

Justification by "Words" Not Works (Faith Alone) - [sermonaudio.com](http://sermonaudio.com)  
Matthew 12:37 is Against Romanism

By Larry Wessels

**Bible Text:** Matthew 12:37; Romans 3:28-30

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Christian Answers would like to announce a conference called "Former Catholics for Christ Conference" in Springfield, Illinois. The conference will cover "In Defense of Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone); Sola Fide (faith alone); Sola Christo (Christ alone); and Sola Gratia (grace alone)." Four guest speakers: Robert M. Zins, Director of "A Christian Witness to Roman Catholicism," author, conference speaker and apologist; Mike Gendron, Director of "Proclaiming the Gospel," author, conference speaker, evangelist and apologist; Tim Kauffman, author, conference speaker and apologist; Cecil Andrews, Director of "Take Heed Ministries" from northern Ireland, conference speaker and apologist.

Christian Answers of Austin, Texas presents

Former Catholics for Christ Conference

Springfield, IL

May 2019

Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone

Part 1: Tim Kauffman

Author, Conference Speaker, and Apologist

The Sola of the Reformation that I'll be talking about today is Sola Fide or faith alone, and you all remember the famous date that Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the Wittenberg door, 1517, and by 1547 Roman Catholicism had responded in the Council of Trent in the sixth session of the Council of Trent, they declared in Canons IX and XI that justification is neither by faith alone nor by Christ alone. Fast forward almost 500 years and you get to the 1999 joint declaration on justification in an attempt, a continuous attempt, a relentless attempt for the last 500 years to unwind the Reformation and the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics signed a joint justification declaration. In 2006, that

was received by the World Methodist Council. By 2016, Pope Francis himself was saying that Lutherans, Protestants and Catholics all agree on justification and in 2017, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's theses, the World Council of Reformed Churches signed on and the Anglican community signed on.

So the question before us is justification by faith alone even taught in the Scriptures? Is it even worth holding onto or fighting for? Or like our great forefathers did, dying for? And I would like to propose to you that it is very much worthy dying for and very much worth fighting for and very much worth defending.

I wanted to take my text today from Matthew 12 and when Rob Zins mentioned that we ought to have a conference to talk about defending the Solas of the Reformation, he listed them all and I said, "I want faith alone and I want to use as my text Matthew 12:34-37." It's in Matthew 12:34-37 that Jesus utters the profound truth that we will give an account of our words on the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified. Profound words, indeed, but not hard to understand, the answer is in the text itself but very often the text is ignored and, as I will show you, the text is changed to turn it into justification by works.

Let's turn to the text now and then I want to go through how Roman Catholics are interpreting it and how Protestants are starting to interpret this. Matthew 12:34-37.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Matthew 12:34-37

The context here is extremely important and we can't miss the context. Jesus is telling us something very important and he's telling it to us in a certain situation so I want you to keep that context in mind as we continue through this analysis of Matthew 12.

Jesus' disciples had plucked wheat and eaten it on the Sabbath and the Pharisees saw it and they said unto him, "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day," that's Matthew 12:1-2. And Jesus used the occasion to instruct them that he is the Lord of the Sabbath. From there Jesus retired to one of their synagogues and healed a man with a withered hand and, 'the Pharisees went out and held a council against him that they might destroy him," Matthew 12:14. Jesus then withdrew himself and healed many people and among them was a man "possessed with a devil, blind and dumb," Matthew 12:22. "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils," Matthew 12:24. In response, Jesus rebuked them saying the words that we have already read, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And from there Jesus proceeds to the statement that we will be justified by our

words on the last day. Again, Jesus' disciples plucked corn on the Sabbath and the Pharisees criticized him. He healed a man with a withered hand and the Pharisees held a council against him. He cast out a devil, healed a man possessed with a devil and the Pharisees said he was doing it by the power of Beelzebub. And then Jesus said we'll either be condemned or justified by our words on the last day.

