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Justification by Faith Alone

August 22, 2021



For The King - Rocky Ramsey

Today Bryce and I walk through another hard to understand text that can cause us to think, what does that text mean? Listen as we walk through how to properly understand this text that has been distorted all throughout church history, especially in the Catholic Church. Thank for listening!

Key Texts: James 2:14-26, Romans 4:2-8, Galatians 2:15-21; 3:1-14, Ephesians 2:1-10, Philippians 3:4-11

My guest joining me this week on the Sunday series is my brother Bryce. Bryce is getting his undergraduate degree in philosophy and hopes to get his MDiv. from a seminary after he completes his undergrad. He hopes to be a pastor shepherding Gods people one day.

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Transcript

(music) Father Abraham had many sons, and many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord.

That's not how it goes. What's he say? So let's all sing along. Right foot, left foot.

Really? Right hand, left hand, father Abraham. We didn't grow up Christian, so I didn't know. Mom still taught me that.

Did she? Huh. She must have known that you know memories of mom. She might have thought you were a reprobate Jew, and she didn't want to teach you.

With my nose? Yeah. She said, "Ah, this one came out Jewish." No. I don't have a Jewish

nose.

No, you don't. But you have a Jewish greed, though. Jewish greed? The love of money is the root of evil.

All kinds of evil. I know. I know.

I've read the verse. Don't rebuke me in front of the children. Oh yeah.

Go ahead and close those curtains. We're in the inner sanctum of the Ramsey Monastery right now. Deep in prayer and God's Word.

And now we're filming a podcast. Okay. And this podcast is the For the King podcast.

Oh, I didn't read my intro words. No. Basically, Pilate says, "And are you king of the Jews?" Now we know your stance on solo scripture.

Mark 15.2, "And are you king of the Jews?" And Jesus says, "You have said so." That verse is a big part of this podcast. The name of the podcast For the King. Thanks for tuning in.

All of you guys listening, whether you're in a car, working out, cooking some food, doing some laundry, wherever you're tuning in, whatever your walk of life, welcome, appreciate you. We hope this is encouraging and helpful. So we're actually, we're about to do a new series here soon about biblical masculinity.

We will get into that in the next few weeks. I'm going to have a guest on that's going to talk us through some of these concepts about biblical masculinity. But today we want to do another installment of our like little mini series that we are still ongoing.

We called it, "What does that text mean?" Pretty straightforward. It's not very creative. We just go through texts in the Bible that have been misconstrued, whether that be in other denominations misconstruing it, or cults, or even just evangelical reform people misconstruing verses.

It doesn't have to be necessarily a heretical interpretation, but we want to get the correct hermeneutic and interpretation out of these texts. So that's what Bryce and I are doing here. So I'm joined with my brother Bryce again, same guy.

It's always on these Sunday ones. And this week we'll be doing a verse in James that specifically the Catholics have used in the past to put in their catechism, in their doctrine, statement of faith sort of stuff that were justified by faith and works, which is kind of the whole point of the Reformation. A big part is by faith alone, a sola fide, by faith alone.

That was one of the solas of the Reformation. So this is a really important concept and

we're just going to walk through. Okay, that was weird.

We're going to walk through this verse for us. So today we'll be in James chapter two and we're going to do 14. Let's go to the part where it talks about Abraham.

So I guess 24. What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works, can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to him, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the needs, the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 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. You believe that God is one. You do well.

Even the demons believe and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless. Was not Abraham my father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works 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.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Okay so there the key verses we're going to contend with, I mean he makes a big long argument here but the key verses would be 22. You see that faith? No, no, no, sorry.

Oh sorry, 21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar. So that's talking about justification by works and then verse 24 would be the other key verse.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone and that one even throws in not by faith alone. Literally says that verbatim. So let's try and understand this text because the Catholics would look at a plethora of other verses in the Bible and then come here and create an entire doctrine of justification just based off of this little these couple of verses.

So let's try to find out what James is really saying here and kind of what the whole a big part of the Reformation was talking about. So first we're going to go to, anything to add? That's the setup. That's the setup.

Yeah. We're all you put ourselves on this one. Yeah.

