a congregation and tells them about their faith-

2Pet 1:1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have **obtained a faith of equal standing with ours** by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

The Greek word for *obtained* is pretty interesting. It basically refers to obtaining something through a *lot*. The Greek lexical form $\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$ (*lagchano*, G2975) is defined as “1. to lot, i.e. determine (by implication, receive) especially by lot”.^[9] The word, in its different forms, is also used in Luke 1:9; John 19:24; Acts 1:17, which obviously refers to casting lots. The basic idea conveyed by Peter through his use of this particular word is, I believe, that the faith which we have did not originate with us. It was as it were by lot—outside of our influence. It was given to us. We obtained it. It is the kind of faith which is the same as the Apostles’ and it was obtained by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus. Who but God in the Bible controls the results of the lot (Prov 16:33)? One commentary says-

obtained—by grace. Applied by *Peter* to the receiving of the apostleship, literally, “by allotment”: as the *Greek* is, Luke 1:9 John 19:24. They did not acquire it for themselves; the divine election is as independent of man’s control, as the lot which is cast forth.^[10]

There is indeed biblical warrant and evidence for the doctrine that faith is indeed a divine gift given to those who are elect, like repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2Tim. 2:26). Our case is further strengthened

when we consider the Scriptural teaching on the inability of fallen man to believe ([see here](#)).

Regeneration Precedes Faith

While this is not directly addressed by the Confession in this section, it is related to the point addressed above, namely, that [faith is a gift](#). The question that I want to answer here is: Do we believe to be born again, or are we born again to believe? I will try to argue that the latter is the answer.

Before starting to argue for Reformed and Calvinistic belief that regeneration precedes faith, it must be noted that here we are speaking about “preceding” not necessarily in time, but logically. If we look at it in the sense of time, then both regeneration and faith happen at the same moment. But, the question that we are concerned with is to find which is the cause and which is the effect. Is regeneration the cause of faith, or is faith the cause of regeneration. I found that Matt Slick had a very nice analogy to explain the relationship between regeneration and faith -

In a light bulb, electricity must be in place in order for light to occur. But, it is not true that light must be in place for electricity to occur. The light is dependent on the electricity, not the electricity on the light. Therefore, the electricity is logically first. That is, it must be necessarily present in order for the resultant light to appear. However, the electricity is not temporally first because when the electricity is present, light is the necessary and simultaneous result. When two things are simultaneous, one does not have temporal priority over another. So, when the electricity is present, there is not a duration of time before light occurs. It occurs simultaneously with the presence of the electricity. This is the same with regeneration and faith. Regeneration must precede faith not in a temporal sense, but in a necessary sense. It must be in place in order for believing to occur, but it occurs simultaneously with regeneration. So, logically, regeneration is first. Temporally they are simultaneous.^[11]

The Testimony of 1 John 5:1

To prove that regeneration precedes faith the Reformed often go to 1 John 5:1 and that is also where I will go-

1John 5:1 **Everyone who believes** that Jesus is the Christ **has been born of God**, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

The ESV is fairly clear on this point, but let us use the Young Literal Translation also -

1John 5:1 YLT **Every one who is believing** that Jesus is the Christ, **of God he hath been begotten**, and every one who is loving Him who did beget, doth love also him who is begotten of Him:

The case for regeneration preceding faith rests upon the first part of the verse that I highlighted and the use of the verb tenses there. Notice that in the YLT we can see the tenses much clearer than in other normal English translations, although the verse reads a little bit strange than usual English. The people who are believing, it is a present act of believing. It is something that is happening *now*, it is an active and present faith, not one which is in the past. But, this faith was the *result of an action in the past*. Now

we come to the crucial point. The verb γενέσθαι (gegennetai, G1080), which has been translated with “has been born” in the ESV and “he hath been begotten” in the YLT is a **perfect passive indicative** in Greek. What does that all mean? Don't worry, we'll take a look at every aspect.

Perfect is the tense of the verb and it describes a *state resulting from a finished action*. Or,

The verb tense used by the writer to describe a **completed verbal action that occurred in the past** but which **produced a state of being or a result that exists in the present** (in relation to the writer). The emphasis of the perfect is not the past action so much as it is as such but the present “state of affairs” resulting from the past action.

