

# THE DOCTRINES OF REPENTANCE AND JUSTIFICATION

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Rom 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

### **The Order of Salvation**

God is a God of order; He is immutable and functions in one way when it comes to soteriology. If you notice in the Romans passage we opened this discussion with you can see the way this miracle unfolds. In Reformed thought, this is commonly called the Order of Salvation. That royal pathway is:

Predestination/Election, The outward call/inward call, Regeneration, Conversion (faith and repentance), Justification, Sanctification and finally, Glorification.

Here is help from Louis Berkhof on the Ordo:

The Ordo Salutis describes the process by which the work of salvation, wrought in Christ, is subjectively realised in the hearts and lives of sinners. It aims at describing in their logical order, and also in their interrelations, the various movements of the Holy Spirit in

the application of the work of redemption.<sup>1</sup>

Given what Berkhof says, it is relevant to this paper to understand a bit about the order of salvation before speaking on any of its components. The focus of this paper will be to discuss two of the described components in the order of salvation, Justification & Repentance and how it relates to the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace. One will be able to see from this treatment on these covenants that Justification and Repentance flow out of the decrees of God and that alone. As we will show, the decrees of God and their efficacy are in no way dependent upon the creature's faithfulness

When we consider the doctrine of Justification, there are varied definitions among peoples that lay claim to the title 'Christian'. Looking over history, from the beginning, there sprung up many false teachings in regard to the doctrine. We can see the Apostle Paul dealing with how it should be properly understood in the Book of Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. One example of such error would be that of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome's theology is a works based salvation. All theologies that reject perseverance of the saint are aberrant and are the antithesis of justification by faith alone. In reality, most mainstream theologies are Arminian and fall short of biblical truth. These groups redefine the doctrine of justification by faith alone by adding a humanly work as a prerequisite or in combination with justification. It is important to note that even within the present reformed community of God the problem rears its ugly head in the

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<sup>1</sup> Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Eerdmans, 1996.

Federal Vision movement. It is my personal belief that men, by their nature want to have some sort of responsibility in their salvation. They cringe at grace and want to be able to brag about how good they are even though God's word tells us differently.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.<sup>2</sup> \* (All following scripture references in this paper from same source)

### **The Covenant of Redemption and its relevancy to Repentance and Justification**

To better get our hands on the essence of this doctrine, I believe it is important to attempt to try and understand what is at the crux of justification and where it originates. In My opening remark, we read in Romans that 'all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose', that God 'foreknew and predestined' men, by calling them unto Himself, and to those He calls, He justifies. One can easily see that at the crux of this calling are the decrees of God. It is the basis of 'calling'. Well, one who is not familiar with this doctrine may inquire: "What was God's 'purpose' in calling men?" It is here that we will begin and consider the Covenant of Redemption:

The covenant of redemption is the eternal agreement within the Godhead in which the Father appointed the Son to become incarnate, suffer, and die as a federal head of

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<sup>2</sup> Nelson, Thomas. *The New King James Version Bible*. 1982.

mankind to make an atonement for their sin. In return, the Father promised to raise Christ from the dead, glorify him, and give him a people. Two of the earliest theologians to write about the covenant of redemption were Johannes Cocceius and John Owen, though Caspar Olevian had hinted at the idea before them. This covenant is not mentioned in the Westminster Standards, but the idea of a contractual relationship between the Father and Son is present.<sup>3</sup>

Christ is the surety for the elect; the ‘scapegoat’. God cannot be the surety as surety denotes a defect. In God, there is no darkness or corruption. Christ willingly submits to the Father in light of His love for the elect of God. When you ponder the Covenant of Works, Adam was without surety. Adam was the procurer of life or death at that specific time.

Scriptural support for the Covenant of Redemption can be found in Psalm 2:7-9, Psalm 110:1-4, Isaiah 49:8, Isaiah 53:10-11; Zechariah 6:12-13, John 6:37-39, Eph 1:3-8, Phil 5:5-11, Rev 5:9-10, Rev 13:7-8.

