"Justification by Works?" (RCC Series 3)
James 2:14-26
October 26, 2025

I. Protestants vs. Roman Catholics (RCs) on Justification

A. To be justified by God is to be pardoned of all of one's sins and declared positively righteous.

B. RCs believe justification comes from faith *plus* good works.

C. Protestants believe justification comes from faith in Christ alone, which the scriptures affirm:

Galatians 2:16 *- yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, 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.*

Romans 3:28 *- For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*

Romans 4:5 *- And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*

Titus 3:5–7 *- [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Luke 18:13–14 *- [13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other [the boastful Pharisee]. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

II. There are two senses to justification in the New Testament.

A. Sense 1 refers to a person being declared righteous (pardoned/acceptable) before God.

1. God counts the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as their own.

2. They are counted legally righteous in the courts of Heaven.

B. Sense 2 refers to something or someone being proved true, as in vindicated or validated.

1 Timothy 3:16 *- Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated [Gk. justified] by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*

Luke 7:35 *- Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.*

III. Our *professions of faith* are justified in the second sense by works.

A. Our works validate, or prove true, our professions of faith.

B. James 2:14 begins his discussion with a person's *claim* to faith.

C. James repeatedly refers to visible evidence that either validates or invalidates such a claim. (James 2:15-16, 18, 20, 22, 24)

D. Abraham's and Rahab's status as professors of faith was validated/proved true/justified by their works.

IV. Summarizing the Bible's teaching on faith, works, and justification:

A. Not: *Faith + Works → Justification (RC Position)*

B. Not: *Faith → Justification - Works (Some evangelicals today)*

C. But: *True Faith → Justification + Works*