Thus, the fact that “has been born” is in the perfect tense tells us that γενέσθαι (gegennetai, G1080) happened in the past, but it has a continuing effect in the present. That the **voice of the verb is passive** means that the *action of the verb was being done unto the subject* and not by the subject. In the words of Peter, “he has *caused us* to be born again” (1Pet. 1:3) and God has given us the “right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). The **indicative mood** simply describes *something that is real* according to the author. It is the mood of assertion and fact. Our focus must be on the tense of the verb about which Wayne Grudem says-

The perfect participle translated here “is born” could more explicitly be translated “has been born and continues in the new life that resulted from that event.”^[12]

The point which I am trying to get across is that the “believes that Jesus is the Christ” is in the present active tense and according to the perfect passive indicative comes as the result of “has been born of God”. The fact that we believe in the present is indicative that we have been born again in the past. They are connected. The present believing is dependent upon a passive action in the past, namely, that God caused us to be born again. The one precedes the other. The being born of God, which is regeneration, precedes the believing that Jesus is the Christ. Thus, this text explicitly teaches that faith does not precede regeneration, but in fact, faith is a result of regeneration. That this is, in fact, the case we look at a couple more similar constructions in John lest people accuse us of using difficult Greek stuff to confound them. In the following examples, it will be very clear to English readers how the construction works.

1 John 2:29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that **everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him**.

ποιῶν (poion, G4160, to make or do), like πιστεύων (pisteun, G4100, to have faith) is a *present active participle*. We find the same perfect passive indicative γενέσθαι (gegennetai, G1080) here again. It is orthodox and faithful to Scripture to say that the fact that we were born from God was the cause of us doing righteousness (e.g. Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14). We do righteousness at the present only because in the past we were born of God. To say anything else is making salvation to be by works and not grace, thus a denial of the Gospel. The reason why we do righteousness is that we were born of God and we desire to please God (Ezk. 36:25-27). We do **not** do righteousness to be born of God. That is works-salvation and that is another gospel!

The same construction is also found in 1 John 3:9, but for our last example I want to look at 1 John 4:7-

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and **whoever loves has been born of God** and knows God.

ἀγαπῶν (*agapon*, G25) is again like in the two other passages, *present active participle* and γενέσθαι (*gengenetai*, G1080) is *perfect passive indicative*. The reason that we love is because we were born of God. We do not become regenerate because we love. It is the opposite. See among many other places about love in John's letter 1 John 4:8-12. Love is the effect, not the cause of regeneration.

Now we come back 1 John 5:1. I believe that we have successfully argued from the similar use of the Greek construction in other passages by John that the “born of God” precedes and results in that one “believes that Jesus is the Christ”. 1 John 5:1 is definite and explicit upon the teaching that regeneration precedes faith. See [Dr. James White, 1John 5:1, We are Born Again Then We Believe](#) and [1 John 5:1, Regeneration, Faith, and Tradition Driven Eisegesis](#).

The Analogy and Other Considerations

The prime text for regeneration is John 3 and that is our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. There the Lord tells Nicodemus that he must be born again (John 3:3). What does that analogy mean? I believe it is the fulfillment of the promised New Covenant in Ezekiel 36:25-27. Regeneration is the secret act of God wherein He gives us a new heart and a new spirit. He basically makes us new creatures. That's what regeneration is. Now back to the analogy. Nicodemus takes Jesus' words in John 3:3 a little bit too literally when he says “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” (John 3:4). But Nicodemus's words express some important things. Although he misunderstood the nature of the new birth, his objection stands. His objection is basically, how can anyone cause himself to be born again? How can he enter into the womb and will himself to be born? Just like with our natural birth, we had nothing to do with it. In all of it, we were passive. We were conceived by our parents without our will being involved and we were born without our will being involved (cf. John 1:12-13). Now we transition to the spiritual realm. Those who believe that faith precedes regeneration would have us believe that people can choose to be spiritually reborn. The problem with this is the testimony of the Bible about unregenerate man's condition:

- dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13),
- hates God (Rom. 1:30),
- slave to sin and Satan (John 8:34-36, 44; Eph. 2:2-3; 2Tim. 2:25-26; Rom. 6:16-17; Titus 3:3),
- does not seek God (Rom. 3:11),
- cannot believe in God (John 10:24-26; 12:37-41;),
- cannot come to Christ (John 6:44),
- the desires and intentions of his heart are evil (Gen. 6:5; 8:21),
- deceitful and desperately sick heart (Jer. 17:9),
- all things he does are sinful (Rom. 14:23; Isa. 64:6),
- cannot accept the things of the Spirit and is unable to understand (1Cor. 2:14),
- darkened in his understanding (Eph. 4:17-19),
- cannot please God (Rom. 8:5-8).

You can find more verses in this [Scripture List of Total Depravity](#) or see [chapter 6](#). This is a summary and not an exhaustive list of the biblical testimony about fallen man.