One can easily deduce from the passages I present that God had a plan in the Covenant of Redemption; in this plan, the Lord decrees to give the Son a certain group of elect individuals, decided before the foundation of the world as a love gift for His willing sacrifice for these elect individuals. Think of this covenant akin to the example in scripture on the Potter and the clay;

Jer 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:<sup>6</sup> “O house of Israel, can I not do

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia. "Dictionary of the Christian Church." Various authors.

with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel!

Romans 9:20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? <sup>22</sup> What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Note that these vessels were ‘prepared beforehand for glory’. In the Covenant of Redemption, in the finer print, there is surety. The elect are vessels prepared for glory, ‘beforehand’. In the same way, as described in these two passages, the potter uses the clay as he determines to use it, practically speaking, we are clay in the hands of God and it is God alone who determines how the clay is to be used. The clay does not speak nor participate in how it is used or formed. God’s plan was to justify individuals by His grace alone. The Covenant of Redemption bears witness to this fact. If men are part of the equation and their justification is based on their good works, how could God choose individuals in the Covenant of Redemption, prior to the foundation of the world, when the outcome would ultimately be left up to the creature and how good he does in this life? It would have to be arbitrary! Does God ever do anything by chance or arbitrarily?

Before we can speak of justification, we will briefly address that which leads up to how grace comes to mankind in Christ.

**The Covenant of Grace is a covenant of love**

After Adam's creation, he is placed in the garden; he and his wife. They are commanded to not eat of the tree in the midst of the garden. In essence, 'do this and live'. This is known as the Covenant of Works. God warns them if they eat of the tree, they will surely die. Eve is deceived; Adam is negligent in his federal headship and the sin is committed. God responds as the Judge He is, casting the family from perfection and life changes forever.

Immediately after the fall we see the gospel first preached in Gen 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

In contrast to the Covenant of Works, a covenant of death and condemnation now due to the fall, the gospel of the Covenant of Grace is now a message of grace and love. As the Protoevangelium cites, this covenant will come by way of the bruising of the head of the serpent by Messiah, the Christ. The Gospel is good news!

The Reverend John Howe expresses this beautiful idea here:

The wrong that man had done to the Divine Majesty, should be expiated by none but man, and could be by none but God. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Howe, John. *The Whole Works of the Reverend John Howe, M. A. : With a Memoir of the Author*. Vol. 1.

It is at this point where the order of salvation becomes evident and highly relevant. In the giving of the gospel message, the initiation of the Covenant of Grace is implemented. Men are now, based on Adam's sin, all fallen. The stain of sin is unavoidable. All men born of women are tainted. In Romans 3 we read, 'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'. What this actually means is that men can no longer be saved by the law. It must be by God's grace and mercy alone, through faith in Messiah alone.

Consider that God elects and predestinates all those born under Adam; some to glory and others to condemnation. God calls the elect to himself by the preached word; none of His word returns void and accomplishes all it was set out to accomplish. Think in terms of how the world was created. God spoke and it was so. Jesus said it best when he said, 'my sheep hear my voice and they follow me'. The preacher calls, the elect are regenerated and respond rightly to the gospel message, being justified freely by grace, fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption, systematically. It is not left up to chance. Would it not be irresponsible of a sovereign God to cast the responsibility of this covenant on the faithfulness of the creature? This is a most important idea in light of the doctrine of Justification. Well, you might say, "Scott, but how do you know that God did not decree that men would play a part in their justification in this covenant?" This is a good question and fair, worthy of a response.

If you look at the scriptures I posted earlier on the Covenant of Redemption, you see no communication in the word of God in regard to this covenant including the creature in the equation. The covenant was between the Father and Son alone, period. God in His foreknowledge knew well that after the fall, men were impotent in this regard; how could a sinful



creature ever approach a holy God? The only solution would be the Lamb of God who would be perfect, fulfilling all the requirements of the covenant of works.

What I have attempted to do thus far in this paper is to create a word picture of sorts showing how it would be fruitless on one hand to propose that God's creation would play an integral part in their justification when the plan had been marked out in the economy of the Godhead, prior to men even being created and on the other, logically impossible in light of these facts I have shown. When you take into account all of these facts, one can easily see that the house you have built is built on firm foundation, not on sand as Rome and the Arminian's propose.

In line with the order of salvation, repentance comes before justification; hence we will speak briefly on this component as to make the transition coherent.