So let's go to Romans chapter four and a lot of these justification by faith like these faith alone verses how you're justified before God usually include Abraham and we'll see that as a type of the one that is justified. And this specifically right here is the heart of the

gospel and this is not just a Reformation thing. You know this isn't just Martin Luther and Calvin and Zwingli purporting justification by faith alone against the Catholic Church.

This is what all others, well not that necessarily but this is what all other systems believe in. They believe that there is a works righteousness that you receive merit by God based upon your performance. So this is the heart of the gospel right here.

Yeah. So that definitely is very serious and Rocky said at the beginning that there's different what do these texts mean that we do that are not salvific. This one is salvific.

This one actually is salvific. Yeah. This is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls as some have put it.

So this is very important. We need to make sure we understand this rightly and come to the scripture with humility and that we take pride only in God alone and we boast only in him. Yes.

Amen. Amen brother Bryce. Okay.

Cool. So Romans. Yep.

Let's start Romans 4. Yep. So we're just going to go through the whole council of God that seems to pertain to this doctrine of justification specifically by faith alone particularly with several Pauline epistles. But again remember that all these words are inspired by God even the ones we read in James.

Right. So the scriptures cannot be broken. The scriptures do not contradict and we use scripture to interpret scripture.

So as we do read through this keep that in mind. We're interpreting James's words and Paul's words by each other. Okay.

So this is what Paul says in Romans chapter 4 verses 2 through I'll just read through 8. For if Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Now to the one who works his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly. His excuse me his faith is counted as righteousness. Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteous apart from works.

When he said in the psalm blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. So we get right here from Paul.

He is immediately putting an antithesis between works based justification and faith based justification. And we'll get into this a little later on when we go back to James and figure out how to understand that interpretive. But Paul is definitely making the point here it's apart from works.

It's not based upon workings of the law but rather Abraham believed God and upon that belief it was counted to him as righteousness. And this is a quotation from back in Genesis I believe it's chapter 16 when God called Abraham out of the land of Ur and then it goes into him making the promises of the nations that will spring forth from him. And then it says there in Genesis and Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

So this is talking about an event before the one that's brought up in James. So Genesis chapter I believe it's 16 I should have looked it up before but in Genesis chapter 16 this he's talking about chapter 15. Yeah but he's talking about an event that's prior to 15 six 15 six awesome.

So it's prior to Abraham offering up his son Isaac and being quote unquote justified in the sense of that James is bringing up. Yeah so that's very important to know. So Paul seems to believe here that justification is by faith alone.

It's apart from the workings of the law. It's simply by the faith exactly in God and then his promises. Yeah and I think it's I don't know if it's later on in Romans or where it's at in scripture but I love his point in verse four.

Now if the one who works his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due can we through our works make God indebted to us right. If we're the worker and we're doing certain works that warrant something God is obligated to pay it out to us but the only thing the only dues that are the only dues we've worked for is death. Yeah the wages of center death.

Our wages are death. We've never done a good work apart from Christ. So I just think that's a great point.

If it's really possible to be saved by works which is what every other religion would report including Catholicism you're saved by works. That means you as a human can make God indebted to you. I mean how crazy is that.

Yeah it is a crazy idea saved by works. Okay good. Yeah let's move on.

Let's now go to Galatians at the end of chapter two. Christ is going to read something for us. So Galatians chapter two.

I'll start in verse 15 read a little bit on and then go into chapter three. It says this so chapter two verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile centers yet we

know that a person is not justified by works of the law.

But through faith in Jesus Christ so that 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. So again you see an utter antithesis between faith and works and when you get into chapter three Paul ends up saying in chapter three verse two let me ask you only this did you receive the spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith. Are you so foolish having begun by the spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh.

And then in verse six he quotes again from Genesis 16 5 is that what you said it was. 16 5 is 15 6 sorry 15 6. Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. And then in verse 8 in the scripture for seeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying so again he preached Abraham he preached the gospel to Abraham saying and you shall all the nations be blessed.

So this is pagan too. Right. He wasn't even a Jew.

So this is finding well by faith he was a Jew. Besides the point whatever. What's a different discussion.

He came out of her. He was a child being. Well the Bible says it does say in Exodus that he was a Hebrew.

Abraham the Hebrew is like that. So I mean whatever. OK.

Well that's just a line. Forget it. Forget it.

Just forget it. So what was I saying. Sorry.