Now back to the new birth. Those who believe that faith precedes regeneration must first deal with the

explicit passages which deny that fallen man can do anything spiritually positive (e.g. Col. 2:14; Rom. 8:7-8; John 6:44). The question we must ask is, “Does God delight and is He pleased with repentance?” and then the negation of that in Romans 8:7-8. Fallen man, says Paul cannot—does not have the ability—to please God and submit to His Law. Is not loving God above all else and your neighbor as yourself the summary of the Law and start of true repentance? Is not the realization that we are hopeless, have sinned against God and need His forgiveness Christianity 101? Is that not pleasing to God and His Law? Yet, that is exactly what those in the flesh are *unable* to do. The Greek δύνάμει (*dunamai*, G1410) is defined as “to be able, have power whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom”^[5]. Fallen man has a [moral inability](#) (see [this also](#)), which we argued for in [chapter 9 on Free Will](#).

Can we really say that the man who cannot please God, the one who cannot accept the things of the Spirit who regenerates man and is unable (δύνάμει, *dunamai*) to understand (Col. 2:14), and the one who cannot (δύνάμει, *dunamai*) come to Christ (John 6:44) is the same who believes and takes the step to believe? One cannot consistently hold these two together. Furthermore, did we not argue that [faith, in fact, was a gift above](#)? What becomes of those verses?

This is why I believe that it is more consistent with the testimony of Scripture to hold that regeneration, in fact, does precede and gives rise to faith. This would explain the fact why we are now able to believe and put our faith in Christ.

In regeneration, the Sovereign and gracious Spirit of the Almighty gives us a new heart and a new spirit, in a word he makes us new. We become new creations, no longer hostile to God, but now desire the things of God. Our nature is changed. We are made spiritually alive and thus will love the things of God and will believe in God. We are no longer, in the words of 1 Corinthians 2:14, natural people, but spiritual people—indwelt and led by the Spirit of God (1Cor. 2:11-13, 15). Our situation prior to regeneration and faith is similar to that of Lazarus. He was stinking in the grave for 4 days. He had no power to raise himself up from the grave. He did not take the first step nor the last step, or any step in between. He was wholly passive through the whole process of him being made alive again. The Lord of glory, the Giver of life Himself raised him up. There was absolutely no choice of his involved in all of this. When the Lord said, “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43) He could do not do anything but come out. The Lord imparted life to him without asking his permission or without anything to do with his will, exactly because Lazarus was unable. So it is likewise our condition in our spiritual deadness and slavery to sin. We are not sick in sin, but dead. We are not half dead, but totally dead to the things of God. It does not mean that we do not do anything, but everything we do in our unregenerate state is sin and leads to death. We cannot do anything good or spiritual as that is not in accords with our fallen and sinful nature. The Lord Christ compares regeneration to spiritual resurrection in John 5:24-26.

§2 Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification

2. **Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness**, is the **alone instrument of justification**; **1** yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever **accompanied with all other saving graces**, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. **2**

1. Rom. 1:17; 3:27-31; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 3:5

2. Gal. 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26

The Case for Sola Fide

It is by faith alone that we are saved from God's wrath and welcomed into a loving relationship with Him. Faith alone is the instrument, which is given to us by God so that we would be brought into His fold. Manifold are the passages which mention saving faith alone (which is always accompanied with repentance, Acts 20:21) as the means to justification. But Roman Catholics may object that the Bible nowhere says "faith alone" and the only places where that phrase appears is in James 2:24 when it's in the negative. We will deal with that below. But when we read of faith being the instrument of justification and in the same verse excluding works, then we are justified to say that the Bible teaches that faith alone is the sole instrument of justification. Romans 3 is my favorite passage on justification. It's clear and to the point. The Holy Spirit says—

Rom. 3:28-30 For we hold that one is **justified by faith apart from works of the law**. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one—who will **justify the circumcised by faith** and the uncircumcised **through faith**.

What are the works of the Law but the things that God delights in and has commanded in the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments? But still, Paul says that is not the way that we are justified. That is not the way that we are declared righteous before the thrice holy God. It is by faith. For the Jew and the Gentile, it is the same way whereby comes the equality of Jewish and Gentile Christians (e.g. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11ff). The Jews had the idea that justification was through their efforts, but Paul here combats that idea. Justification by works is the essence of all man-made religions and the path to perdition. In Galatians, when Paul is combating the "another gospel" of the Judaizing heretics, he in the same breath is combating against justification by works and teaches *Sola Fide*. The error of the Judaizes was that they added works to the Gospel of Christ. They began with requiring the believers to be circumcised, but they did not realize that those who are circumcised were obliged to keep the whole law (Gal. 5:3), therefore they hinged the justification of the sinner upon his works.

