
Justified by Faith, Judged According to Works: Another Look at a Pauline Paradox

Author: Dane Ortlund

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I. Proposed Reconciliations (324)

A. Irreconcilable

1. Paul is inconsistent and contradictory (Wrede, Kuula)
2. Paul's judgment according to works motif is an unfortunate Jewish retention not adequately jettisoned by the former Pharisee (Weiss, etc.)

B. Reconcilable if Justification is Given Interpretive Authority

1. Justification is by faith, and the concept of one being judged and granted eternal life based on obedience is hypothetical (Ritschl, Turretin, Lietzmann, Longenecker, Thielman, etc.)
2. The "judgment according to works" motif serves Paul's rhetorical purposes, unsettling the ethically complacent (Wetter, Joest, Conzelmann, etc.)
3. Judgment according to works is an event subsequent to a final, works free justification, and this judgment is the meting out of relative degrees of reward (Filson, Devor, Mattern, Vos, Morris, Ladd, Barnett, Reymond, Stettler)

C. Reconcilable if Judgment/Obedience is Given Interpretive Authority

1. Justification by faith excludes legalistic/self-righteous obedience from laying a role in one's final verdict; it is indeed the "doers of the law"—albeit imperfectly, and only by divine grace—who will be justified (Cambier, Snodgrass, Fuller)
2. Justification by faith refers only or mainly to salvation's inauguration; final, eternity-determining judgment depends upon works produced thereafter (Godet, Wernle, Donfried, Sanders, Garlington, Yinger, Rainbow)
3. Final acquittal is based squarely on works; the $\delta\iota\kappa$ - lexeme in Paul (as in "justification by faith") refers not to a forensic declaration but an ethically qualitative righteousness (Gore, Van Landingham)
4. Justification by faith, emerging in the context of deconstructing ethnocentric tendencies in young Christian communities, was never intended to exclude moral deeds (more generally conceived) from contributing to final acquittal (Dunn, Wright, F. Watson)

5. In light of the Christ-event, Gentiles can now be justified by faith alone, while Jews continue to be evaluated based on Torah-observance; hence justification by faith applies to Gentiles, judgment according to works to Jews (M. Barth, Gaston, Gager, Wyschogrod)

D. Reconcilable if both Justification and Judgment Emerge from a More Fundamental Reality

1. The key is a robust appropriation of the new covenant reality of the empowering, indwelling Spirit to all those who have been freely justified solely on the basis of Christ's atoning work (Schreiner, Gathercole, Smith)
2. Justification and judgment are both rooted in authentic faith: justifying faith is acting, laboring, loving faith, by which faith-energized actions are all evaluated (Melancthon, Berkouwer, Ridderbos, Pregeant, Seifrid)
3. Justification and judgment are both rooted in the lordship-inaugurating righteousness of God, with its twin realities of status and power (Schlatter, Kertelge, Kasemann, Stuhlmacher)
4. Justification and judgment are both rooted in union with Christ, a union from which fruit organically and inevitably grows (Calvin, Edwards, O'Brien, Gaffin)

* Note also the view of M. Bucer who appealed to predestination (cf. page 330).

* The view that justification by faith is for believers; judgement by works for unbelievers

II. Neglected Factors [331]

A. Paul's Use of Prepositions

1. Justification by faith; judgement according to works

- a. Paul consistently uses $\epsilon\kappa$ or $\delta\iota\alpha$ when relating faith to justification (Rom. 3:22, 25; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; cf. Eph. 2:8; Col. 2:12), and $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ when relating works to judgement (Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 11:15; cf. Rom. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:14)

B. Romans 2:13

"Perhaps some of the angst over Rom 2:13 can be alleviated by recognizing precisely what is being set in antithesis. The snag is that our Protestant ears have been so deeply trained to understand human action—especially when it emerges in the context of $\delta\iota\kappa$ -language—to be set in antithesis to faith. Yet the contrast of Rom 2:13 is not human action and faith but human action and mere hearing. It is the $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ rather than the $\alpha\kappa\rho\omicron\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$ —not the $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ rather than the $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ —who are justified. Obedience operates in Paul in multiple directions of antithesis." [333]

"Romans 2:13 teaches neither an obedience-grounded justification nor a hypothetical justification (because of v. 16). It is a real justification, but it is a justification linked with doing rather than hearing." [333]

III. Toward a Synthesis [334]

"First, justification is not a two-staged "*doppelte Rechtfertigung*"¹ but the single eschatological event of a declaration of forensic acquittal and right standing proleptically brought into the present and grasped by grace-fueled faith in Christ's work. To posit the possibility of a person being justified here and now and yet failing to receive final acquittal is, for Paul, nonsense. We thus remain unconvinced of a consistent N.T. emphasis on a *yet-to-be determined* future justification that consists of anything more than public manifestation. Christians "are already justified—by faith. But they are yet to be justified—by sight." [334]

1 The phrase is Stuhlmacher's, who rejects it (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit* 229), as does Bell (*No One Seeks* 256); for those who espouse some kind of "double justification," see Joachim Jeremias, "Paul and James," ET 66 (1955) 370; Godet, *Romans* 118; Rainbow, *Way of Salvation* 155-74.

"Second, our understanding of N.T. faith must avoid the twin pitfalls of mere mental assent, on one side, and synergism on the other. If faith is strictly cognitive, justification by faith and judgement according to works are kept dangerously distant. Conversely if faith must be conjoined with obedience *for justification*, subjectivistic synergism necessarily ensues in which assurance is rendered elusive and Christ's cross impotent (Gal. 2:21). But if the faith that renounces one's own moral resume is organically bound up with the movement of the will by which one casts oneself on God in Christ for all things (*fiducia*), justification is protected from all human contribution while faith is protected from unbiblical reductionisms to the merely cerebral." [336-37]

"Third, Paul taught a real judgment that applies to believers and unbelievers alike and is according to, not on the basis of, obedience. . . ." [337]

"Fourth, obedience is not merely evidential but is rather built into the very fabric of salvation itself, yet without contributing to justification. Justification and judgment are linked not so much in cause-and-effect or linear progression as they are organically unified. This organic bond is union with Christ, in which one is not only declared righteous by virtue of Luther's *frohlicher Wechsel*, or what Hooker has described as the Pauline "interchange," but also indwelt by the Spirit. Justification and obedience both sprout from the seed of union with Christ." [338]

"As Clowney writes, "A dead and empty faith cannot justify, but this is not because it lacks works as a supplement. It is because it lacks the living bond of trust from which works must flow." [Edmund P. Clowney, "The Biblical Doctrine of Justification by Faith" in *Right with God* 49]