

How Are We Saved? The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone

The Christian church today is in danger of returning to the Dark Ages. The seeker movement has us turning from our Bibles. The ecumenical movement urges Christians to use worldly means to accomplish temporal (not eternal) ends. And the current theological movements look through the lens of philosophy rather than Scripture. The departure from *sola scriptura* has led to the departure from *sola fide*. John MacArthur

I. The Beginning

Romans 1:17

Historic evangelicalism has always treated justification by faith alone as a central biblical distinctive—the most important doctrine to get right.

Christianity—divine accomplishment; emphasis on the cross of Christ

All other religions—human achievement

sola fide v. a damning system of works-righteousness (Romans 4:4-5)

II. Declared Righteous: What Changes?

A. The Meaning of justification

Justification—a forensic (legal) term, meaning _____

Describes what God *declares* about a believer; not what God *does to change* a believer

Justification is more than a simple pardon (Romans 4:22-25).

Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9

B. The Ground of Justification

Romans 3:22—

C. The Instrument of Justification

Romans 3:26—

As a result of our justification:

- We are adopted as sons & daughters (Romans 8:15)
- We are fellow-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17)
- We are united with Christ so that we become one with Him (1 Cor. 6:17)
- We are henceforth “in Christ” (Galatians 3:27) and He in us (Colossians 1:27)

III. How Justification & Sanctification Differ

1. Justification *imputes* Christ’s righteousness (Romans 4:11b)
Sanctification *imparts* righteousness (Romans 6:1-7; 8:11-14)
2. Justification takes place *outside* the sinner & changes their *standing* (Romans 5:1,2)
Sanctification is *internal*; changes the believer’s *state*
3. Justification is a *once for all* event
Sanctification is *ongoing*

IV. Jesus on Justification by Faith Alone

Unlike Paul, Jesus never gave a formal exposition of the doctrine of *sola fide*. This doctrine, however, permeates all of Jesus’ gospel preaching & teaching.

John 5:24

Luke 23:43

The healings of Jesus (Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 8:48; 17:19; 18:42): “Your *faith* has made you well”.

The occasion where Jesus declared someone “justified”—
Luke 18:9-14

The doctrine of justification by faith is like Atlas: it bears a world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of saving grace.

J.I. Packer