So how do Roman Catholics interpret this passage? Well, they interpret it exactly the way you'd expect. I just did a random search on the internet to find out what they're saying. It's very consistent with what they've always said. The Roman Catholic ministry called "About Catholics" says that Matthew 12:37 shows that justification is not by faith alone. In their book about Roman Catholicism they say, "We also have a personal responsibility in our justification before the Lord. If we accept Christ's sacrifice on the cross, confess him as Lord, yet commit bad actions, God judges accordingly, Matthew 12:37, by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned. Our acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross does not abdicate our responsibility to live the Gospel. Salvation is not assured." That's again from a ministry called "About Catholics" in their book from 2014. See? Jesus says we'll be justified by our words, therefore we'll be justified by our actions. That's how they're reading it.

Former Protestant turned Roman Catholic apologist, Tim Staples, in 2009 wrote an article called "We Can Work It Out," intended to be a pun about justification by works and in that article Tim Staples cited Matthew 12:37 as follows, "In Matthew 12:37, Jesus puts any thought of justification by faith alone to rest: '...for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.'" See? Jesus says words, therefore works.

Former Protestant turned Roman Catholic, Scott Hahn, in a March of this year explained that Matthew 12:37 means our final justification will depend on the purity of our hearts and the purity of our speech. He wrote, "Why do purity of heart and speech matter so much? Because as Jesus declares elsewhere, 'by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.' They matter because they will help to decide our final judgment." See? Words and therefore works.

Former Protestant turned Roman Catholic, apologist Jason Stellman in his conversion testimony said, "I need to go back to Paul but I also need to go back to Jesus too. I need to start looking at the way Jesus speaks about judgment, sin, the relationship of faith and works and what happens at the last day." That was from his Eternal Word Network interview back in 2013 on The Journey Home Network when he was first coming out as a Roman Catholic and explaining why he had done it. In his continued explanation of his decision to convert to Roman Catholicism, he cited Matthew 12:37 and said it clearly means those people who exhibit by their words good fruit in their lives will be justified on the last day.

What you notice in all these citations I've provided for you is they all take something Jesus said, change one word, from "words" to "works," and conclude therefore that justification on the last day is by our works. Now that's exactly how I would expect a

Roman Catholic to interpret the Scriptures because they are bound by conscience to interpret every Scripture consistently with their councils and their councils have denied justification by faith alone. So they get to a text that says justification in the last day and they have a word there, justification by works, and they say, "Well, words are works, therefore justification by works," but Jesus has revealed something to us here that requires more than just a cursory analysis and that's what we're going to look at today and go into a lot more detail. But I'm not surprised Roman Catholics interpret the passage that way but what does surprise me, although it probably shouldn't, is that Protestants are interpreting it the same way.

Sam Waldron, President of Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote that by justification by words in Matthew 12:37, Jesus really meant that it's a final justification by works. On this passage he says, "We have here a justification by works which takes place on the day of judgment."

Rich Lusk, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, says of Matthew 12:37, "Jesus is not kidding or messing around when he speaks of a future justification according to our words." Well, I agree with him there, he wasn't kidding or messing around, but that was in his book about a future justification by works.

He continued in another work ominously, "This double justification doctrine, initial justification by faith alone followed by a second justification according to works in the eschatological judgment, is re-emerging as a consensus position among today's leading evangelicals and Reformed biblical theologians." That's from his "Reformed Doctrine of Justification by Works" from 2012.

Or what about John Piper in his book "What Jesus Demands from the World"? He said, "Though it may cause confusion, it is possible to use the word 'justify' to describe how the fruit of good behavior works in the day of judgment. The fruits can justify us in a sense of proving that we are believers and belong to Jesus and have a right standing with him, that is how I understand Matthew 12:37, 'by your words you will be justified.'"