Gal. 2:15-16 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a **person is not justified by works of the law** but **through faith** in Jesus Christ, so we also have **believed in Christ** Jesus, in order to be **justified by faith** in Christ and **not by works of the law**, because **by works of the law no one will be justified**.

Do you think that Paul was trying to show that justification by faith? He uses "works of the law" three times in a single verse to deny justification by works! Paul denies the place of works in our justification before God. Faith alone is sufficient. It is not by the deeds and works of the Law, which are in fact good because they're commanded of God, but not sufficient to declare us righteous and just before God since our good works are filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

Ephesians 2:8-9 is probably one of the most loved passages of the Bible to those who love that they're saved by faith alone and not works—

For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast.

[See our discussion above](#) when I argue that this the gift refers to the whole process of salvation, i.e., faith and repentance, too. But for our present subject, notice how Paul attributes our salvation to that fact that it by grace, i.e., something that we did not deserve and was given to us in spite of us. Grace is not only unmerited favor, it is because of our sin, it is *demerited* favor. It was by grace and it was through

faith. Faith was the instrument through which we were saved. Paul emphatically says that it was not our doing. There was nothing that we did, the purpose of this is to exclude all boasting from humans. God does not want humans to boast in anything but His work and His person (Jer. 9:23-24).

Paul argues that even David and Abraham under the Old Testament were justified by faith and not by works:

Rom 4:5-10 And to the one who does not work but **believes in him who justifies the ungodly**, his **faith is counted as righteousness**, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts **righteousness apart from works**: 7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” 9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that **faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness**. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but **before he was circumcised**.

It is our faith which is *counted* by God as if it was our righteousness. Our faith is in Christ. Under the Old Testament, it was in the promises of God and the types and shadows as they did not have the complete revelation of God yet. But Paul says that even David speaks of justification by faith alone. It is our faith which is the lone instrument of this. God counts our belief, trust, confidence, and faith in Him as our righteousness just like He did for Abraham (Gen. 15:6). This was as Paul, again and again, says—apart from works. Works were not into consideration because all of them are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6) and no really does anything “good” before a perfectly holy God (Rom. 3:10, 12). Even the father of the faithful, says Paul in verse 10, was justified by faith, how much more his children. But to stress his point, even more, he refers back to the Genesis 15 episode where God makes the covenant with Abraham. The circumcision part had not come yet, it is established in Genesis 17, but Genesis 15:6 says that God counted Abraham’s faith in God and trust in His promises as the ground of Abraham’s right-standing before Him. God did not declare Abraham just after he was circumcised, but before he was circumcised. He was justified by faith alone apart from works.

We could go on and on, but it is needless. I believe that those verses sufficiently show that works are excluded from salvation. See CARM for more: [“Are we saved by faith alone, or do we need works, too?”](#) and [“Verses Showing Justification by Faith”](#).

Faith and Works

Usually, the Roman Catholic would object to the case made above and go to James 2:24 where it is stated that “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” What is the context and what is James trying to communicate here? Does he say that we must work for our salvation? I do not believe so, otherwise, that would make the Bible contradictory with itself and that is something which both positions do not believe. Let’s take a look.

It is necessary to begin our discussion from verse 14 and not to jump into v. 24 with no consideration of what the context is and what came before. Is he saying that we are justified by works and faith before God or something else?

Jas. 2:14-17 What good is it, my brothers, **if someone says** he has faith but does not have works? Can **that faith** save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead**.

You see, the discussion should not begin at v. 24 if you want to get the correct and consistent

understanding of the passage but begin at v. 14 or even 1:1 to get the whole context. But it is sufficient and good if we begin here. James starts by asserting what does it matter if one merely says he has faith. "If someone says" that they're Christian, but do not bear "fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8), their faith is empty. They are merely saying that their Christians, but in fact do not give any evidence that they are followers of Christ. Furthermore, James points back to the fruitless faith of that person saying, "Can *that faith* save him?" The question, therefore, is not can faith alone save, but it is can a *fruitless* faith save? You see, the whole discussion should be framed in regards to this point that James is trying to refute the idea that because "someone [merely] says" that they're justified and have faith, means that they're justified. Saying that one is justified and a believer, does not, in fact, mean that they are truly justified and are true believers. That is what is James combating here.

Galatians 6:10 encourages us to do good and help people, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul is clear on justification by faith alone, yet the faith that justifies always works out in love. Now notice what is said in James 2:15-16, those who claim that they have faith, do not, in fact, obey Paul's exhortation to do good, especially to their brothers and sisters in the Lord and therefore they do not give any evidence that saving faith resides within them. Their entire "faith" is merely their assertion that they have faith with no evidence. On this basis, James says in verse 17 that if this is what you think faith is, i.e., merely the assertion of faith without the accompanying fruit, then that "faith" that you actually have is dead, false and fake. It is useless; it is not going to help you. It is not saving faith.