### **What is Repentance?**

Repentance is the spiritual condition, given of God to the elect alone, which is the acknowledgment of sin against God and His law, sadness over this sinning, a illumination of being unclean in light of the Holiness of God, the confessions of the sin to God alone and the turning away of said sin. Repentance is acknowledging that you are a sinner and bring nothing to God that is acceptable. Repentance is the throwing of yourself unto the righteous Judge, knowing that you deserve nothing more than condemnation, begging for mercy in His Son alone. The Greek word for repentance is:

3340. μετανοέω metanoeō; from 3326 and 3539; *to change one's mind or purpose*:—  
repent(26), repented(5), repents(3).<sup>5</sup>

As shown above, repentance is a change of one's mind. The reality is, God changes the heart of stone in the elect and replaces it with a heart of flesh. See Ezekiel 36:26 Events such as these are nothing less than a miraculous work of God's divine sovereignty and decree. It is definite. God does not reason with His creation. The Apostle Paul was knocked to the ground and turned, heading afterwards in the opposite direction. See Acts 9:1-9 and John 11:43

**Faith and Repentance always precedes justification.**

Our justification is made effectual through faith and repentance. A good example, when we speak of faith and repentance would be to consider a coin; repentance is on one side and faith on the other; they cannot be separated. All men who repent have been regenerated and converted of God. Biblical repentance is only seized by those the Lord grants repentance to.

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2 tells us:

<sup>24</sup> And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,  
<sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them  
repentance, so that they may know the truth,<sup>26</sup> and *that* they may come to their senses

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas, Robert, I. *new American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*.  
Anaheim:

*and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

Another excellent example is: 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14 which illuminates a biblical repentance:

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Additionally, The Westminster Confession of Faith helps:

Chapter 15; Of Repentance unto life

I. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.

II. By it a sinner, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.

III. Although repentance be not to be rested in as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.

IV. As there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.

V. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.

VI. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof, upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy: so he that

scandalizeth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended; who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.<sup>6</sup>

Additional passages that are helpful: 1 John 1:9, Acts 3:19, Luke 13:3, Ezekiel 18:21-23, Acts 17:30, 2 Peter 3:9, Proverbs 28:13, Revelation 2:5

### **Repentance is continuous**

A fine example in scripture is 1 John 1:9-10. It shows our struggle with sin and the command to confess. In this confession is the fruit of the need for continual repentance:

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.<sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Does sanctification play a part in when and how men repent? Think about your own walk and tell me. Did you repent of every piece of baggage in your life all at once? Of course not! When I pose this question, I do so in respect to the idea that all men suffer from besetting sins.

Sanctification and repentance are two peas in a pod. One doesn't happen apart from the other. As we read and study God's word, the Holy Spirit identifies those things in our lives which run

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<sup>6</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996.

contrary to God's word and His will for our lives. In that, sanctification plays an integral part in our repentance. Think about how many things the Holy Spirit has sifted out of your life in the period you have walked with the Lord. All of those things are rooted in sanctification and the outcome of that sanctification is Godly sorrow and repentance. Without repentance, it can never be called sanctification and without the sanctifying work of God's word, it could never be true repentance. These two things go hand in hand.

Upon belief, men are given the ability to repent. When we believe, we are by default justified. We will discuss justification a bit later in this paper but at this point I want to state that when we are justified, we are forgiven in Christ. You might inquire, "Scott, but are all our sins forgiven? Past, present and future?" Yes they are-in Christ! However, as we are discussing here in this portion of the paper it is important to understand certain distinctions that are inherent to the doctrine of repentance; even though we are forgiven and we were allowed to repent upon belief and converted, believers are still under the pressures of sin and still fall to temptation from time to time. We are told to continually fight the good fight, run the race, etc. In that, repentance is much akin to our sanctification; repentance flows out of our sanctification. Repentance is the flower that blooms in our sanctification. Believers are commanded to repent and confess sins. So yes, we are forgiven absolutely. Practically, we still respond in like manner, according to that power that is working in us and hate the sin that often entangles us and repent of them as they occur. The initial repentance that men do when they believe does not cover future sins. The justification portion of the decree does; we are forgiven and justified. However, repentance is past, present and future. In this, it is entirely different from us being forgiven in Christ and being justified. Let me give you an example:

Acts 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,<sup>31</sup> because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Acts 26:20 “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,<sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

One can see from the above passages that ‘doing works worthy of repentance’ denotes a continuous practice. It is not just one time. Our initial repentance is that repentance God allows; it is specific to our salvation at that moment.