And notice what all three of these Protestants have done, they have taken the word "words," substituted the word "works," and concluded that justification will be by works on the last day. Roman Catholicism has spent 500 years, although not the majority of the last 500 years but they have spent 500 years trying to get Protestants to come back to the Church by reaching across the aisle. They, actually that's probably not a good illustration because we're not even in the same building so they can't reach across the aisle but they've been stretching out a hand to us trying to get us to compromise on the doctrine of justification and the surprise is that the descendants of the Reformers are returning the favor and reaching their hand back, and that's why Pope Francis can say we all agree on justification and we're starting to hear Protestants say, "You know, Pope Francis might be right. Maybe we do agree on justification."

All these men, Staples, Hahn, Stellan, Waldon, Lusk and Piper, have all made Jesus to say something that he did not say. Each one of them has taken "by thy words thou shalt

be justified" and changed it to "by thy works thou shalt be justified." Just go back and read their interpretations, they take one word out and put another word in. They've changed what Jesus said.

It's one thing for us to hear Roman Catholics say that our works justify us at the last day but we're hearing this more and more from Protestants and evangelicals. Is that the future of Protestantism, initial justification by faith alone followed by a second justification according to works in the eschatological judgment? That's what they're saying. That's what they're telling us and they're telling us that that's what Jesus taught and what the Reformers either meant or should have meant.

So what are we to do when we are having this double justification paradigm thrown at us as if it was the teaching of the apostles themselves? Well, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is being attacked on every side and Matthew 12:37 is the new battlefield and it is for this reason that I requested to speak on Matthew 12:37 because Matthew 12:37 is, in fact, about justification by faith alone apart from works of any kind. Yes, that's correct. Not only do I propose that Matthew 12:37 is about justification by faith alone apart from works, but I also believe that this is where Paul got his understanding on justification by faith alone apart from works. It is not a reference to an eschatological justification in the future based on our works, but rather is an affirmation of justification by faith alone apart from works upon the hearing of the preached word of Christ. Yes, that is what I said, "for by thy word thou shalt be justified," is not a reference to a future justification according to works but rather is an affirmation of justification by faith alone apart from works upon belief when we hear the preached Gospel and it is Jesus' definitive teaching on the topic of justification by faith alone and it is from Christ that Paul learned that very same Gospel that he taught in his epistles.

So at this point, I want to turn to Moses for a moment because Moses said something that's gonna be extremely relevant to us as we go through Matthew 12. He has recorded something that is relevant to Matthew 12 because it involves Jews and Gentiles and Romans 12, in fact, involves Jews and Gentiles. Remember the context: Jesus' disciples plucked corn on the Sabbath and the Pharisees criticized him. Jesus healed a man and the Pharisees held council against him. Jesus cast out a devil and they said he was doing it by the power of Beelzebub and then Jesus says you'll be justified by your words or condemned by your words. Moses says something that's relevant to this and, frankly, it should make our blood run cold. Let's sit up and pay attention to what this servant, the Lord's servant Moses said because it's striking and it's relevant to Matthew 12.

This is Deuteronomy 32:16 and 19 to 22. This is where the Lord responds to the Jewish idolatries and he says,

16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger....19 And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. 20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. 21

They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

That's Deuteronomy 32:16 and 19 to 22. It is not my intention to be overly dramatic here but any time the Lord says a fire is kindled in his anger and it will burn to the lowest hell, we should probably take note of what he is saying to us. The people had provoked God to jealousy by that which is not god and so he promised to provoke them to jealousy by them that are not a people, so great was his anger against them, and Paul took notice of that anger, in fact, Paul's conversion was a result of that anger.