We keep our faith alive through acting out on our faith and bearing the fruit that comes from the fact that the Spirit is within us. We want to do good works so that our Father would be glorified (Matt. 5:16). We want to do the good works, which the God who saved us by grace and through faith, had prepared for us from eternity (Eph. 2:10).

Jas. 2:18-19 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will **show you my faith by my works**. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

Again, we continue with what we established before, the mere claim of possession of faith and the actual possession of faith. We are justified by the *possession* of faith, not by the mere *profession* of faith. Faith is something that is internal between oneself and God, it is not something invisible to others. But there is a way in which true faith can be seen, namely, by our deeds to the glory of God. God knows if we have true and saving faith because He knows everything and knows us better than ourselves, but people cannot know if we have true saving faith. The only way for them to have an idea if we have faith is to observe our walk of life and our deeds. That's the reason that James says that it is impossible to demonstrate your faith before people without your works, i.e., the fruits of your repentance and faith (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). The context of James' discussion is **not justification before God**, rather the discussion is the **demonstration of your justification and faith before people**. James is not concerned here with what dwells inside a believer, but his discussion concerns those who profess the faith but do not act like it. It is those people who cannot demonstrate their justification before men.

Jas. 2:20-26 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith apart from works is useless**? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that **faith was active along with his works**, and **faith was completed by his works**; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also **faith apart from works is dead**.

The discussion continues. The profession of the faith is useless without works by which you can demonstrate the genuineness of your faith. Now we get to the justification of Abraham. Paul has clearly argued in Romans 4 that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works ([see above](#)). But what is James speaking about here? We have already argued that the discussion of James concerns the **demonstration of our faith before people**. It is not about whether we have saving faith or not before God. God knows our hearts and knows if we have true faith, people don't the way they can see that is through our fruit (Luke 6:44). In v. 22, James argues that when Abraham offered Isaac his faith was completed by his works, i.e., the obedience to God even at this point. His faith was active and in fact, it was Hebrews says what inspired him to do what he did (Heb. 11:17-19). His faith was the driving force of his obedience. We have already argued as the Paul does himself, a better interpreter than me, that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works in Romans 4. But what James is saying here is that Abraham's possession of true saving faith was *demonstrated* by his obedience to God. In this, he demonstrated that he truly believed God in everything that he said and that he would have even given his son for God. He demonstrated before all that he truly *possessed* true faith and not merely *professed* it.

In v. 23 James says that the Scripture was fulfilled, it came practically to life. Abraham, by his obedience to God's command, demonstrated to all that he possessed true saving faith in God Almighty and did not withhold his beloved son. Then the statement in v. 24 we should be understood in the light of the previous discussion. Indeed, we are not justified *before men* merely by faith, but by works also. The second definition for δικαιοσύνη (*dikaioo*) given by Thayer's Greek Definitions (G1344) is "to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered."^[5] Abraham did show himself as righteous and justified before people by his obedience to God. He demonstrated that he possessed saving faith.

In the same way as Abraham, the example of Rahab when she received and helped the Israelite spies because of the LORD's fame which had reached Jericho. So, James concludes that just as the human body without the spirit lies in the dust and returns to dust, the same way faith without works is dead and useless. It is not saving and true faith. Saving and true faith always works itself out in love and good works (e.g. Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 2:11-12; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 13:20-21).

What we must understand from this discussion is the fact that we are saved by faith alone, but *saving faith is never alone*. It is always accompanied by the fruits which are the effects of faith. Again and again we read in the New Testament of doing good works without any contradiction to the doctrine of justification by faith alone (1John 3:8; Gal. 5:13; Jas. 2:14-15; 1Pet. 1:22; 2:12; 3:1, 16; 1Tim. 2:10-11; 5:9-10; 6:17-18; Titus 2:7-8, 13-14; 3:7-8, 14; Heb. 10:24). A faith that is a true and saving faith always works itself out in works (Titus 3:7-8).

§3 Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified

3. Christ, by his **obedience** and **death**, did **fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified**; and did, by the sacrifice of himself in the blood of his cross, **undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them**, make a proper, real, and **full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf**; **1** yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, **2** and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, **3** and both freely, **not for anything in them**, their justification is only of free grace, **4** that both the exact justice and rich grace of **God might be glorified in the justification of sinners**. **5**
 1. Rom. 5:8-10, 19; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 10:10, 14; Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12
 2. Rom. 8:32
 3. 2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 3:17; Eph. 5:2; Rom 3:26
 4. Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:6-7

By Obedience and Death Fully Discharged The Debt

[Active Obedience](#) refers to Christ's perfect obedience to the Law on our behalf and the [Passive Obedience](#) refers to the atonement on our behalf. The interested reader is referred to [chapter 8](#) for these two points.