The next question to ask may be, is repentance absolute? In other words, how can we believers reconcile the fact that we have repented of certain sins more than once? Are there different degrees of repentance? For example: The term repentance means to turn away from the sin and head in the opposite direction. If all believers have besetting sins, they are revisiting sins they have committed in the past; they have turned and headed in the opposite direction only to eventually return to it. Is this true repentance? I would be hard pressed to consider these sins unrepentant as at the moment, all of us would agree that we hate the sin in question, yet when temptation arises, we stumble. I had a certain sin that I struggled with for a good portion of my walk; praise God that He has given me victory over it in recent years.

When I make mention of ‘degrees’ in repentance, I use the term to describe that some sins are more difficult to repent of, hence I believe there are degrees to our repentance. I call these absolute repentance and gradual repentance. For instance, when I was saved, my repentance of

rejecting the gospel was absolute and immediate. Cussing was the next to go; it was gradual, but went much quicker than the other sin I make mention of. God allows for these degrees, obviously. For example, the Apostle Paul speaks of a pattern of a repetitious sin in his life; Christians are never without sin, hence, Christians are always repenting-continuously. Just like we are called to pray without ceasing, we should be always repenting because the steady stream of sin never ceases. For example, who loves the Lord with all their heart, mind and soul? Practically speaking, no one does. One would like to be able to respond to this question in the affirmative, but when you consider how you love the Lord, it is not the way He has commanded and He knows that about us. Praise God for grace! Look at what Paul says about the issue:

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. <sup>16</sup> If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. <sup>17</sup> But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I would only add in relation to repentance, all repentance begins in the heart. If God does give the believer true repentance, the heart of that believer will not ultimately hate the sin he is committing and turn from it. Can we call this dog returning to its vomit, true repentance? A dog is not a true believer; God's children are not called 'dogs'! The believer is under grace; Christ is familiar with our frames of dust as He was tempted in the same way we are tempted and fail. He Himself didn't falter where we do. Praise God! We can see in scripture where God leaves a thorn in the side of one of His children to humble them. This makes the believer more dependent on the grace of God. Remember, it is a heart issue. Make the distinction between stumbling and an

indulgence. Believers have the heart of God and often stumble. To indulge a sin and embrace it is a flag of warning for those who call themselves Christian. Believers should never be indulging sin.

In the next section, we will discuss ‘fruits worthy of repentance’. Possibly, ‘besetting sins’ fall into this category. Possibly, any sin returned to is considered ‘unworthy repentance’. Think, grace, degrees, worthy versus unworthy repentance.

### **Fruits worthy of repentance**

Matt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,”

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,<sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

As made mention in the previous, the regenerated elect of God can only produce ‘fruits worthy of repentance’. We can see that there is ‘fruits’ that are worthy and ‘fruits’ that would be considered unworthy. What I have already written should guide you in understanding this distinction that the Apostle addresses. See also Matt 3:8, Luke 3:8, Acts 26:20

### **True repentance versus false repentance**



Thomas Watson writes:

A man sees that though such a sin is for his pleasure—yet it is not for his best interest. It will eclipse his credit, harm his health, or impair his estate. Therefore, for prudential reasons, he dismisses it. But true leaving of sin, is when the acts of sin cease from a principle of grace infused into the soul—as the air ceases to be dark from the infusion of light.<sup>7</sup>

2 Corinthians 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.<sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Men repent not only because they must, but that they can; those that repent have been enabled by God's Spirit. God's grace is irresistible. God calls and all creation respond accordingly. This distinction of God allowing men to repent is of the utmost importance in understanding the difference between false repentance (which in fact is a misnomer) and true repentance. Yes, it is I who repent, yet it is God who allows my repentance. In my retrieving of the gospel message, it is I who receive and accept; however, I accept because of the sovereign work God has already done in my heart. See John 1:12,13,3:3

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<sup>7</sup> Watson, Thomas. "The Doctrine of Repentance by Thomas Watson, 1668." *Gracegems.org*.

