

August 2012 Prayer Letter from
Jon & Nancy Swanson

This issue is important!

“You see that a man is justified
by works, and not by faith alone.”
James 2:24 NASB

Greetings Friends & Campus Ministry Supporters—for whom we remain sincerely grateful in Christ Jesus our sure Hope!

We have a strong Catholic presence on one of the campuses we serve. **Imagine** how one of our students felt being told AND shown evidence that the Catholic students are more Bible-honoring than the *Protestant* believers. Here’s the story as best I can recall:

Another student’s appeal (to this Christian student of ours) was that she and the majority of non-Catholics do not accept the biblical teaching of James 2:24. Instead, Sarah was told, many Christians actually end up **denying passages in the Bible** in favor of ascribing to one of the Reformation tenets, *Sola Fide* (faith alone). “How could this be?” she wondered.

I had to remind her that salvation is a free gift of God that we do not merit in any way. While the words of our Lord (in Matthew 12:36,37) are True, we must come under God’s gracious provision in Jesus Christ in order to be saved from our sin. Our good works never forgive sins. I went on to say, “This presents another opportunity to test what our foundation of Truth really is.” “What do you mean?” she asked. Without quoting exactly, I said something like this:

“Do you remember our ‘Truth Matters’ mini-series last semester? We learned from Christ’s example that we, even today, must also shun putting our religious traditions as more authoritative than God’s Word. Mark 7 nails this crucial mind-set. This includes man-based doctrines which actually run contrary to the full revelation of the Word of God. Is it possible the treasured dogma (due in part to Martin Luther’s German mistranslation of Romans 3:28 – his translation in English: “a man is justified by faith alone” – the Greek word actually means “apart” or “apart from”) of Protestants is actually a doctrine with great intention **but** which actually misses the mark - in light of the **full** Counsel of Scripture?”

Sarah went on to ask, “So the Catholics are right?” “**Not necessarily**, Sarah,” I replied (emphasizing the difference between a Bible-honoring faith and works perspective of justification – that is, works that are done in Christ after one’s new-birth and as one abides in Christ/walks in the Spirit – from that of a works’ righteousness heresy). “Frequently some Catholics adhere to some form of justification by works but fail to balance it with the essential prerequisite: **new birth through Jesus Christ alone** – John 3. Perhaps a few quotes from important passages would help set this topic in biblical balance.” I then gave her a document (included in this letter) which wonderfully affirms the biblical data on this topic of faith and works.

Why do I share this story? Because we so often fail to apply Proverbs 3:5,6 by leaning on our finite understanding as we build our view of some very important doctrines. The handout is available to you (the reader of this prayer letter) should you wish to receive it. It’s also found in a very important (for today) work called, *The Final Trumpet Rapture Gathering* – available through Amazon.com. Since I am the author of this gift to the Church, please contact me if you need clarification on the material therein. Please note: I am sincerely not boasting in all this. The appeal in this work is Bible-honoring and places human opinion in its proper perspective. All that to say: The appeals in the material above, the handouts and the book reflect data we literally find in our Truth foundation, God’s holy Word. So there is no boasting here, just a simple presentation of what God’s Word actually teaches for the sake of protecting His Family in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Please be in prayer for us as we once again begin preparing for another academic year of ministry. THANK YOU!

Sincerely, to make Him known and to know Him more,

Jon Swanson

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P.S. We affirm both sides of justification and thus use (in the setting of college ministry efforts) media emphasizing one aspect of justification – positional righteousness – while at the same time affirming the full biblical data on this important topic. The title of a new DVD that we’ve recently added to our materials is called, *The Biggest Question*.