

## Robert Sungenis Debates Jason Engwer on: The Doctrine of Justification

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**Jason Engwer:** James 2:14-26 - As James explains in 2:8-12, people would have to live perfectly, obeying all of God's laws (James 2:10), in order to be saved through works. Instead of trusting in a law of works, we have to trust in a law of liberty (James 2:12). Does James go on to contradict himself later in the chapter? No, he doesn't. He's addressing the evidence of saving faith (James 2:14)

**R. Sungenis:** No. James doesn't mention anything about "saving" faith. "Saving faith" is a Protestant invention. James says "faith," that is, "Can THE faith save him...by itself..." (See Not By Faith Alone, pages 137-138). As Paul said in 1 Cor 13, a man can have faith strong enough to move mountains, but if he has not love (works) he is nothing (he will not be saved)

**Jason Engwer:** and justification before men (James 2:18).

**R. Sungenis:** No. James mentions nothing about justification before "men." The example James uses (Abraham's offering of his son Isaac) is an act performed totally for God (See Not By Faith Alone, pages 124-125). Abraham's servants were told to wait behind while Abraham took Isaac up to the mountain to sacrifice him to God. Moreover, it was God alone who said through the angel, "Now I know that you fear me," showing that God himself was waiting for Abraham's response of fear.

**Jason Engwer:** Faith without works is dead in the sense that true faith results in works.

**R. Sungenis:** No. This is another Protestant invention, that is, the idea that once the button of faith is pushed the conveyor belt of works will automatically start running. Faith does not inevitably produce good works. Faith only gives one a better disposition to do works. The whole book of James addresses the issue of Christians who have faith but are not producing the works they should. Read especially James 3-4, not to mention their despising of the poor man in both 2:1-5 and 2:15-16 after it is said that they have faith in James 2:1. (See Not By Faith Alone, pages 139-144; 146).

**Jason Engwer:** James can't be saying that faith without works is dead in the sense that people aren't saved until after working.

**R. Sungenis:** No, that's exactly what he is saying, since the answer to verse 14 must be NO, that is, "Can the faith save him...by itself?" must be answered negatively, since it is rhetorical.

**Jason Engwer:** If he was saying that, he would be contradicting what he wrote in 2:8-12, and he would be contradicting Mark 2:5, Luke 7:50, Luke 17:19, Luke 18:10-14, and other passages in which people are saved through faith alone.

**R. Sungenis:** This is a common Protestant mistake. None of these passages cited use the word "alone" or teach that justification is by faith alone. Protestants have a perennial problem: They think every time they see the word "faith," "saved by faith," etc, that it means "faith alone." They fail to understand that some contexts will stress faith because the context is dealing with a faith issue, not because it is trying to divorce good works from faith in the matter of salvation.

**Jason Engwer:** Abraham was justified before God when he believed (Romans 4:10-11), not when he later did works as a result of his faith (Romans 4:2).

**R. Sungenis:** This is another problem of Protestant theology: the either/or exegesis, that is, if Abraham is justified in one place, he can't be justified in another. We will see below that Scripture will not allow such a conclusion.

Another problem is that they fail to understand the KIND of works that cannot be used for justification. Paul is clear in Romans 4:4 that "works of debt," which are works done prior to faith, are non-salvific, since he already told us that works done in faith and repentance to God are salvific in Romans 2:6-7, 13. (See Not By Faith Alone, pages 1-46).

**Jason Engwer:** However, Abraham was justified before men (James 2:18) not through faith alone, but through works (James 2:21-24).

**R. Sungenis:** False. There is nothing in all of the NT that says men are justified before other men. God is the only determiner of justification.

**Jason Engwer:** Paul and James aren't addressing the same issue.

**R. Sungenis:** False. Paul and James quote from the same verse, Genesis 15:6, and therefore must have the same interpretation of the verse, for a different interpretation between them would mean that they are contradicting each other.

**Jason Engwer:** Paul is saying that we're justified before God through faith alone.

**R. Sungenis:** This just begs the question, for we would have to retort: Where does Paul use the words "faith alone?" Granted, he says, "a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" in Romans 3:28, but that does not mean "faith alone." It only means that "works of law" are excluded from faith, not works of some other sort. In the same way that Protestants have a perennial problem in concluding that every mention of "faith" means "faith alone," they have a similar problem when they conclude that every mention of "works" is non-salvific.