In light of the Ordo Salutis, God commands all men, everywhere to repent, See Acts 17:30; however, not all men are able. Even though all men everywhere are commanded to repent, true repentance only follows regeneration and technically speaking, is only evidenced in the elect of God. What may resemble repentance in the reprobate is nothing more than a morality of sorts. I will attempt to draw a sharper line in the following portion of this paper.

At the root of true repentance is the Holy Spirit. Consider the repentance of Judas and contrast that with the repentance of Peter. The scriptures tell us that Judas repented. His repentance was according to worldly standards and conscience; it was a form of morality and guilt only. Peter's was true. If you'll look again at the previous passage I posed above from 2 Corinthians it clearly shows that 'the sorrow of the world produces death' and that's exactly what Judas got. If one does not have the spirit of God, all repentance is in vain. As well, consider Cain (Gen 4:10-15), Ahab (1 Kings 21:27-29), Esau (Gen 27:40). All of these examples are identical to Judas. There is grieving, but not unto salvation and definitely not according to the work of the Holy Spirit. As previously mentioned, this aberrant type of repentance brings only death.

Richard Sibbes writes:

Spiritual light is distinct, it seeth spiritual good, with application to ourselves; but common light is confused, and lets sin lie quiet. Where fire is in any degree, it will fight against the contrary matter. God hath put irreconcilable hatred between light and darkness at first, so between good and ill, flesh and spirit, Gal. 5:17; grace will never join with sin, no more than fire with water. Fire will mingle with no contrary, but preserveth

its own purity, and is never corrupted as other elements are. Therefore, those that plead and plot for liberties of the flesh, shew themselves strangers from the life of God.<sup>8</sup>

Plummer writes:

But what is true repentance? This is a question of the highest importance. It deserves our closest attention. The following is probably as good a definition as has yet been given. "Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace... [whereby] a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous Law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments."<sup>9</sup>

The believer is filled with God's spirit. We are under grace and forgiven in Christ. Taking into consideration what I have said above on besetting sins, if you are truly a child of God, your heart will be in the right place when it comes to dealing with your sin. It will be met head on, as you want to be obedient and are grateful for what Christ has done on your behalf. You rightly acknowledge that Christ commands perfection. See Matt 5:48. You understand that you participate by this obedience in your sanctification. Given these things, the main component in true repentance is again, God's Spirit residing in you. As mentioned, if you are indulging sin,

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<sup>8</sup> Sibbes, Richard. *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes; The Bruised Reed*. Edited by Alexander Balloch Grosart. Vol. 1. Edinburgh: James Nisbet and Co., 1862.

<sup>9</sup> Plumer, William S. "Repentance and Conversion, Vital Godliness."  
<http://www.apuritansmind.com>. <http://www.apuritansmind.com/tulip/repentance-and-conversion-by-dr-william-s-plumer/>.

there is a problem. If you willingly, without remorse, revisiting particular sins, you need to take inventory, as something is amiss. I am not saying that this is a sign of being still in the flesh and unregenerate, but only you will know that. If you are a child of God, the Holy Spirit will bear witness with your spirit allowing you the power to resist the devil.

James Buchanan writes:

....because they are acts of dutiful obedience on the part of those who have been  
‘accepted in the beloved’, and whom He has adopted as His own children; secondly,  
because they are agreeable to His revealed will; and thirdly, because they are fruits of  
His Spirit’, and, as such very precious in themselves and very pleasing to Him. <sup>10</sup>

When I consider these passages on this portion of the subject, I always refer to the book of Galatians, chapter 5:

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Fruits worthy of repentance will always be an outpouring of these attributes of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>10</sup> Buchanan, James. *The Doctrine of Justification*. Edited by Banner of Truth Trust. 1867.

—. *The Doctrine of Justification*. Banner of Truth, 1867.

When John the Baptist chided the Pharisees, these were the characteristics that he was referring to. False repentance will always lack these fruits described in Galatians as the motivation behind this type of repentance will always have self in mind or a work, not God or the love for the brethren. See also Ephesians 5:9

### **So what exactly is justification?**

Simul Justus et Peccator: ‘At the same time, righteous and a sinner’.