No I brought it up. Well yes. Yeah.

You should be saying so. Right. You reminded me of an argument that was happening with the dispensational.

OK. And that's what he said in order to disprove my point. Oh wow.

But then I showed him the version. Exodus said that hey I must be ignorant on this point. Forget it.

Just forget it. So again we see the other antithesis between faith and works. Right.

So we have to interpret scripture in light of scripture. If you want to affirm James points to the nth degree that this is something that this justification is the same justification that Paul is talking about then you're going to end up having the scriptures contradict themselves because Paul is making a crystal clear point here that it's not by works of the

law but it's through faith that someone is counted as righteousness and then he says the same thing of Abraham and he believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Yeah.

100 percent of your two Ephesians though. I don't think there's really anything else there. Yeah again we just this is another text where Abraham is brought up.

I guess that's maybe the main point among the other things that were already said. Okay so Ephesians chapter 2. This is a very famous set of verses but I'm just going to start in. I'll just read one through 10 and you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now in that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of our body and the mind and we're by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised up raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus so this is he just laid out the gospel and then once he say sorry my throat is really scratchy go ahead and address that so that doesn't happen again um so he just literally just laid out the gospel for us and then this is what he says about the nature of how you are receiving this grace uh verse eight in chapter two in Ephesians for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not of your own doing it is the gift of God not a result of works so that no one may boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before him that we should walk in them and that last part 10 that verse 10 that these good works he's prepared for us this is going to come into full circle in James and the point James is getting across about the nature of our justification um but we see here it is not a result of works so that no one may boast verse nine the Catholics like to boast in their works and their penance and their indulgences and all these crazy sacraments they've come up with they're just conjured up in their minds you know um that's a source of boasting for them that kind of um religiosity i guess right the pharisaical kind of like um dotted lines you know because they've come halfway to God right yeah so they they they have grounds for boasting but Paul's point like we were already writing in Romans is Abraham has no grounds for boasting boasting yeah yeah exactly the righteousness that he has come comes to faith yeah so the way by which you receive grace from God is by faith in Christ yeah yeah and repentance yeah and but that faith entails repentance right that's different um i know i'm just messing so i think i have proved upon my point there that's basically the main thrust and uh one last text before we return back to James and kind of finish off this episode um Philippians chapter three and let's just do uh i'll go from four to nine um though i myself this is just Paul again a Paulian epistle though i myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also if anyone else

thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh i have more circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrews as to the law of Pharisee as to as to zeal a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law blameless but what uh but whatever gain i had i counted as loss all of his works he counted as a loss um for the sake of Christ indeed i count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my lord for his sake i have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that i may gain Christ 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 and then he finishes off at verse 10 that i may know him in the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible i may attain the resurrection from the dead um so how is he attaining the resurrection from the dead how is he attaining the knowledge of Christ how is he gaining Christ and losing all of the things by a righteous a foreign righteousness that's not his own through faith um that depends on faith that's kind of the crux of it in verse nine the righteousness from God and how is he getting that righteousness from all of his quote unquote righteous deeds as a Pharisee as a Hebrew of Hebrews and all these things he lays out he says look i followed the law to a T i did everything i was supposed to do but at the end of the day God was never indebted to me i had a foreign righteousness given to me by Christ and that's why he counts it rubbish he looks at it after he sees Jesus and how perfect Jesus is and he says wait a second all my stuff i had was rubbish and apparently in uh greek that's like a cuss word really yeah like apparently rubbish is like whatever that word was it's like it's like us saying like a bunch of you know yeah excrement covered in whipped cream that's actually what i thought of what i said brindle yeah so um paul said this a bunch of times and then uh oh here we go jesus's brother james okay he's jesus's brother thinks he owns the place paul some random Pharisee spout in his theology james comes in sets him right he was wrong i'm just kidding that's false what we've been doing this whole podcast is trying to show um what has been stated in the scriptures all the way back it literally says it in genesis chapter 15 verse six that abraham believed and it was counted him his righteousness grace was all in the old testament they were never ever justified by their works we already talked about that in the propitiation and atonement episode you guys go check that out there's more kind of info on this but none of those sacrifices ever propitiated god's wrath that was on their sin they didn't have any righteousness from that stuff um abraham was justified by his faith alone faith alone um and then let's get into the point now of why james speaks this way and brings up abraham's exercising of his faith manifesting and works when isaac is on the altar yeah so let's get into that and i think that's the that's the crux so when it comes to interpreting this passage is that so here's the way that reform theologians seem to understand this and it's that there there's two different words happening here there's two different usages and meanings of the word justification that james is using and the word justification that paul is using it would be like the same way when we say that there is a um you know my shirt is blue and you would say it's like i'm very blue today in terms