After explaining that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, having attained to righteousness even the righteousness which is of faith, but Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness, Paul explained that the Jews should not have been surprised that the Gentiles had achieved the righteousness of faith because Moses had prophesied the very thing in Deuteronomy. In Romans 10:19, Paul wrote that the Jews indeed should have known the significance of the Gentiles being saved, in fact, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32 to prove the point. He wrote,

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

That's Romans 10:19-21. Indeed, as we discover in the New Testament, the Gentiles are they who found the Lord even though they were not seeking him and Jews are they that are disobedient and gainsaying people to whom the Lord had outstretched his hands all day long. What Paul has established for us is that it is the Gentiles that are that foolish nation of Moses' prophesy, that people who are not a people by whom the Lord would provoke the Jews to jealousy. In fact, Paul confirms that very thing in the next chapter, writing explicitly that the Gentiles were being saved in order to make the Jews jealous. This is Romans 11:11-14,

11 ... salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [the Jews] to jealousy.... 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Now Paul is actually speaking from personal experience here because there's nothing that infuriated him more than the people that were following after the Way, the new way, following after Christ, and he wanted to kill anybody who was actually following that

way. It angered him that people were getting saved apart from the righteousness of the law that he thought that he had attained. Paul, in fact, was jealous of all the salvation that was going on, thought it was going to people that did not deserve it and ought not have been saved.

Not only does Paul understand this as the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32:21, he says that the Jews should have seen it coming because the Scriptures had foreseen it. Now this is important to our discussion on Matthew 12:37 because we know that Paul learned his Gospel from Christ, we are told this in Galatians 1:12, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The reason Paul understood that salvation had come to the Gentiles to stir the Jews to jealousy is because he had learned this from Christ and we know that Jews, that Jesus had stirred the Jews to jealousy because his Father had told him to do so. It was one of his most important missions. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus could only speak and say that which his Father had told him to say. John 12:49-50, "the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." Jesus also said elsewhere that, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and of mine, I can do nothing of myself. As I hear I judge, and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will but the will of the Father which has sent me."

Jesus had come to do his Father's will and one of the most important things Jesus had been commissioned to do was to stir the Jews to jealousy by provoking them to jealousy and saving the Gentiles. He do so repeatedly in his interactions with the Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, tax collectors, lepers and harlots. In fact, when Jesus kicked off his preaching ministry, the very first thing he did was provoke the Jews to jealousy. It was the first thing on his agenda. After Jesus had been baptized and led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, he then returned to Nazareth and began to provoke them to their face. He entered a synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." That's Luke 4:18-19.

Upon reading it, Jesus said to the people, "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Now it's important that we understand how they received his preaching on his first sermon. The people were amazed and marveled at the gracious words that he had spoken. It says in Luke 4:22, "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." His words were very warmly received indeed, but then Jesus did something interesting and we must remember that this is exactly what his Father had sent him to do. Jesus provoked the Jews by informing them that the salvation he had come announcing would go to the Gentiles. Luke 4:25, Jesus said to the same audience, "many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a

widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." That's Luke 4:25-27.

Suddenly the Jews who had been so excited to hear the words of Isaiah that Jesus had come to announce a day of salvation and even marveled at the gracious words that Christ had spoken, became furious and tried to throw him off a cliff. Why? Because he had mentioned the Gentile widow of Sidon and the Gentile Naaman of Syria, reminding the Jews that when there were many widows and lepers in Israel, the Lord had sent his prophets to Gentiles. There had been many Jewish widows in Israel but Elijah had been sent to a Gentile. There had been many Jewish lepers in Israel but Elisha had been sent to a Gentile. The Jewish response was predictable and intentional, the Lord had provoked them to jealousy.

Examples like this abound in the New Testament. You'll remember that a harlot was in the house of Simon the Pharisee and by the time Jesus was finished with them, he had explained that the harlot loved God more than the Pharisee did. When Jesus was encountered by 10 lepers and only one came back to say thank you, he said, "Were not all healed and yet the only to return was this Samaritan." Speaking of Samaritans, when he told the story of the good Samaritan, he basically concluded the story by showing that the Samaritan knew better about how to love his neighbor than the priests and the Levites did. When he visited the house of Zaccheus the tax collector, he said, "This man is a son of Abraham." When he encountered a Roman centurion, he said, "This man has more faith than I've ever seen in all of Israel." Jesus repeatedly sets up the foreigners, the Gentiles, the half-breeds, the harlots and lepers and tax collectors as people who are better at being Jewish than the Jews and it had its intended effect, the Jews were spurred to jealousy and, in fact, some of the Pharisees themselves were converted as they came to Christ to inquire more about this. By and large their response was anger and jealousy but it did have its intended effect, to stir some of them to jealousy and some of them came to him and believed.