**Jason Engwer:** James is saying that saving faith is evidenced by works, which justify us in the sense that they prove that our faith is true.

**R. Sungenis:** False. James does not use the term "saving faith." He only says that faith is shown by works. In other words, James does not say that the works turn the faith from non-saving faith to saving faith. If anything, as is proven by the contrast between Abraham and the Jews of Paul's day, one must have faith in God before he can begin to perform works for God.

Protestants mistakenly regard the addition of works to faith as if the only effect of the works is for the purpose of qualifying the faith so that the faith, alone, can save; rather than seeing that salvation is procured only when faith and works act together. That is a crucial distinction. The reason they make this mistake is that they come to the text with a presupposition that faith alone justifies (which teaching they mistakenly believe to acquire from Paul). Hence, since to them faith is the only thing that justifies, then works can only act as the qualifier of the type of faith needed for justification. But James puts no such qualifiers on faith. Faith is faith and works are works.

**Jason Engwer:** James agrees with Paul that people are saved through faith, not works, but James is addressing the contrast between true faith and false faith

**R. Sungenis:** No. James never sets up a contest between two kinds of faith. That's why he can say in James 2:19 that the devils also believe. The only contest James sets up is between having faith and doing works. David still had faith in God after he committed adultery with Bathsheba, but because of that adultery he was condemned. In the state of adultery, he believed in God just like the devils believe in God, and both trembled, and thus, faith alone could not save him.

**Jason Engwer:** That's why he asks in verse 14, "Can that faith save him?" The question assumes that people are saved through faith. James wouldn't be addressing the type of faith that saves if faith didn't save.

**R. Sungenis:** If you check the Greek, it doesn't say "THAT faith," it says "THE faith." The words "that faith" are a Protestant invention, since Protestants are desperate to distinguish between two types of faith, "saving" and "non-saving." James isn't addressing the "type" of faith. He is addressing whether the person who says he has faith will now add works to that faith. If he does not add works, it does not mean that he has no faith. It only means that he refuses to add works, and thus he cannot be saved.

**Jason Engwer:** People are saved through faith while ungodly and not working (Romans 4:5-6), then they produce fruit as new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). The fruit justifies the believer before men (James 2:18), just as wisdom is justified by her children (Luke 7:35)."

**R. Sungenis:** False. The word "justified" in Luke 7:35 is metaphorical. It is not metaphorical in James 2:21-25. In fact, since James uses "justified" right after he quotes from Genesis 15:6, we know that he has the same definition of the word that Paul does, since Paul also quotes from Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4:2-3.

Moreover, if the word "justified" did not have the same meaning for James as it does for Paul, then the statement in James 2:24 would make no sense. The verses says, "a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." Let's assume that the word "justified" here means something other than what Paul meant. Let's use the word "vindicated," which is the meaning Protestants claim for it in Luke 7:35. Then it would read: "a man is vindicated by works and not by faith alone." Do you see what just happened? In an effort to eliminate the word "justified" from works, they have eliminated it from faith, too, for the verse now reads, "a man is vindicated...not by faith alone." This anomaly occurs with whatever word one uses in place of "justified." Hence, we see

clearly, that if you change the definition of the word "justified" in James to be different than that of Paul's definition, then you inadvertently make "faith alone" non-salvific, and only "vindicative."

**Jason Engwer:** "Even when advocates of salvation through works agree about the type of works that are excluded from the gospel, they often disagree with one another about just which works are included in the gospel, which sins must be avoided in order to be saved, etc.

**R. Sungenis:** False. The type of works that are excluded are, according to Trent, "his own works" or "works done under the law." These are any works that men do which are not under God's grace.

**Jason Engwer:** They agree that salvation isn't through faith alone. But they don't know how to attain eternal life, aside from trying to do a lot of good works and hoping that it will be enough.

**R. Sungenis:** False. The Catholic Church is clear how its members are to attain eternal life, but she warns that no one can presume to place themselves in heaven, since, on earth, one may fall into serious sin at any time, just as David did with Bathsheba, even though he was a man after God's own heart.

**Jason Engwer:** The gospel of salvation through faith alone has an assurance and a clarity of focus, a focus on Christ and His finished work (1 Corinthians 2:2, Galatians 6:14), that are absent from every gospel of works.

