

Enns, P. P. (1997, c1989). *The Moody handbook of theology*.

FAITH AND WORKS

Lutheran view. The light of grace came to Martin Luther through reading Romans 1:17, sometime before 1517. Thereafter, in breaking with Roman Catholic doctrine, Luther came to a strong conviction that justification is by faith alone (Lat. *sola fide*). October 31, 1517, when Luther posted the Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, may be seen as the actual beginning of the Reformation, with the affirmation of salvation by grace through faith instead of the synergistic view of the Roman Catholic church. As a result, Luther rejected the Catholic doctrines of penance, indulgences, and any other form of human merit as necessary for salvation. Luther came to the conclusion that only God's grace is the foundation and basis for man's salvation and justification. He taught that it is God's grace alone that forgives sins and imputes the righteousness of Christ to the one who believes.

Works, Luther taught, have no part in salvation. Good works are the result or fruit of salvation but never a part of salvation. He distinguished between the "works of the law," which are done in a state of unbelief and provide no part of salvation, and the "works of faith," which are the proof of justification. These genuinely good works are found in the Ten Commandments, as Luther stated: "Thus we have the Ten Commandments, a compend of divine doctrine, as to what we are to do in order that our whole life may be pleasing to God,...outside of the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God."

Calvinist view. John Calvin was in general agreement with Luther on the subject of justification by faith. Calvin also emphasized justification as a forensic (legal) act, whereby God declares the believing sinner righteous, an act made possible by the free grace of God. In contrast to Luther, however, Calvin began his doctrine of salvation with God's election of the sinner. Calvin understood election to salvation as unconditional for "If election were dependent on man's faith and good works, grace would not be free, and in fact would cease to be grace." □¹⁶

In relation to James 2:20, Calvin taught that justification by works does not relate to imputed righteousness but rather, as Luther also taught, works that demonstrate the reality of justification. Thus Calvin taught a "double justification." "Primarily, justification is acceptance before God through the imputation of righteousness. This comes by faith alone. Secondly and in consequence, however, justification is the declaration or manifestation before men of the righteousness of faith. This is justification by works." □¹⁷

Calvin's doctrine of salvation produced a milestone in that he related justification to sanctification. While maintaining the distinctiveness of each, he related both to the act of salvation. Christ does not justify someone whom He does not also sanctify. Justification, according to Calvin, becomes the motivation to sanctification. Although justification is free, sanctification becomes the believer's response of gratitude. □¹⁸ Calvin remarked: "No one can embrace the grace of the gospel, but he must depart from the error of his former life, enter into the right way, and devote all his attention to the exercise of repentance."

Arminian view. In contrast to Calvin's doctrine of unconditional election, Arminians taught conditional election; that is, God elects to salvation those whom He knows will believe in Christ.

But provision has been made for all humanity, because Christ died for everyone, not simply the elect. Although man is incapable of responding to God because of sin, God dispenses prevenient grace to all people, which enables them freely to choose to believe in Christ or reject Christ. However, the believer is capable of resisting the Holy Spirit, falling back into the world, and losing his salvation. Perseverance is essential to maintain eternal life.

[16](#) 16. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, 3 vols. (Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 1:453.

[17](#) 17. Bromiley, *Historical Theology*, p. 236.

[18](#) 18. *Ibid.*, p. 238.