Now we're dwelling so long on God's plan to make the Jews jealous and Jesus' obedience to his Father's commands to make the Jews jealous because it is in that context that Jesus tells the Pharisees, "by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." If we are to understand the narrative of Matthew 12, we must understand Jesus' mission to make the Jews jealous and the way he does is by showing the Gentiles to be the blessed children of Abraham hearing the Gospel, believing, repenting and receiving the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants and throughout Matthew 12, the Jews are rejecting him, questioning his methods, his motives, the company he keeps and the works he does. It is those Jews who Jesus calls offspring of vipers in Matthew 12:34 and children of their Father the devil in John 8:44.

It's in the midst of this controversy that Jesus turns away from the Pharisees and goes somewhere else that he is better received and more warmly. Matthew does not give many details on who those people are, he simply writes the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him, but when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence and great multitudes followed him and he healed them all, but Mark

and Luke both provide additional information that tells us what Jesus is up to here. Luke and Mark tell us that when the Pharisees began to plot against Christ because he had healed the man with the withered hand, Jesus withdrew himself and the people who followed him were from Tyre and Sidon and the Edomites, who were obviously the descendants of Esau, the people beyond the Jordan. In other words, when the Pharisees rejected Christ repeatedly, questioning whether his disciples were behaving properly on the Sabbath, questioning whether it was right to heal on the Sabbath, questioning whether or not he actually should have healed the man and they wanted to plot against him, Jesus turned from them and he went to the Gentiles and, again as the Gospel writers have done throughout his ministry, the Jewish and Gentile responses to Christ are placed next to each other in stark and ironic contrast. It is here in Matthew 12 that we see that contrast under the brightness of the noonday sun. The Pharisees rejected Christ and with their lips they expressed disbelief and unbelief, the evil treasure of their evil hearts, but the Gentiles received him and with their lips they expressed faith, the good treasure of their good heart. In fact, that is precisely what the prophet Isaiah had foreseen and what Matthew pauses to point out to us. Listen as Matthew explains the fulfillment of the prophecy that when Jesus turned away from the unbelieving Pharisees, he went to Gentiles, he showed them his judgments and they believed him. Listen to what he says, this was,

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. 19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust. 22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. 23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

And here we have our first piece of evidence that Jesus had really not been talking about justification by works at all. I'm assuming we're already familiar with the, actually the primary piece of evidence that he's not talking about works because he said "words," but here we have additional evidence to show that we cannot simply take "words," render them as "works," and determine that Jesus has foreseen a justification by works on the last day.

When he refers to fruit in this passage, he is referring to the fruit of the lips. He says make the tree good and his fruit good or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by his fruit. That's Matthew 12:33. The fruit to which he refers here is not the good works of the believer and the evil works of the unbeliever, but rather the good words of the believer and the evil words of the unbeliever. The whole passage is about talking or saying, it is not about doing. Remember, in this context Jesus is responding to what the Pharisees have said and warns, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him, but whoever speaketh against the Holy

Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." That's verse 32. Then he says, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew contrasts that with what the Gentiles have said. What is in view here is words, not works. That will become more obvious as we continue our analysis of Matthew 12, but for now this will serve to correct those men whom we have cited: Staples, Hahn, Stelman, Waldron, Lusk and Piper, all of whom have read "works" into the passage, placing in Jesus' mouth a word that he did not say. It is not the Pharisees' and Gentiles' works that are being contrasted here, it is their words and as Matthew has shown us, the words of the Pharisees are words of unbelief and the words of the Gentiles are words of belief. That is precisely what the Scriptures had foreseen, "in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