**R. Sungenis:** False, since neither Christ nor Paul used the words "faith alone." Moreover, Catholicism is clear that Christ finished His work. Now it is our responsibility to finish the work Christ gave to us. Unfortunately, there are many, as James teaches in 2:1-13, who fail in doing their work, and who will be "judged without mercy" (James 2:13). Protestants, like Jason Engwer, believe that no Christian will ever be "judged without mercy," for they believe that, once received, a person cannot lose his/her justification. The Bible nowhere teaches that concept. It is the worst heresy ever devised.

**Jason Engwer:** Even so, if Jesus and the apostles were excluding only some works from the gospel, then the practical benefits of salvation through faith alone would be irrelevant. We should ask, then, did Jesus and the apostles intend to exclude only some works from the gospel?

**R. Sungenis:** No, because they excluded from the gospel all works performed without faith and devoid of grace. Works not done in faith and grace are works of debt. As long as Jason fails to make that distinction, he will forever be trapped in his falsification of Catholic doctrine.

**Jason Engwer:** One way to answer the question is to examine the context of passages such as Romans 3-4 and Galatians 3. In these passages, is Paul excluding only some works? Or all works? Paul explains in Romans 3:27 and Galatians 3:21-25 that there is no law of works whereby people can be saved. The text proves that Paul isn't just excluding one law of works, such as the Mosaic law, but rather is excluding all laws of works. Even if Paul had been excluding only works of the Mosaic law, what works wouldn't be part of that? The Mosaic law

included obeying God (Deuteronomy 6:2) and loving others as ourselves (Leviticus 19:34), which would encompass every work we can do.

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, Jason has that correct. Paul was excluding ALL works. He does the same in Titus 3:5 when he says "He saved us not on the basis of deed which we have done." But Catholicism has been crystal clear on this. Read Canon 1 of Trent. It says that ANY work done by man cannot merit the grace of Justification. But unlike Jason, Trent also knows that Scripture speaks of works that DO justify (Romans 2:6-13). Obviously, then, we must make a distinction between the kind of works that justify and the kind of works that don't justify. The simplest way to describe this distinction is to refer to the one as works of grace and to the other as works of debt, after Paul's terminology in Romans 4:4. If not, then Jason, and all the rest of Protestantism will be stuck trying to understand Romans 2:6-13 where Paul says that good works and obedience to the law justifies a man.

**Jason Engwer:** Was Paul, then, excluding only works not done with faith and done without God's enabling grace? No, Paul uses Abraham's circumcision, a work done with faith and in obedience to God, as an example of a work excluded from the gospel (Romans 4:10-11). The advocate of salvation through works may respond that Paul was only excluding circumcision because the work of circumcision is no longer commanded by God. It's not a part of the new covenant. But it was part of the covenant during Abraham's time. When Abraham was circumcised, he did that work with faith and in obedience to God. It was a good work commanded by God and it was done in faith, yet it wasn't a means of salvation.

**R. Sungenis:** The argument in Romans 4 is not that circumcision is not salvific, but that faith must come before circumcision. In other words, if Abraham had been circumcised without faith, there would be no justification for him. As Trent says in Ch 8, "faith is the root of all justification." Faith must be behind every work in order for the work to be considered a work of grace. Otherwise, the work is a work of debt. By the same token, if after he exhibited faith Abraham refused to circumcise, then he would have been condemned (lost his justification), which is clear from Genesis 17:14. This is the very reason Paul mentions David in the same context of Romans 4, since after his sin with Bathsheba, David lost his justification. It was restored when he repented of his sin.

**Jason Engwer:** In Titus 3:5, Paul excludes works of righteousness from the gospel. How could a work done without faith or apart from God's enabling grace be a work of righteousness? Obviously, Paul is excluding all works, including good works, from the gospel.

**R. Sungenis:** The contrast in Titus 3:5 is between works devoid of Christ and works we perform in Christ. As Trent said "his own works" (which is the same as Titus 3:5's words "his own works of righteousness"), do not merit the grace of justification, for they are not in Christ. In Titus 3:5, the work we perform in Christ is submitting to the "washing of regeneration," which even Protestants agree refers to Baptism. Since Baptism is a work of grace, not a work of debt, then it is not classified as "his own works" or "his own works of righteousness."