of your mood right you use the word the word in a different way it would be like when the bible uses the word cosmos meaning world at an instance meaning um the entire known world or world meaning literally the whole creation yeah um so it would just be that basic understanding that we have two different usages of the word occurring and what james is talking about is the confirmation of the belief that abraham had in god is confirmed by the testing of his faith and this is the important piece because back in chapter one that's the context of paul or sorry of james talking to these brothers in christ and the brothers of the dispersion he's talking about the testing of their faith and how their faith is being proven true because of the gifting of god and his grace and letting them and allowing them to be tested through fire to be proven yeah that their faith is true and that's the whole point of this passage that they are not people who just hear the word there are people who do it yep and that's the backdrop of chapter two when he goes into this because when he's talking about can that faith save him right and he's talking about the difference that uh the distinction between an alive faith and a dead faith yep you know he had on that well no that was that was all good um and the lead up when you look at the argumentation um the testing of your faith asking for wisdom asking for a faith that actually looks like something in the world he you know and then he talks about like don't be like a man who goes and looks in the mirror and then walks away and forgets what he looks like that's not actual true knowledge of what you look like and he's using that analogy for faith that's not real faith if you go and look in the mirror and walk away and don't do what faith would require of you which is to love others if you believe in god you have faith in god it should produce good works um and then he talks about their sin of partiality they're not loving other people and that's why he gets into these scenarios he brings up about there's a poor needy person you say go be well you know um good luck and you don't actually do anything to help them that is not an exercising of a faith that's real that justifies you and one other thing real quick this is why in the middle of this whole argument he says in verse 19 you believe that god is one whoever he's talking to he's like hey you believe in god and he says uh you do well kind of sarcastically i'm imagining um satirical yeah satirical even the demons believe and shudder so um he's basically saying uh the faith that justifies you is going to have good works accompanied with it because just believing that god exists a general faith that doesn't save people just like the demons aren't saved because they know god exists they believe in him they know he's real but the demons aren't out there doing good work satan doesn't do good works just believing in god and not producing good works that is like i evident in a true faith that's not a faith that justifies you so you're not and that's why he concludes basically saying you're not justified by faith alone the this kind of this other kind of faith he when he says faith alone he's not saying you're not justified by abraham's kind of faith alone he's saying you're not justified by this like um what was the word i was gonna use like a mirage of a faith this fake faith alone you're justified by works that are coming out of a real faith and not not the actual works but the faith that is accompanied by works it's kind of his point and that's why the and that's why it's important to understand that this word the usage of the word justification is is

he's using it different than paul they're not talking about the same thing they're not talking about you being counted righteous before god because he's not bringing that up he's not bringing up the righteousness that's counted to you based upon your workings and that's why he that's why he doesn't go to the passage and um um 15 6 exactly well he goes there but that's why he's not grounding it he he's grounding what he's talking about and abraham offering up his son yeah isaac and that's the point his faith was proven true because god justified his faith is justified like do you have any justification to believe that you have true faith well i don't know let's look at the person's fruit and think about that's the point it and you have the same greek word that's being used when it says wisdom is justified by her children yeah jesus is the wisdom of god so is jesus now all of a sudden justified what what it's getting at is wisdom is proven true because of what it's produced in her children yeah that's what that passage is getting in so you have different usages of the word justification occurring yeah that you're not counted righteous based upon um this you know dead faith which would have a more of alliance upon works but you're justified by an alive faith well and when he's talking about like all of this like these external things the works that you actually get to see the the genesis 15 6 is kind of like an in god's insight through his revelation into abraham's heart in that moment but when when james was talking about like was his faith justified and it wasn't justified until it produced works basically saying it was like a confirmation that he actually had true faith for the reader right we're just given something special in genesis 15 6 because we we you wouldn't have known abraham's heart you didn't know when he believed god apart from that being revealed to us god knows when somebody truly comes to believe in a moment right um but for the story's sake and for us believers jesus says you'll know a tree by its fruit right um and for our sake we to actually know if somebody is justified before god you know you won't only be able to judge that by someone's works and that's what james is saying he's saying i see none of this yeah and when he does bring up the passage from genesis 15 6 i think once you read that it makes sense with what he's talking about and in james chapter 2 verse 22 he says you see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works 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 and then he says you see that a person is not just my for work is not is sorry it's justified by faith alone i know um but you see what's happening there you see that faith was active along with works and faith was completed by his works yeah he's talking about a confirmation he's talking about the talios the end the end of what justification by faith alone entails and it is like rocky already said one that works yeah it's one that is active it's one that's alive works was active with faith yeah god produced in us a new creation we are new creatures in christ jesus exactly because of regeneration yeah um so that's the whole point right there when you look at that in context you see that faith was active active along with works and faith was completed by his works and now the scripture is fulfilled and then what does he go back to he goes back to genesis 15 6 so see the relation here genesis 15 6 abraham believed god and it was counted him as righteousness and now genesis 22 it's