What we have before us in Matthew 12 is simply a fleshing out of the jealousy that Moses had foreseen in Deuteronomy, a jealousy said that the Lord said that he would provoke the Jews to because they had provoked him, and as Paul would shortly come to realize, the Gentiles were that foolish nation by which the Lord would provoke them. And how did he do it? By showering his blessings upon the believing Gentiles as if they were sons of Abraham and casting the unbelieving Jews as Gentiles. What he has done in Matthew 12 is no different. Listen to the Gentile response compared to the Jewish response. The Gentiles said, "Is not this the son of David?" But what did the Pharisees say? "Thy disciples do that which is not lawful." Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? They went out and held council against him. They said, "This fellow casts out devils by Beelzebub." Compare that to what the Scriptures say of the Gentiles, "And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

Just think about that contrast here in Matthew 12. When Jesus preached to the Pharisees and did miracles among them, the Pharisees responded with words of unbelief, and when Jesus turned and went to the Gentiles and did miracles among them, they responded with words of belief. Isaiah had foreseen it. They believed. This is a passage about words of faith spoken in response to the preaching of the word of God. It is about faith, it is not about works, but there's something more. After saying that every idle word men shall speak they shall give an account on the day of judgment, and by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned, Jesus proceeds from that point and does something that only makes sense in light of Moses' prophesy about jealousy. In response to the next question by the Pharisees, Jesus gives two examples of people who on the last day will be justified and he has just told us that they'll be justified by their words and quite noticeably the people who will do this are Gentiles.

Immediately after Jesus says, "by thy words thou shalt be justified," the Pharisees ask him for a sign and he says, "The only sign that this generation will be given is the sign of Jonah," and then he gives examples of people who will be justified by their words on the last day. Let's rejoin the conversation that's taking place.

38 ... the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but

the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

So Jesus warns the Pharisees that they'll either be justified or condemned by their words on the last day and then he gives examples of two people who will condemn the Jews on the last day by their words, and in the context it's clear that the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba will be justified on the last day by their words.

Four things are striking about these examples. First and most obvious, they are Gentiles. This is consistent with what we know about the jealousy that had been prophesied by Moses. Jesus is telling them just like he spoke on his first day of preaching, he said there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah but to none was he sent but a Gentile. There were many lepers in the days of Elisha but to none was he sent except a Gentile. Here he's saying, "Your words will condemn you on the last day and you'll be condemned by Gentiles."

The second thing that strikes us about these examples is that according to the Scriptures, the Ninevites and the Queen of the South both did works. There was no shortage of works that Jesus could have appealed to for justification if he was truly talking about justification by works. Even though Jesus is very much aware of their works and, in fact, refers to the repentance of the Ninevites and the travels of the Queen of Sheba, nevertheless he is telling us that on the last day they too will be justified by their words. Just think about that. There were plenty of works to which Jesus could have appealed if his message was justification by works. Indeed, the Ninevites were overflowing with good works after the preaching of Jonah and the Queen of Sheba was overflowing with generosity after hearing the wisdom of Solomon, and yet nevertheless, those stories are told to us in the context of justification by words on the last day. Jonah 3:10 says that God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And 1 King 10:10 says that the Queen of Sheba gave 120 talents of gold and spices, a very great store and precious stones. There came no such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. Those are works and yet nevertheless in the context of a story in which the people who will be justified on the last day did plenty of works, Jesus tells us that they will be justified by their words.

And that leads us to the next striking thing about Jesus' examples. The response of the Ninevites to the preaching of Jonah and the response of the Queen of Sheba to the preaching of Solomon, were words that came from the overflow of the belief of their hearts, in fact, that is exactly what we find when we go back and read the story. Jonah 3:5, "So the people of Nineveh believed God." 1 Kings 10:2, "She," that is the Queen of

Sheba, "communed with him," that is Solomon, "all of that which was in her heart," and then she said to the king, "It was a true report that I heard." These are words of belief that came from the good treasure of the hearts of the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba and together with the words of belief from the Gentiles of Matthew 12, they stand in stark contrast with the words of unbelief that came from the evil treasure of the hearts of the Pharisees.