The issue is "merit." Can our works merit, in the STRICT sense of the word, justification? The answer is clearly NO, since if they could merit justification, then justification would not be of

grace (Romans 11:6). But when we do works of grace in Christ, we are not claiming to strictly merit anything. Whatever we receive for doing those works is based on grace, and the even the power to do the works comes only from grace. Unless Jason begins to understand the difference between legal works that merit legal payment as opposed to non-legal works which cannot demand payment but are rewarded by grace, then he will always misunderstand, and falsely malign, the Catholic position.

**Jason Engwer:** If passages such as Romans 4:4, 11:6, and Ephesians 2:8-9 only meant that works done apart from God's enabling grace are contrary to salvation by grace, wouldn't that be redundant? Obviously, works not of grace would not be of grace. That goes without saying. Paul's argument is not that works done apart from grace are not of grace, which nobody would deny. His argument is that saving grace is not associated with works. In other words, Paul is not excluding a type of works that does nullify saving grace, while including another type of works that doesn't nullify saving grace. Rather, he's excluding all work, because work of any type would nullify salvation by grace.

**R. Sungenis:** If that were the case, then Paul would never be able to say, as he does in Romans 2:13, "the doers of the law will be justified," for in other places Paul often puts "law" in the same category as "works" or "works of law," that is, in the category of the non-salvific. As it stands, Paul can say what he says in Romans 2:13 for the same reason he says in Eph 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Eph 2:8-10 is one of the clearest passages of Scripture making the distinction between works of debt in which men boast as opposed to works performed under God's gracious preparation. As the works of debt are characterized in verse 8 as "works of yourselves" or works that elicit men to "boast," this is the same characterization of works that Paul used in Romans 4:2 when he said: "if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to BOAST about," which he then described as a matter of "debt" in Romans 4:4. Boasting is the essence of works of debt, for in boasting we are seeking payment, on a legal basis, for our work.

**Jason Engwer:** As he explains in Romans 3:27 and Galatians 3:21-25, there isn't any law of works whereby people could be saved. [...]

**R. Sungenis:** That's right, because "law of works" are works of debt which require legal payment. Works of grace do not require legal payment.

**Jason Engwer:** People are saved when they believe, even before being water baptized (Acts 10:44-48),

**R. Sungenis:** Acts 10:44-48 doesn't say that Cornelius was "saved" when he received the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues. It only says that he spoke in tongues. The Holy Spirit can come upon a person in a myriad of ways, but not all of them have to do with salvation, per se. In fact, the apostles reasoned that since God was allowing Cornelius to speak in tongues, this was clear evidence that God had accepted him, and thus they brought him to the Baptismal font to be saved.

**Jason Engwer:** even while they're ungodly and not working (Romans 4:5-6).

**R. Sungenis:** No, it refers to those who do not work before they exhibit faith, as verses 10-11 specify, not merely those who do not work. Those who work prior to faith, as the Jews did, are in the system of debt. Paul already told us that he accepts works performed under God's kindness and forbearance (grace) as those which will be rewarded with justification and eternal life (Romans 2:4-13). Obviously, then, he cannot be including the works of grace from Romans 2 when he condemns works of debt in Romans 4. They are two different systems.

**Jason Engwer:** This salvation through believing response to the word of God is not an exception to a rule, but rather is the rule (John 5:24, Acts 19:2, Romans 4:16, 10:10, Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 1:23-25).

**R. Sungenis:** Sure, a believing response is the rule, since one must have faith to be saved, but this doesn't mean that faith is alone in salvation. It only means that faith is the first step in salvation. As the Council of Trent said, "Faith is the beginning of salvation..." If Jason does not accept this reasoning, then we will ask him to take the very passage he cited, John 5:24, and observe what Jesus does with it in John 5:28-29. He says, "...those who have done good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." Even though faith started the journey, it is works that determine, in the end, whether the person will be saved, just as James said in James 2:14-26.

**Jason Engwer:** Paul uses Abraham, an unbaptized man whose works of faith in obedience to God were not a means of salvation (Romans 4:10-11), as the example of how everybody is saved (Romans 4:16).