Substitutionary Atonement

We have largely argued for the [Substitutionary Atonement](#) and [Definite Atonement](#) in chapter 8.

Not From Anything in Them

That could be seen from the fact that we have been elected by God from all eternity, that is the doctrine of [Unconditional Election](#), which I sought to make a case for in [chapter 3](#). But also from my exposition of [Romans 9:11 in chapter 10](#) on the [Effectual Call](#) where I try to show that God's election and calling were not based on anything in us. But also from many passages which distance our works from our salvation. I'll spare you and me the time on this point by simply pointing you to the following picture-

Salvation by Works?

not as a result of works
not according to our works
not because of works
of works? No.
justified apart from works
apart from works
not because of works
not on the basis of works
not justified by works
not on the basis of works

Ephesians 2:9
2nd Timothy 1:9
Romans 3:20
Romans 3:27
Romans 3:28
Romans 4:6
Romans 9:11
Romans 11:6
Galatians 2:16
Titus 2:5

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God Glorified In Justification

Rom 3:25-26 whom [Christ] God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to **show God's righteousness**, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It 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.

The purpose that God was put forward as a propitiation, i.e., a sacrifice that satisfies God's wrath and turns in into His favor, was to demonstrate, first of all, His righteousness. It was for His glory. God has chosen us and saved us for His own glory, not because we are good or we are sinless. It was to demonstrate His infinite glory. This could be seen in a classic OT text as Ezekiel 36 where God promises to save His people and promises the New Covenant-

Ezek 36:22-23 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is **not for your**

sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but **for the sake of my holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And **I will vindicate the holiness of my great name**, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you **I vindicate my holiness** before their eyes.

God wants to vindicate the holiness of His Name. His people have misrepresented Him and He will clear up the mess that His people have made of His holy name. The first goal for which the Lord will act is the glory of His name. For His Name, He will act, not because of man, in the first place. But He wants to vindicate the glory of His Name, which is His worth, His person and everything about Him. So likewise in Romans 3, the reason that Christ the Lord was put forward as a propitiation is to demonstrate God's righteousness. How so? God passed over the sins of the elect under the Old Testament without the sacrifice of Christ, but now that the sacrifice of Christ is made the Lord is demonstrated as the Just One who has already provided the sacrifice which turns away His wrath from the sins of the saints in the Old Testament. In a sense, Satan could have raised the charge against God that He was unjust for letting David into heaven while the sacrifice of Christ was not made. But once the sacrifice was made in whose light and on whose basis David's sins were blotted out, there was no longer any basis for an accusation from Satan. God's justice was demonstrated.

But how is God's justice then demonstrated in mercy and grace? Proverbs 17:15 says that "He who **justifies the wicked** and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an **abomination to the LORD.**" So, how can God justify the wicked, i.e., sinners and those who are not righteous, without Himself being an abomination?! This is the problem that Paul is actually dealing with in Romans 3:25-26. The solution of the problem is found in Christ being the propitiation. This means that God put forward Christ so that He would bring upon Him the punishment deserved for everyone who would believe. God did indeed justify the wicked, but His wrath against their sins was satisfied in the Substitute. He did not merely ignore their sins and justify them, that would have been an abomination. Rather, God punished their sins in the Substitute. God's wrath was satisfied against their sins. God was propitiated. It is in this way that God is just and the justifier. God will do justice against all those who do not repent by sending them to hell to pay for their sins. But He is also the justifier of the ungodly because He has poured out His wrath, which He had against the elect, on His Son, the perfect and spotless Substitute.

God's desire in all of this to show that salvation only belongs to Him. It only comes through His efforts, not anything in humans. So that no one would have a basis to boast. God desired to show His righteousness and He indeed does show His righteousness. He is righteous in punishing the guilty and He is righteous in saving the elect because a Substitute paid their debt. God planned for salvation to be in this way, i.e., that it would be in Christ and by grace through faith so that no man could say that he contributed anything to his salvation.

1Cor. 1:30-31 And **because of him you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, **boast in the Lord.**"

It is because of God that we are believers and we have been justified. The righteousness of Christ is credited to us and God sees us righteous and spotless in Christ. Why? So that we would boast only in the Lord. Justification is by grace and through faith so as to exclude boasting (Eph. 2:8-9). God is jealous for His glory and He will give it to no other.