And that leads us to the fourth striking thing about Jesus' appeal to the words of the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba, he appeals to the words that they spoke when they first heard the preaching of the word of God. The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, Matthew 12:41, and the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, Matthew 12:42. Jesus does not appeal to the repentance of the Ninevites or the generosity of the Queen of Sheba for justification on the last day, but he does appeal to their words for justification. He does not appeal to what they did, he appeals to what they said. Justification by words. And just as Matthew 12 contrasts what the Pharisees said in response to the preaching of the word of God and what the Gentiles said in response to the preaching of the word of God, the Pharisees responding in unbelief with their words and the Gentiles responding with belief, it is all about the verbal response of faith from the overflow of a believing heart at the preaching of the word of God. It is about faith, faith, faith, and no matter how much we might want to say that, yes, works flow from faith and they do, Jesus does not say justification is by those works, he says it's by the words and the words are words of belief. And what is more, it is about the words of belief the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba when they first heard the preaching of the word of God and much like Matthew has identified the verbal response of the Gentiles when they heard the preaching of Christ when Christ left the Pharisees to go and preach to them. The words that will justify them on the last day are not the words they will speak between now and the end of the judgment, the words that will justify them on the last day are the words of faith that were spoken when they first heard the preaching of the word of God.

And that leads us to one of the most important aspects of this entire narrative. Jesus says that our words will justify us on the last day and then he demonstrates for us that the Queen of Sheba responded with belief on the day that she heard the message and the wisdom of Solomon, and he says that the Ninevites repented on the day that they heard the preaching of Jonah, and that leads us to something very important about Paul and how he understood the Gospel that Jesus had come preaching and we're going to tie this now, Matthew 12:37, to the ministry of Paul the apostle and his preaching of the Gospel.

Where, for example, did Paul learn that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God? Well, he learned that from Christ. That's Romans 10:17, by the way. He learned it from Christ because he said that he was taught this by no man but had learned it by revelation from Jesus Christ and, in fact, that is the very message of Matthew 12:37, faith of the Gentiles had come by the preaching of the word of God whether he was talking about the people across the Jordan after he had left the Pharisees behind, or he was talking about the Ninevites responding in faith to the preaching of Jonah, or the Queen of Sheba responding in faith to the preaching of Solomon.

Where did Paul learn that verbal confession of faith resulting from a belief in the heart is evidence of salvation? Romans 10:9-10, Paul says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Where did he learn that? He learned that from Jesus and, in fact, that's the very message of Matthew 12:37, from the treasure of the heart the mouth speaketh, from the evil treasure of their evil hearts they brought forth evil words of unbelief, and yet when speaking of the Gentiles, from the good treasure of their good hearts they brought forth words of belief. The whole passage is about justification by faith and not only is it about justification by faith, it's about justification without any consideration of the works that they would do afterward. It's justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law. This is Jesus' definitive teaching on the topic and this is where Paul learned it, he learned it from Christ himself and the Gospel that Paul teaches in his epistles is the Gospel that Christ taught him personally and it's the Gospel that Jesus was teaching in Matthew 12:37 when he said justification will be by your words.

Where did Paul learn that justification is by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law? He says it clearly enough, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," Galatians 2:16. Romans 3:28 says the same, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." He learned it from Christ and that's the very message of Matthew 12:37. Jesus knew very well that they had done works and yet he says they would be justified by their words of faith.

Where did Paul learn that you are justified by faith apart from works and when you are justified by faith apart from works you are already at peace with God? Remember in Romans 5:1 he said, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have peace. Jesus says that when we believe him, we already have everlasting life. He learned that from Christ, in fact, that's the very message of Matthew 12:37, the judgment of the sins of the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites was over, or it would be over soon enough, sorry, because it would be done at the cross. But he already knew that the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba would be declared righteous on the day of judgment because they had already received the righteousness that is of faith.