**R. Sungenis:** Baptism is not an issue with Abraham, since it wasn't instituted until Christ came. And yes, everyone is saved like Abraham, but what Jason is missing is that Romans 4:9-22 says that faith must come prior to works, not that faith alone justifies. If someone tries to work without faith in God, then he is in the system of debt. Works, by themselves, will always put someone in the system of debt, and in that system, the law will always condemn him, since the law demands perfection, not repentance.

**Jason Engwer:** Abraham was saved through faith alone.

**R. Sungenis:** False. The words "faith alone" are never used by Paul in Romans 4, or anywhere. In fact, Paul used the word "alone" four times in Romans 3-4 (Romans 3:29; 4:12; 4:16; 4:23), so obviously he knew what the word "alone" meant and what it could do for his argument if he wanted to teach the concept of "faith alone," yet he never coupled "alone" with the word "faith." A devastating lacuna for the Protestant to answer.

**Jason Engwer:** "Faith without works is dead in the sense that true faith results in works, not in the sense that faith and works have to be combined before a person is saved.

**R. Sungenis:** False. There is no Scripture verse which says that faith results in works. This is the major fallacy of Protestant thought. Rather, works must be consciously and consistently added to faith by an act of the will. This principle is precisely why Abraham fell into some disbelief and

bad works in Genesis 16 when he took Hagar as a wife, and in Genesis 17 when he laughed at the promise of God.

**Jason Engwer:** Those who claim that faith must be combined with works in order for a person to be saved can't explain the passages of scripture in which people are saved when they believe, before doing any works. These people were saved earlier than the advocate of salvation through works would expect. For example, the people in passages like Mark 2:5, Luke 17:19, and Acts 10:44-48 were saved before being baptized or doing any other works. Dismissing such examples as exceptions to the rule just begs the question.

**R. Sungenis:** I already partially answered Acts 10:44-48 above. Mark 2:5 doesn't prove Jason's contention since neither the paralytic nor his friends came to Jesus to be "saved," rather they came to have the paralytic healed of his paralysis. It is Jesus who decides to forgive his sins, but that is because he is setting up a contest with the Pharisees. This account is covered in my book *Not By Faith Alone*, pages 208-212. As for Luke 17:19, it doesn't refer to salvation, it refers to physical healing. There are other accounts in which people were healed without any indication that they received salvation (Mt 11:20; John 6:26, 66; 10:31-32).

Moreover, in dealing with Abraham, according to Hebrews 11:8, he already exhibited faith in Genesis 12, the same faith that, according to Hebrews 11:4-7, Abel, Enoch and Noah had exhibited, which justified them. Surely Abraham's faith in Genesis 12 is not any less justifying than the faith of Abel, Enoch and Noah. This totally destroys the Protestant idea that Abraham was justified, once and only, at Genesis 15.

**Jason Engwer:** Since there are no scriptural examples of people not being saved until they work, how can the examples of people being saved before working be dismissed as exceptions to a rule? If there's no evidence of the rule's existence, and there are examples of the rule being contradicted, isn't it reasonable to conclude that the rule doesn't exist?

**R. Sungenis:** Rahab in James 2:25 is a perfect example. It is clear from the account in Joshua 1-2 that she was justified when she worked. Her faith did not come years before her works. Her faith came at the same time as her work. Moreover, James says that, in comparison with Abraham, Rahab was justified "in the same way." Thus we know that the faith and works of Abraham in Genesis 22 justified him. And that is why Hebrews 11:19 says that Abraham's offering of Isaac was an act of faith just as much as it was a work.

**Jason Engwer:** In Romans 4, when Paul is discussing how everybody is saved, he explains that Abraham was saved when he believed, not when he later did works as a result of his faith (Romans 4:10-11). As Abraham's children, we're saved the same way (Romans 4:16). This is another contradiction of salvation through works. [...]

**R. Sungenis:** No, its not a contradiction, since Romans 4:10-11 is saying that one cannot be justified if circumcision is received without faith in God, whereas James is talking about someone refusing to do works after he says he has faith.

**Jason Engwer:** Advocates of salvation through works claim that only some works are being excluded from the gospel in passages such as Romans 4:5-6 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Supposedly, only works of the Mosaic law, works done without faith, or some other type of works is being excluded. However, Paul explains that all works are being excluded from the gospel.

