

Last week...

- 1) Centrality of God and his character
- 2) Centrality of God's Word
 - a. *The standard*
 - b. God cannot inspire error

COMMITTED TO FAITH ALONE

- ▣ The 3rd distinctive of Reformed Theology is justification by faith alone.
- ▣ Luther said, it is “the article with and by which the church stands, without which it falls.”
- ▣ It touches the very heart and soul of the gospel itself. It’s not just a trivial theological debate.
- ▣ This discussion deals with the problem of how an unjust person can stand before a perfectly righteous God. For that to be possible, a person must first be justified.
- ▣ Is this really that serious?

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Some verses dealing with justification by faith:

Romans 3:22-30; 4:3, 5, 11, 16; 5:1, 9; 9:30, 33; 10:4,
9-10; 11:6

Galatians 2:16, 21; 3:5-6, 8, 14, 22, 24

Ephesians 2:8

Philippians 3:9

1 Timothy 1:16

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- ▣ The Reformation focused on the question of *how* a person is justified.
- ▣ On what basis or grounds does God ever declare anyone just?
- ▣ Must we first become just inherently before God will make such a declaration?
- ▣ Or does he declare us just before we are in ourselves actually just?

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John Calvin answered the question this way:

“A man is said to be justified in the sight of God when in the judgment of God he is deemed righteous and is accepted on account of his righteousness. For as iniquity is abominable to God, so neither can the sinner find grace in His sight, so far as he is and so long as he is regarded as a sinner. Hence, wherever sin is, there also are the wrath and vengeance of God.

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He, on the other hand, is justified who is regarded not as a sinner, but as righteous, and as such stands acquitted at the judgment-seat of God, where all sinners are condemned. Thus we simply interpret justification as the acceptance with which God receives us into His favor as if we were righteous. And we say that this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.”

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1 Peter 2:24 says, “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. “

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. “

Do we really believe this?

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- ▣ Reformers taught of a “forensic justification” – a legal declaration of our justification.
- ▣ The ground of this legal declaration is the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to our account.
- ▣ This concept was considered “legal fiction” by Rome.
- ▣ For Rome, God can pronounce or declare a person to be righteous only if that person first becomes and is actually righteous.

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- How are we made righteous in the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification?

Baptism

- Grace of Christ *infused* into the soul.
- Cleansed of original sin.

State of
Grace

- Cooperate with the infused grace by living a life of good works.

Justified
State

- God will now call you righteous because you have actually become a righteous person.

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- ▣ Also note in the Roman doctrine that...
 - the grace of justification is not permanent. It may be lost when you commit **mortal sin**.
- ▣ Venial sin = real sin, but less serious
- ▣ Mortal sin = kills the justifying grace in the soul. Mortal sin destroys grace but not faith.
- ▣ In other words, a person can retain true faith and still not be justified.
- ▣ Sacrament of Penance -> restores the state of grace

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- ▣ How did the Roman Catholics *differ* in their view of grace and faith.
- ▣ BOTH the Roman Church and the Reformers believed that grace and faith are *necessary* for justification.
- ▣ However, the Roman Church did not believe that they were *sufficient*. In other words, we must add our *works* to faith in order to receive salvation.
- ▣ Reformers believed that the *work of Christ* became the sufficient condition for us.

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Roman
Catholic
View

Faith



Works



Justification

Reformed
View

Faith



Justification



Works

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- ▣ So where does “works” come into play? What is its relevance in the Christian’s life?
- ▣ Reformers taught that justification is by faith alone, but *faith is never alone*. It always manifests itself in works.
- ▣ How John Calvin reconciles Paul and James: “Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance (appearance) of faith. In one word, [Paul] is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works.”

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- ▣ How else can we describe this saving faith?
 - 1) *notitia* – refers to the content of saving faith. Faith has an object. It is not empty or faith in nothing.
 - 2) *assensus* – assent or agree or subscribe to the truth of the content. In other words, we do not believe in what we believe to be a myth.
 - 3) *fiducia* – personal trust and reliance on Christ. Is Christ precious to you? Is he your treasure?

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Justification

| Roman Catholic View | Reformed View |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Instrumental cause: baptism | Instrumental cause: faith |
| Infused righteousness | Imputed righteousness |
| Inherent righteousness | Alien righteousness |
| Analytical justification | Synthetic justification |
| Grace plus merit | Grace alone |
| Faith plus works | Faith alone |
| Christ's righteousness plus ours | Christ's righteousness alone |
| No assurance of salvation | Assurance of salvation |