Where did Paul learn that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness even the righteousness which is of faith? Romans 9:30-31, he says, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." The Gentiles have it. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." And what do we have happening in Matthew 12? The Pharisees keep on pointing to the law and say, "Are you allowed to heal on the Sabbath? Are you allowed to pick corn on the Sabbath?" They were trying to establish their righteousness

based on the law and because of that they spoke words of unbelief and therefore did not attain to the righteousness of faith. The Gentiles received the preaching of Christ and believed and attained to the righteousness of faith and when Jesus gives examples to us, he points to the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba and he already knows that they will arise to condemn the Pharisees because they're already safe in him because of the righteousness which is of faith.

And that leads us to the most important question of all: where did Christ hear this? Christ tells us that he heard it from his Father. He was unable to say anything except what his Father had told him to do. The very first day he stood up to preach his first sermon, the very first thing he did was provoke the Jews to jealousy by saying that salvation had gone to the Gentiles, and then in Matthew 12:37 he actually demonstrates for them very vividly, he turns on his heel after being rejected by the Pharisees, preaches to the Gentiles and Matthew tells us that's what Isaiah had foreseen, and then Jesus comes back and says basically the Gentiles would be acquitted by their words on the day of judgment but you will be condemned by yours because upon the preaching of the word, they responded in faith and upon the preaching of the word, you responded in unbelief and rejected him.

Those Gentiles achieved the righteousness of faith the day they heard and believed the preaching of the word of God and that answers the question that we have to get back to is that we are being asked to join with Roman Catholics, reach our hands out in response to their overtures about justification, join them in their erroneous doctrine of justification that actually puts words in Jesus' mouth and then asks us to believe those false words, things that Jesus did not say. "As Jesus says justification will be by words therefore join us in affirming justification by works," we can't do it. It's not our place to take a word out of Jesus' mouth and put another one in its place as much as it might satisfy the pride of the human mind to add works back into justification. But the real question is not what Gospel did Luther preach or what Gospel did the Reformers preach so that we could believe the same thing, it's really not even what Gospel did Paul preach so that we could believe the same thing, and really not even what Gospel did Jesus preach so that we can believe the same thing, it's what Gospel does the Father teach? A Gospel from which Jesus could not swerve or deviate, a Gospel from which the apostles were prevented from swerving by the Holy Spirit so that it would be in Scripture for us to believe it so that it would be recorded that Jesus taught that the Gentiles would be justified by their words on the last day by the same righteousness they received the day they first believed the preached word of God.

Who taught that message? Who taught that Gospel? Whose Gospel is it? Jesus says that's the Gospel of his Father. He could do nothing else but to preach it and just like that message I read at the beginning that the anger of God had been kindled and burned to the lowest hell, it reminds us how jealous God is for his people and the anger when people attempt to lead his people astray. Just think about what these men have said by interpreting Matthew 12:37 justification by words, taking it out of its context and forcing it to be justification by works, that's not the message Jesus was commanded by his Father to teach and they are wrong to correct our Lord and Savior in his Gospel to make it something that they can participate in through their works. And on that note, we must

remember when we embrace a doctrine of justification by works, we would be rejecting Christ and therefore rejecting the Father and we cannot do that. We must stand on the Gospel that the Father told Jesus to preach.

And on that note, I'll wrap up on John 12.

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. 46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

That reminds me of what Jason Stellman said when he converted to Roman Catholicism, he said, "I couldn't just go back to Paul, I had to go back to Christ and what he said about works and justification on the last day." I hope some day Jason Stellman does that. At the moment, he has not. He has taken a word out of Jesus' mouth and therefore has rejected the Father who sent him, and all these men who would tempt the church today to reject justification by faith alone are asking us to reject the Father. That's something we simply cannot do.

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