§4 God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect

4. **God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect, 1** and **Christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification; 2** nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the **Holy Spirit doth in time due actually apply Christ unto them. 3**
1. Gal. 3:8; 1 Peter 1:2, 19-20; Rom. 8:30
 2. Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Rom. 4:25
 3. Col. 1:21-22; Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:4-7; Eph. 2:1-3

The Work of the Trinity

One of the best ways for me to understand the Trinity and see the Trinity in action is in the redemption of man. The Father plans the redemption, the Son accomplishes the redemption and the Holy Spirit applies the redemption. The work of all the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity may [be seen in](#) Ephesians 1. Verses 3-6 speak of the work of the Father, vv. 7-12 of the work of the Son and vv. 13-14 speak of the work of the Spirit.

It is **God the Father** who chose us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6). It is He who planned our salvation from all eternity (2Tim. 1:9). It is He who foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us and will glorify us (Rom. 8:29-30). It is the Father, says the Lord Jesus, who draws us to Him so that we are saved (John 6:44). It is the Father who sent the Son on a mission (John 3:16; 17:3-5). It is He who adopts us to become His children (Eph. 1:5; 1John 3:1; Rom. 8:14-17). It is the Father who planned the redemption of the elect. It is the Father who ordained the cross of Christ from all eternity (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Isa. 53:10) which is the means by which we are saved from His wrath.

It is **God the Son** who perfectly obeys the Father in accomplishing all that the Father had sent Him for (John 17:3-5). It is He who laid down His life for all His sheep (John 10:14-15). It is He who gives life to all whom the Father has given Him (John 17:2). It is He who prays for His own (John 17:9). It is He who intercedes for the elect (Rom. 8:34). It is He who mediates between the Father and sinful man (1Tim. 2:5). It is in and through Him that our redemption is found (Eph. 1:7). It is by His blood that we are cleansed and bought (1Cor. 6:19-20; 1Pet. 1:18-19). It is to Him that the Father draws us to (John 6:44). It is He who raises all those given to Him by the Father on the last day (John 6:37-40). It is He who keeps us in faith and in His hands (John 6:39; 10:27-28).

It is **God the Spirit** who applies to us the work accomplished by the Son. It is He who convicts us of our sin (John 16:8). It is He who regenerates us (Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5) and thus gives us the new life in Christ. It is He who applies the words of Christ to us. Without Him, they're empty words but He makes them living and regenerates us (John 6:63). It is His person that we receive the moment we believe (Acts 2:38). The Spirit dwells in us (Rom. 8:9; John 3:16; 14:17; 2Tim. 1:14). We are sealed by the Spirit the moment we believe (Eph. 1:13-14). It is He who guides us into all truth (John 16:13). We are led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18). The Spirit sanctifies us (1Thess. 2:13; 1Pet. 1:2). The Spirit makes us more like Christ and transforms us (2Cor. 3:18). The Spirit prays with us and for us (Rom 8:26-27). The Spirit bears witness to us that we redeemed and are children of the living God (Rom 8:16). The Spirit works fruits in us (Gal. 5:22-23). The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the body (1Cor. 12:4, 8-10; Heb. 2:4). The Spirit gives life to our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11). The Spirit reveals the deep things of God to us (2Cor. 2:10). It is in the Spirit that we are spiritually baptized into the body of Christ (1Cor. 12:13). It is through the Spirit that we have access to the Father (Eph 2:18). There are much more things which the Spirit does for those whom Christ has purchased. ^[13]

Here we see the perfect work of the Triune God in the redemption of the elect. Christ obtained all that was necessary for the redemption of the elect 2000 years ago on the cross, yet the benefits which Christ has obtained are not directly applied, rather in God's timing, those who were before the foundation of the world in the Son chosen, are regenerated by the Spirit and changed from children of wrath into children of the living God.

§5 God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified

5. God doth **continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified**, **1** and although they can **never fall from the state of justification**, **2** yet they may, by their sins, fall under **God's fatherly displeasure**; and in that condition they have not usually the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, **confess their sins**, beg pardon, and **renew their faith and repentance**. **3**
1. Matt. 6:12; 1 John 1:7-2:2; John 13:3-11
 2. Luke 22:32; John 10:28; Heb. 10:14
 3. Ps. 32:5; 51:7-12; Matt. 26:75; Luke 1:20

Continued Confession of Sin and Forgiveness

We still sin. Once we are justified it does not mean that sin is completely eradicated. The penalty of sin is indeed completely eradicated, but the sinful world around is not eradicated neither is the flesh completely defeated yet. Our desires are not completely God-centered as they should be. We fall short. See chapter 9 on [man's will in the State of Grace](#). We should daily pray for the forgiveness of the sins that we know about and others which we may not consciously know about. Our Lord taught us to pray "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). We seek God's forgiveness as we see also seek forgiveness from those whom we have wronged. The Lord promises us that we will receive forgiveness if we come to Him through Christ and confess our sins. Oh, what comfort! What joy! What grace to a wretch like me!