The Latin defines the act of justification in Christ. We are sinners that are robed in the righteousness of Christ; it is His righteousness, not ours. We are at the same time, righteous and a sinner. To remove the robe, sin is in full bloom. When God looks on the justified, He see’s the righteousness of Christ, no longer our sin. The filthy garment of our offerings have been inoculated, once for all time by the willing submission of our suffering servant. John Calvin described this justification as to which our faith hinges upon:

We have now the principal point or the main hinge of the first part of this Epistle, — that we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone. We have not this, indeed as yet distinctly expressed by Paul; but from his own words it will hereafter be made very clear — that the righteousness, which is grounded on faith, depends entirely on the mercy of

God.<sup>11</sup>

In Romans 3:20 we read:

"By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.

Charles Hodge writes:

How can a man be just with God? The answer given to this question decides the character of our religion, and, if practically adopted, our future destiny. To give a wrong answer is to mistake the way to Heaven. It is to err where error is fatal, because it cannot be corrected. If God requires one thing, and we present another, how can we be saved? If he has revealed a method in which he can be just and yet justify the sinner, and if we reject that method and insist upon pursuing a different way, how can we hope to be accepted?<sup>12</sup>

One can see from what Hodge states that to misunderstand the doctrine of Justification by faith

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<sup>11</sup> Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Epistle of paul the Apostle to the Romans*. Bellingham, Washington: Logos Bible Software, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Hodge, Charles. "Justification, the law and the Righteousness of Christ, The meaning of Justification." <http://www.chapellibrary.org>.  
<http://www.chapellibrary.org/files/9413/7643/3261/jtla.pdf>.

alone, in Christ alone is fatal. It is another gospel. It is the antithesis of truth. It is for this reason why the reformed bang this drum so loudly. Rome's doctrine is no less a clanging cymbal, an illicit gospel and guilty of leading magnitudes astray.

Knox wrote in the Scot's Confession:

We confess and acknowledge that the law of God is most just, equal, holy, and perfect, commanding those things which, when perfectly done, can give life and bring man to eternal felicity; but our nature is so corrupt, weak, and imperfect, that we are never able perfectly to fulfill the works of the law. Even after we are reborn, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth of God is not in us. It is therefore essential for us to lay hold on Christ Jesus, in his righteousness and his atonement, since he is the end and consummation of the Law and since it is by him that we are set at liberty so that the curse of God may not fall upon us, even though we do not fulfill the Law in all points. For as God the Father beholds us in the body of his Son Christ Jesus, he accepts our imperfect obedience as if it were perfect, and covers our works, which are defiled with many stains, with the righteousness of his Son. We do not mean that we are so set at liberty that we owe no obedience to the Law--for we have already acknowledged its place--but we affirm that no man on earth, with the sole exception of Christ Jesus, has given, gives, or shall give in action that obedience to the Law which the Law requires. When we have done all things we must fall down and unfeignedly confess that we are unprofitable servants. Therefore, whoever boasts of the merits of his own works or puts his trust in works of supererogation, boasts of what does not exist, and puts his trust in damnable idolatry.<sup>13</sup>

Rom 1

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for

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<sup>13</sup> *Scottish Confession of Faith*. Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1560.

everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “*The just shall live by faith.*”

First things first! Men are by nature, all fallen in Adam. When Adam fell, the sin of Adam is imputed to the entire human race. God is a God of justice and must punish sin. This means that all men are condemned to Hell and rightly deserve it. There is no way to escape this fact; outside of grace, outside of the perfect work of Christ, all men perish and rightfully so.

In the Old Testament, the people of God were required to offer up blood sacrifices in response to the command of God. The sacrifices were to be as perfect, ‘without blemish’. See Exod 12:5, Lev 1:3, Ezekiel 43:22.

These offerings were a covering of sorts-never did they atone; they never justified else there would be two ways of salvation ultimately. In the midst of these offerings, we still have true believers offering these sacrifices in the faith required of the Messiah to come. In essence, this was an outworking of the faith that they already had. Remember, ‘without faith, it is impossible to please God’. The sacrifices pointed toward a more perfect sacrifice that was to come in Christ Jesus. This is why John called Jesus, ‘The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’.

