

33rd Week After Pentecost – MONDAY
Today's readings, followed by a few pastoral & personal thoughts.

Today's reading from St James is one of my favorites. It is also one of the least understood parts of the NT, because of a misunderstanding about what "justification" is. Some Orthodox Christians may not see what the "big deal" is here, but this is a "big deal", and a huge stumbling block for many Western believers.

To be "justified" is to become righteous. This is not imputed unto us by fiat from God, but comes about because of our struggle to be righteous, and the grace of God helping us. Before the incarnation, no struggle for righteousness could be wholly successful. God became man, and changed fundamental human nature, making it capable of total righteousness – total "justification".

The great chasm in understanding comes from considering "justification" to be a legal process, where Jesus Christ offered a perfect sacrifice to His Father by proxy. Orthodox understand justification to be the gradual change of the inner man to holiness. All this is made possible because of the incarnation. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In all things in life, *we learn by doing*. Justification is no different. The Christian must "hear" the Gospel (whether by mouth, written word, and always by the inner groanings¹ of the Holy Spirit) and act upon it to know God. Knowledge in the scriptural sense always involves action. One could also say: faith always involves works.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (James 2:25)

If we do not emulate Christ in our works, we cannot know Him – we cannot be justified. The works are part of "knowing" God. Without them, we do not change.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

There is a righteous recent Greek nun, who recommended that the Christian would read St James EVERY DAY. This is how important it is that we understand faith and works.

¹ Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered

James 2:14-26 14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Mark 10:46-52 46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Bibliography

The Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St Mark, by Blessed Theophylact, published by Chrysostom Press - <http://www.chrysostompress.org/>. ALL FOUR BOOKS ARE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

Priest Seraphim Jan 13/26 2009

[St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas](http://www.orthodox.net/scripture/pentecost-monday-33_2009_james2;14-26+mark10;46-52.html)

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