

## **Faith Only Gospel - The Bible Teaches the Protestant Doctrine that Good Works have nothing to do with salvation and thus refutes the claims of the Catholic Church**

Recommended Book, By Faith Alone, RC Sproul, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1995

### THE CATHOLIC VIEW DENIED

The Catholic Church holds that the sinner gets rid of sin by repenting and trusting in God and that makes him justified though he has done no good works. But after that he must do good works with God's help to remain right with God and to become more right with God and deserve salvation more. The only alternative to this view if you want to believe in salvation by grace, a belief that that is commanded by the Bible, is that once you are justified you are justified forever even when you sin.

Paul was clear in his letters that if God says the sinner is righteous the sinner cannot be charged with wrongdoing. But he is talking from God's perspective and is clear that from ours Christians do wrong. He charges himself and Christians with sin so it does not mean we are to think of a justified person as perfect or a saint.

In Romans 11:32 we read that God consigned everybody whoever existed to disobedience only that he might have mercy on all.

In Romans 11:33 we read that God's ways are strange meaning that God letting people sin is odd in our eyes. So God can stop sin but won't so he ordains sin. It would not be strange if he could do nothing about it. This is a statement of predestination or unconditional election because if God causes our merits and our faith and God chooses the believers then God's choosing us had nothing to do with our efforts and merits.

Romans 11:34 repeats that nobody can understand God's thinking.

Romans 11:35 says that nobody can give God anything so that God owes him something back. The context is about how strange it is to us that God saves some and ruins or damns. It would not be strange if the damned freely chose to be damned without being predestined by God. So predestination is a fact. The verse means that nobody can deserve salvation or deserve the chance to be saved and the saved then are saved randomly by God. Paul said good works deserve rewards so he meant you cannot deserve salvation.

Romans 11:36 for from him and through him and for him are all things.

This says that God has made all things and all things come from him. From the verse before we see what it has to do with. They are saying that we cannot deserve salvation from him for all we are doing is giving him back what he gave to us. That must be what it is saying for why else would he be drawing attention to creation at this point? If you help a sick person it is God that enables you to do it by holding you and your abilities in existence. No work that we do deserves anything from God.

Paul rejects the Catholic teaching that when God forgives you and declares you clean and free from sin and fit for Heaven it is a gift but after that you have to deserve Heaven by doing good works with the help of God's grace. He denies that you are justified by your good works for that means God owes you something for doing good. If Paul agreed with the Catholic teaching he would have written that nobody can give God anything so that God owes him something back when that person is not doing this work with the help of grace.

Perhaps good works are the fruit of a free salvation and so are gifts from God as well and don't deserve a reward though they get one? But they are still your works and you don't have to perform them but do them freely.

Note that Paul is speaking in the context of saved people. Therefore he is saying that even those who have been and are justified by faith cannot do any good work that contributes to their salvation by making them deserve it. The Catholic doctrine is wrong.

Romans 11:36 he says that the reason God can owe nobody anything is because God makes all things. The Catholic Church says on the contrary that we are justified by our good works only when God helps us do them by grace. That is saying God owes you salvation for doing these works that he helps you to do. But if all things belong to God as Paul says and that is

why he owes us nothing then God helps you to do make him owe less than nothing to you! The Catholic doctrine is blasphemous and is trying to manipulate God by getting from him what he doesn't owe. It shows that pride is the root of Catholic spirituality not holiness.

## FAITH ONLY DENIED?

One big boost to the anti-Jesus industry in the Catholic Church is her too easily seen through claim that the Protestant doctrine of salvation is contradicted by scripture. Out of pride the Church wants to believe it has to contribute something to salvation. The Bible says that good works are essential to salvation in the sense that the saved person will do them not in the sense that they preserve one's salvation or earn it. This is what James 2 meant by saying that justification was by faith and good works.

Jesus told the rich young man to keep the commandments of God to have eternal life (Mark 10). This does not contradict Paul for Jesus may have meant, "Unless you get saved once for you won't be able to please God and really keep his commandments. Keep them." He was indirectly commanding him to accept salvation by faith alone. Jesus said elsewhere that nobody can be saved unless God helps. He said with man it is not possible but only possible with God.

Other texts are twisted to make them seem to support the Catholic doctrine. One is where Paul (Philippians 2:12) asks us to work out our salvation. This is supposed to say that we have to work for our salvation. But the word salvation is used in the Bible to mean things other than gaining eternal salvation at times. Work out your marriage means live as a married person not to earn your marriage. Work out your salvation means act like a saved person. Some translations give us something like work to earn your salvation which if right is certainly proof that this verse does not mean eternal salvation which Paul considered to be entirely gratuitous.

