

Justification and Works

Do you believe that faith leads to justification?

Faith does not only *lead* to justification, faith in Christ actually and really justifies the ungodly. The Bible states that "everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13:39), the sinner is justified "through faith" (Romans 3:25), "justified by faith" (Romans 3:28), God justifies "by faith" and "through faith" (Romans 3:30), we are "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1); one is justified "by faith" and again, "justified by faith" (Galatians 2:16), God justifies "by faith" (Galatians 3:8), righteousness is received "through faith" and "by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

Do you believe that justification leads to good works?

Yes, justification inevitably and most certainly leads to good works. We are not justified before God on account of the merits of our good works, but, having been justified by faith, we are at peace with God, and therefore God is pleased by our moral and spiritual sacrifices. A person who is not yet justified is at enmity with God and therefore nothing that he does can ever please him as long as he remains an outlaw and rebel against the throne of heaven. Good works are *impossible* unless one is already justified by faith.

Does this mean that the person who is justified never sins and will always do good works?

No, it does not mean that the justified never sin, nor does it mean that the justified are always and constantly doing good works. As Christians we readily confess and admit our many failures. When we read in the New Testament about the life of the early believers, we discover that they too endeavored to act righteously and shun every sin, and yet they too were not as fruitful as they could have been, and sometimes they sinned against their God and Father.

If the justified person does sin, what's the difference between a sinner without faith and a sinner with faith?

There is all the difference in the world. A sinner without faith is under the curse of the law. With every sin he increases the weight of guilt and punishment that will be meted out to him on the Day of Judgment. When a saint sins, he is still a saint and a child of God; he is still in Christ; he is still justified on account of his blood. The disobedient child incurs the displeasure and discipline of God his Father and is moved by the Spirit to repentance. The consequences of sin in the believer are many – the disobedient son displeases God the Father, loses the joy of salvation, suffers personal misery and spiritual weakness, hurts others, tarnishes his testimony, and loses rewards that the Lord gives when he comes again -- but the believer does not lose his legal right-standing before God.

If it is true that the believer is still justified when he sins, it would make faith in Jesus is a license to sin.

This is the accusation that has been made against the gospel of justification by grace through faith ever since the beginning ("Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Romans 6:1). Does faith in Jesus imply a license to sin? No! A million times, no! Faith in Christ is the first place, the **ONLY** way we can be freed from the guilt and condemnation of sin, as well as giving us a right relationship with God, which is the basis for our sanctification, the work of the Spirit in the justified, teaching us to abhor and avoid evil, and to love and practice righteousness.

Don't think that the only motive that will keep people from sin is the threat of hell; the believer has a purer motive -- the glory of God his Saviour. The believer is moved by love to the one who loves him with infinite love! What makes me treat my wife with kindness and gentleness, seeking to bring her joy and not sorrow – is it the fear that I will be brought to court and sentenced to prison? No, rather I am moved

by love – her love to me and my love to her. Does that mean that I never offend her or that I always treat her in the best way possible? No, but love gives hope of change, growth and maturity in our relationship.

Am I correct in stating that under your concept of justification, that once a person is justified, the intent is to do good works because you love God and want to please him, but always doing good works is not possible or is not a requirement?

God intends that all his children, who were justified on account of Christ's blood and righteousness, should do good works in response to the grace they had received. We love him, says the Bible, because he has first loved us.

Whether it is possible to 'always' do good works, to live a perfect moral life on this earth – I answer that on this side of eternity all Christians fail to reach moral perfection. Indeed, we must confess in the words of the apostle John, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.' Our Lord taught to ask the Father for forgiveness in the same breath that we pray for our daily bread.

Whether good works are a requirement or not, it is important to qualify that question – a requirement for what?

If you ask whether good works are optional or obligatory in the life of the justified, then the answer is an emphatic 'yes' - good works are obligatory and commanded by God! While the Bible excludes personal works for salvation, the same inspired text informs us that we are saved for that purpose, 'unto good works' that we should walk in them.

But if you ask whether good works are required for our justification, i.e. to be justified on account of personal merit, the answer is plain, no! For justification personal merit must be excluded. The Bible says that it is him who does not work but believes in God who justifies the ungodly that his faith is credited for righteousness. We are justified freely by grace, through faith, on account of the perfect obedience and the shed blood of our Redeemer.

We ought to be careful not to allow what is good ('good works') keep us from fully relying by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for our justification.