1John 1:8-9 If we say we have **no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness**.

If we think that we are able to live a sinless life and never sin again, we lie to ourselves and we are actually not in the Lord as we contradict His Word. But, when we sin we should confess our sins and not misuse grace (cf. Rom. 6:1-2). It is not like that God does not know that we sinned, but He desires that we come to Him, in all honesty, confessing our sins before His face and receiving forgiveness. It is not knowledge which God seeks, but confession and acknowledgment that we have rebelled against Him. John says that God is faithful and just in cleansing us from all sin and unrighteousness. He is faithful to His promise that we will be cleansed from sin and we will be glorified. But He is also just because the Substitute was punished in our place for all our sins, past, present and future. It is on this basis that God is just. Not because He ignores our sins, but because a propitiation—a satisfaction for those sins was provided in Jesus Christ for us (1John 2:1-2). Moreover, we know that we will be forgiven because it is Jesus Christ who intercedes for us and stands between us and His Father (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:15-16; 7:25). We don't stand before God on the basis of our righteousness, rather we are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Never Fall

The elect can never fall away from the state of grace. They may have times when they neglect God and the things of God, but they can never fall as God is the One who keeps them (e.g. 1John 3:9). Remember the story of Peter? Peter did for a little while fall and denied his Lord, but the Lord Jesus promised Him beforehand: "I have prayed for you that **your faith may not fail**. And **when you have turned again**, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). The Lord both foretold Peter's fall and his restoration. So likewise it may be with some children of God when they have seasons in their life which God for reasons

unknown to us has in His wisdom ordained for some of His children to walk through. That they can never fall is seen in many texts, particularly in the Gospel of John-

John 10:28-29 I give them eternal life, and **they will never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them** out of the Father's hand.

We already *have* eternal life (John 3:16, 36) and we cannot lose it. We have been born by the Spirit, we cannot be unborn. God will work in us His pleasure (Phil. 2:11-12), which is for the sheep of Christ not to perish. It is the Lord Jesus and the Father who hold us in Their hands. It is impossible for His sheep to be lost. This is the Father's will for the Son (John 6:39) and there is no way for the Son who always does what the Father pleases to fail in this task (John 8:29). See also [chapter 17 on The Perseverance of the Saints](#) where we will Lord willing make a case for that doctrine and also a [Scripture List supporting the Perseverance of the Saints](#).

Renew Their Faith and Repentance

See [chapter 15](#) paragraph 2.

§6 The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects

6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, **one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.** 1
 1. Gal. 3:9; Rom. 4:22-24

All the saints of the Old Testament were justified by grace through faith by virtue of the Covenant of Grace as it was in promise form. This we have argued in [chapter 7](#) under the Mosaic, but especially in chapter 8 about the [Retroactive Blood of Christ](#). See also above in paragraph 3 about Abraham's justification in [Paul](#) and in [James](#).

Oh, what amazing grace to know that our justification is not depended upon us. What comfort and what thankfulness to God! Thank You, Lord God King, for everything that You have done for such a miserable wretch like me. All glory to the Blessed Trinity!

And to the one who **does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly**, his faith is counted as **righteousness**, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom **God**

counts righteousness apart from works:

(Romans 4:5-6)

Footnotes

1. [^] Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's [Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith](#) which was apparently supplied by the [Westminster Confession of Faith 1646](#).
2. [^] Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). Chapter 36, p. 723.
3. [^] [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#).
4. [^] Taken from Matt Slick at CARM, [The Roman Catholic view on justification](#).
5. [a](#), [b](#), [c](#), [d](#) [Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Definitions](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). See reference for the Strong's number.
6. [^] William D. Mounce. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. (Zondervan, 2006). p. 146.
7. [^] *Ibid.*, p. 374.
8. [^] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version: The ESV Study Bible*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles. 2008). p. 2265.
9. [a](#), [b](#) [Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). See reference for the Strong's number.
10. [^] Jamieson, Fausset, Brown. [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible \(Abridged\)](#). Taken from the [TheWord Bible Software](#). *In loc.*
11. [^] [Explaining Regeneration Preceding Faith](#).
12. [^] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Chapter 34, p. 704, n. 10.
13. [^] [50 Things the Holy Spirit Does](#).