**R. Sungenis:** Paul doesn't use the term "all works." He refers to "works of law" or "works of our own righteousness" or works of "boasting." On the contrary, Paul says that the works he requires for eternal life (Romans 2:8) and justification (Romans 2:13) are the "gospel" (Romans 2:16).

**Jason Engwer:** There is no law of works whereby we can be saved (Romans 3:27, Galatians 3:21-25). Even works that are righteous are not a means of salvation (Titus 3:5). Even if we attribute our works to God (Luke 18:11), we can't be saved through works.

**R. Sungenis:** A person who BOASTS of his own goodness is not, legitimately, attributing his works to God. All kinds of people SAY they attribute their works to God. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Many will say to Me, did we not do mighty works in your name...and I will say, Depart from me." This is the whole reason Paul condemned the "boasting" of the Jews when they did their works (Romans 2:17; 3:27; 4:2), since they thought that just by claiming God as their own they had special favor with him. Even Catholic sacraments require the proper faith disposition of the recipient if the grace of the sacrament is to work *ex opere operato*.

**Jason Engwer:** In Romans 4:4, when discussing the works that are irreconcilable with saving grace, Paul is referring to works for which a wage is received. Obviously, people didn't receive a wage for following the Mosaic law. Paul obviously has all works in mind. All attempts to be saved through bodily effort are contrary to the gospel (Galatians 3:3). Paul is excluding works of every type. That's why he mentions "the law" in one verse, "works" in another verse, "deeds" in another verse, works for which we receive wages in another passage, etc. The concept that Paul is excluding only some works from the gospel, and that he's including other works within the gospel, runs contrary to the text and context. Even if the works in Romans 4:5-6, for example, are dismissed as only some types of works, Paul also says that the person being justified is ungodly.

**R. Sungenis:** Jason is at least half-way correct. Paul is not saying that only the Mosaic law is the excluded work. Paul says "works of law," not Mosaic law. This means that any work which comes from a legal system, cannot justify a man. That's why Paul can include "works of his own righteousness" in Titus 3:5; and works of the moral law in Romans 7:7-8; as works which will not justify a man, because both are legal entities. The Council of Trent recognized the same thing. It never referred to only the Mosaic law as that which cannot justify. It said ANY work cannot merit the grace of justification. In the New Covenant, Jesus replaces the ceremonial and moral law of Moses with the New Law under His jurisdiction (cf. Hebrews 10:26-31).

**Jason Engwer:** Are we actually to believe that Paul is teaching that we're saved while we're ungodly and doing good works at the same time? Why is the person referred to as ungodly if he's doing good works?

**R. Sungenis:** He's referred to as "ungodly" because he is in mortal sin, as David was when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. He still had faith, but he was a condemned sinner. Until he did the work of repentance under grace, not works of debt (such as offering a burnt sacrifice), he would remain in his sin.

But the real issue with which Jason must struggle is that Paul is using David as an example of a man who became justified when he repented of his sin. Thus, Paul is saying that David became justified when he repented of his sin of adultery. Well, if that is the case, wasn't David justified earlier in his life, before his sin of adultery? Yes. He was a man of God long before he knew Bathsheba. 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22 tell us that David was a man after God's own heart. David wrote beautiful Psalms praising God long before he fell into sin with Bathsheba, hence he was justified. But Paul is telling us that David lost his justification when he committed adultery, and David, being "ungodly" at that point, needed to be restored to godliness. That happens in justification, which David received when he repented of his sin to Nathan. This account of David totally obliterates the Protestant position, which holds that justification happens only once in a person's life and can never be lost.

**Jason Engwer:** The reader now perceives with what fairness the Sophists of the present day cavil at our doctrine, when we say that a man is justified by faith alone (Rom. 4:2). They dare not deny that he is justified by faith, seeing Scripture so often declares it; but as the word alone is nowhere expressly used they will not tolerate its being added. Is it so? What answer, then will they give to the words of Paul, when he contends that righteousness is not of faith unless it be gratuitous? How can it be gratuitous, and yet by works? By what cavils, moreover, will they evade his declaration in another place, that in the Gospel the righteousness of God is manifested? (Rom. 1:17). If righteousness is manifested in the Gospel, it is certainly not a partial or mutilated, but a full and perfect righteousness. The Law, therefore, has no part in it and their objection to the exclusive word alone is not only unfounded, but is obviously absurd. Does he not plainly enough attribute everything to faith alone when he disconnects it with works?

