

Week 13 The Controversy over Justification by Faith

1. Overview of the Topic

- 1) "Justification by faith" is the core doctrine of Paul, which teaches that a person is declared righteous solely through faith, not by works.
 - 2) Throughout history, this doctrine has caused significant debates—between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformers, and even within Protestantism itself.
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2. Biblical Foundation

- 1) Romans 3:28– "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."
 - 2) Galatians 2:16– "A person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ..."
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3. Major Issues in the Debate

1) Conflict between Paul and James?

- (1) James 2:24– "A person is justified by works and not by faith alone."
- (2) Reconciliation:
Paul speaks of faith as the *basis* of justification, while James refers to works as the *fruit* of true faith.

2) Roman Catholicism vs. the Reformation

- (1) Roman Catholic view: Faith + works + sacraments = justification
- (2) Luther/Reformers: Justification by faith alone (Sola Fide)
- (3) Council of Trent (1547): Condemned the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone

3) The Traditional View vs. the New Perspective on Paul

- (1) Traditional View (Luther/Calvin):
Justification is a legal declaration by God
- (2) New Perspective (E.P. Sanders, James Dunn, N.T. Wright):

Justification refers to covenantal inclusion and community identity, focusing on "covenant faithfulness"

(3) Criticism:

This view tends to downplay individual guilt, sin, and the universal need for salvation

4. Orthodox Pauline Understanding

1) Justification is forensic/legal:

The sinner is declared righteous through faith in the merit of Jesus Christ

2) Distinguished from Sanctification:

Justification is once-for-all, while sanctification is progressive

3) Faith involves personal trust, not just intellectual assent

5. Contemporary Application

1) Restoring the essence of the Gospel:

Be alert to modern theological trends that obscure "faith alone"

2) Christian life and ethics:

True faith inevitably results in good works

6. Discussion Topics

1) Does James' statement "justified by works" contradict justification by faith?

2) Is the New Perspective on Paul a fresh insight or a distortion of Pauline theology?

3) How is justification by faith taught in today's church?

7. Conclusion

1) The doctrine of justification by faith is the heart of the Gospel and the engine of the Reformation.

2) Rightly understanding and preserving this truth is vital for the theological and spiritual health of the church today.