Paul wrote that there is faith, hope and charity and that the greatest of these is charity (1 Corinthians 13). Charity is greater than faith in the sense that it persuades a person to make a saving act of faith in Christ. Faith is an act of love. Paul's saying does not refute solifidianism for it is still faith that justifies.

Paul said he was nothing if he had faith alone and no charity. Catholics say he would have been something if faith alone would do. Maybe he meant he would be no good not that he would have been un-saved if he did not do good works. He may have meant that if he had no charity then he would not have really been saved at all for the saved always do good works.

Paul said that all have to be punished for their deeds, "what they have done in the body", at the judgment seat of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:10). Catholics hold that this refutes salvation by faith alone because if we are saved by faith only then God cannot punish us after death. Not necessarily for even Calvinists believe God punishes the saved in this life so why not the next. But as Calvinists reject Purgatory (the Catholic idea that there is a place of punishment and purification for the saved after death before they can go to Heaven) the answer for them is that since Paul believed the saved do not pay for their bad deeds after death for salvation wipes the slate he meant by what they have done in the body was that they chose salvation and that the wicked failed to do this. They are punished for not choosing salvation and the sins of the unsaved are punished not because they are sins but because they were done instead of choosing salvation. There is a difference a huge difference.

Catholics suppose that when Paul declared that he had to do good works to avoid being rejected as worthless (1 Corinthians 9:27) and that a bishop who lets his family go off the straight and narrow is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8) that this proves that a saved Christian can lose salvation. But Paul meant he would be worthless not in the sense that he would not get salvation but in the sense that he would be of no use to God or other people. The bishop can be worse than an infidel and still be going to Heaven.

Catholics say that when Paul said that we must not sin in the belief that we will get more grace if we do (Romans 6:1) that this import was that salvation depends on faith and good works and not solely on faith. Paul is not denying that sin makes God give you more grace and justification but denying that you should sin to get grace. Sin to sin but not to get grace. Luther condemned sin though he told his people to commit it meaning that they had to sin anyway. Catholics could say the same for they believe sin is inevitable. They teach that the more you sin the more grace you will get when you repent. The grace is meant to undo the power of sin so it is sinful and illogical to sin to get it. Everybody commits a certain amount of sin and Paul is saying that extra sins that should not be expected should not be committed. He is not saying that the more you sin the less grace you will get but that you should not abuse God's generosity by abusing it by sinning. There is no hint in this that he means that salvation by faith alone is incorrect. In fact, if he thought that it was then how could people possibly think they get more grace the more they sin for the fact that they sin shows they are resisting grace? If the grace he means is just the grace of imputation, you being considered good because Christ's account is credited to you, and not the other grace that changes you from inside into a holy person, people would say the more sin the better for then the more chance God gets of being generous. So what Paul said was the extent of imputed grace does depend on how much sin you commit but that must not be used as an excuse for sinning. When he meant imputed grace this denies the Catholic doctrine

that you have to be really righteous not just declared righteous as in a legal fiction.

Peter called on Christians to make sure their election, their being saved, by doing good works (2 Peter 1:10,11). This does not mean make sure you get to Heaven but make sure you are going to Heaven by doing good works for the saved will do good works – good works prove that one has been saved.

Salvation is a free gift but good works earn rewards so let nobody argue that since the Bible promises rewards for good works that it denies salvation by faith alone.

It is understandable that many see that it is very easy to repent and believe in Jesus so it makes salvation too easy while the Bible says that salvation is going through a narrow gate and is unpopular. The narrow gate stuff implies that you have to believe certain things and that most people will work against the truth being known. Objectively speaking, there is no reason why anybody would refuse salvation when it is that simple. We all want to do some good works so the person could simply purify these works when he is doing them anyway and offer them to God. No thief or homosexual or heretic or whatever would object to getting saved for they could still sin afterwards.

## JAMES 2

This epistle says we are justified by good works not just by faith alone. Yet it quotes with approval and to support that declaration. a verse that says that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. That is a verse teaching salvation by faith only. James said that faith needs to be lived out by good works and works of faith to be any good. By works he means living out the faith and making it real. It is about having real faith. It is not about doing good works to earn God's approval. You are justified by works in the sense that your works are your faith. Far from being a denial of salvation by faith only, James is affirming the doctrine.

## CONCLUSION

The Bible denies that good works have anything to do with obtaining salvation. Thus it condemns the Roman Catholic Church for teaching that sacraments and good works are necessary for salvation. That the Bible says nothing to deny that salvation or justification is by faith alone proves that the Catholic Church is opposed to God because it won't take that as proof that the doctrine must be true. The Bible would say if it didn't want to teach that doctrine. The Bible never asks us to take God's gift of eternal life and pay back the gift by obeying him so it has no vision of good works having anything to do with salvation except to express gratitude.

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#### BIBLE TRANSLATION USED

The Amplified Bible