**R. Sungenis:** Here is the great blunder of John Calvin. He assumes that "faith alone" is the same thing as "faith apart from works of law." That is absolutely false. "Faith alone" means that NOTHING can be added to faith for justification. "Faith apart from works of law" only means that "works of law" cannot be added to faith for justification. Paul does not say "Faith apart from love" or "Faith apart from hope," since love and hope are under God's grace. "Works of law" are further explained by Paul in Romans 4:4 as works of legal debt, works upon which someone boasts and expects payment or strict merit. But Paul does not put the works of Romans 2:4-13 into this category, nor the works of Romans 14:10-12, or those of 1 Cor. 3:12-17; 2 Corinthians 5:10; or any number of passages which speak about works determining our salvation.

**Jason Engwer:** "What I would ask, is meant by the expressions, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested;" "Being justified freely by his grace;" "Justified by faith without the deeds of the law?" (Rom. 3:21, 24, 28). Here they have an ingenious subterfuge, one which, though not of their own devising but taken from Origin and some ancient writers, is most childish. They pretend that the works excluded are ceremonial, not moral works.

**R. Sungenis:** No, not true. The Council of Trent never said that the works which cannot justify are limited to the ceremonial law. There may have been a few Catholics before and during the time of the Reformation who were limiting the issue to the ceremonial law, but that is not Catholic doctrine and you will not find it in any official Catholic teaching. In his commentary on Galatians 3:10-12, Thomas Aquinas was clear that the condemnatory aspect of the Law also included the moral law, not just the ceremonial law. Augustine said the same.

It is clear in Titus 3:5 and Romans 7:7-8 that Paul includes ANY works in his condemnation. Catholics need to get this concept clear in their minds just as much as Protestants. Any Catholic who says that the works Paul condemned are limited to the ceremonial law is wrong. The ceremonial law may have been the chief way that the Jews abused the issue of works, but not the only way. What can be said is that the ceremonial law was the chief way that the Jews put themselves into the category of works of debt, since they performed circumcision without faith like Abraham's, and did it thinking that God owed them salvation for merely being a descendant of Abraham.

**Jason Engwer:** Such profit do they make by their constant wrangling, that they possess not even the first elements of logic. Do they think the Apostle was raving when he produced, in proof of his doctrine, these passages? "The man that does them shall live in them," (Gal. 3:12). "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," (Gal. 3:10). Unless they are themselves raving, they will not say that life was promised to the observers of ceremonies, and the curse denounced only against the transgressors of them. If these passages are to be understood of the Moral Law, there cannot be a doubt that moral works also are excluded from the power of justifying. To the same effect are the arguments which he employs. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin," (Rom. 3:20). "The law worketh wrath," (Rom. 4:15), and therefore not righteousness. "The law cannot pacify the conscience," and therefore cannot confer righteousness. "Faith is imputed for righteousness," and therefore righteousness is not the reward of works, but is given without being due. Because "we are justified by faith," boasting is excluded. "Had there been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe," (Gal. 3:21, 22). Let them maintain, if they dare, that these things apply to ceremonies, and not to morals, and the very children will laugh at their effrontery. The true conclusion, therefore, is, that the whole Law is spoken of when the power of justifying is denied to it."

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, it is the whole law, but it is the whole law under the system of law, not grace. The system of law is a system of debt, wherein someone demands legal payment for the work they have done. But that is not the kind of works Paul requires for justification in Romans 2:4-16, the very passage Calvin and his followers dismissed as "hypothetical" and as not having any salvific import. Catholicism sees no contradiction between Romans 2 and Romans 3-4, since it makes the proper distinction between works of grace and works of debt. This crucial distinction was taught by Thomas Aquinas in his categories of STRICT merit in opposition to CONDIGN or CONGRUENT merit, a distinction with which Calvin was familiar, but refused to admit into his theology, since he was bent on destroying the Catholic Church. It is the same distinction that today's would-be critiques of Catholicism fail to make, and therefore, perpetuate the myth about

"works" in Catholicism. If they would read the Council of Trent very closely, they would see that such is not the case.

Robert Sungenis, M.A.

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