fulfilled you see the justification of that in what abraham did by offering up his son isaac as a sacrifice it was confirmed it was uh the stamp of the approval of justification of what god had already done in abraham's life back in chapter 15 of genesis yeah and that's the point that james is making here and that's crystal clear yeah that is crystal clear i don't see how you get around that that is so obvious and even his analogy at the end in verse 26 as we wrap this up for as the body apart from the spirit is dead so also faith apart from works is dead so he's there there are two different faiths at play in this passage one faith that produces works one faith that produces no works and that faith is dead and that helps us understand this text there's two different faiths we talked about and there's two different ways in which justification is being portrayed to us here remember those two things for this text remember what the rest of the bible says the bible never contradicts itself there's a way to understand it and our translation is not going to get the nuance of the justification being used here because it's in english and you know we don't have sometimes words that differentiate the way different things are you know maybe a more helpful english word here would be confirmation the fulfillment word is actually helpful here when it says it was fulfilled but i mean it literally does mean justified in the sense of like evidence to be justified by evidence that kind of thing it is the same greek word sure yeah exactly but it's like different nuance yeah same greek word but we might have another word that might help us understand it's not used because it's a literal translation or whatever because the esv is more literal um so yeah that that kind of thing so just like what you said with the analogy with blue versus i'm feeling blue versus that is blue same word different kind of meaning i guess um so okay i think that's good okay i'll text one more thing on the end is it um is it helpful it's the application just go ahead i think a lot of times as i mean i hesitate to even say protestant because most people aren't even really protestant anymore but i think sometimes we overreact to a passage like this and try to articulate it in a manner that heralds justification by faith alone at the exclusion of paul's indictment here or sorry james's indictment against the church and it's that you need to have an alive faith you need to have your if you have believed god and it has been counted to you as righteousness look at your fruit you will be tested and you need to make sure that your testing produces a sound fruitful faith so one that's alive so all of us even rocky and i we both need to examine ourselves every day and we need to make sure whether we're in the faith or not and that doesn't mean you're justified by faith or sorry that doesn't mean you're justified by works but that just means you're actually checking the tree you're seeing that there's a if there's life you got to pick the apples and you got to eat them yep there is great application okay thanks so much for listening guys to the for the king podcast leave a rating and review on um apple podcast if you get a chance i would really appreciate that um i hope that was encouraging something you guys can walk away with and help understand the bible better it is the word of god and something that we must understand if we want to know who god is and what we ought to do as his people um and what the whole point of everything is the talos as price put it eloquently earlier um go check out the website for the king podcast.com if you have any uh want to interact

with any of this content or send us a message send bryce a message whatever you can reach me up for the king podcast at gmail.com um you can support the podcast financially if you would film climb pray for us that the gospel go to the ends of the earth that god would use bryce and i and use the podcast for his glory um i think that's it um we're again we'll be starting a biblical masculinity series here soon that's something bryce and i are really passionate about recently and we would love to share some of these things from god's word that we've learned about biblical masculinity um okay let's wrap it up now to the king of the ages immortal invisible the only god be honor and glory forever and ever amen soli deo gloria for king jesus