See John 1:29



## **Justification is a legal and forensic**

Justification is a legal and forensic, God declaring the sinner forgiven; the distinction between being sinless and declared sinless must be considered. They are not one and the same thing. In Christ, believers are ‘declared’ righteous. It is Christ’s righteousness fully. So in the Covenant of Grace, based on the Covenant of Redemption, God had decreed a way for undeserving sinners to again enter into harmony with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In the offering up of Himself, according to the Covenant, Christ redeems those previously unredeemable peoples to Himself. To do this, the sacrifice of Christ must fulfill the requirements of the law, i.e. the Covenant of Works. He must be fully man and He must live a perfect sinless life, dying at the hands of His creation, having God the Father pour out the full measure of His wrath on the Son, ultimately fulfilling the agreement. Christ taking on the sins of the elect in no way makes Him a sinner. There is a big difference theologically.

Isaiah 53 helps:

- <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The Hebrew word used here, ‘Laid’:

**6293.** פָּגַע paga (803b); a prim. root; *to meet, encounter, reach*:—approach(1), attack(2),

attacked(1), came(1), cut him down(1), entreat(2), fall(7), fell(4), happen(1), intercede(2), interceded(1), kill(1), make supplication(1), meet(3), meets(3), met(2), pleaded(1), reached(6), spare(1), strike the mark(1), touched(1), touched and reached(1), urge(1).<sup>14</sup>

The same word is used in Joshua 16:7 to describe the borders of the Children of Ephraim and how the borders met. In this way, we can see how God intended the passage in Isaiah to be understood, the sins of mankind physically meeting with the Son of God. These sins were ours, not Christ's. Christ lived a sinless life of perfection. See 1 Pet 2:22, 2 Cor 5:21, Heb 4:15; Justification is a judicial act; In Galatians chapter 5, Paul simulates the highest court. To be justified is to be acquitted! God is judge and he must punish sin. Since Christ's righteousness is imputed to the elect believer; the believer is acquitted of the judgment they so deserve, by the royal sacrifice of Christ Jesus at Calvary. Christ becomes the Kinsmen redeemer for the elect of God. He takes the sin and punishment on Himself that is deservedly for the elect, imputing His righteousness to undeserving sinners. This is received by faith alone, in Christ alone.

The Belgic Confession states:

Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God— who is perfectly merciful and also very just— sent his Son to assume the nature in which the disobedience had been committed, in order to bear in it

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas, Robert, I. *new American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998.

the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death. So God made known his justice toward his Son, who was charged with our sin, and he poured out his goodness and mercy on us, who are guilty and worthy of damnation, giving to us his Son to die, by a most perfect love, and raising him to life for our justification, in order that by him we might have immortality and eternal life.<sup>15</sup>

### **Imputation through faith:**

Men receive the benefit of the Covenant through faith in Christ Jesus. By believing in Jesus, men are justified by that faith alone. Belief is a fruit of regeneration. In a similar respect, the sinful imputation that Adam caused in his fall to his posterity, Christ imputes His perfect righteousness to the elect of God. See Romans 5:12-16, Eph 2:8,9

Justification is the resting upon Christ totally for the benefit and security of salvation and rejecting any outward work by anyone other than what Christ did. To better illuminate this mentality I will refer you to: Rom 3:22, 24, 26, 28-30, 4:3, 4:5, 4:11, 4:16, 5:1, 5:9, 9:30, 9:33, 10:4, 10:9-10, 11:6, Gal 2:16, 2:21, 3:5-6, 3:8, 3:14, 3:22, 3:24, Eph 1:13, 2:8, Phil 3:9, 1 Tim 1:16.

The Apostle Paul tells us that it must be either works or grace; it cannot be both:

Rom 8:6 And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

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<sup>15</sup> de Brès, Guido. *The Belgic Confession of Faith*. Edited by Oak Harbor. Lexham Press, 1997.

And in Galatians:

Gal 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

See Isaiah:

Isaiah 55

1 “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk. Without money and without price. <sup>2</sup>Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. <sup>3</sup>Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—

From the provided scriptures, one can clearly see how we come to the conclusion that salvation must be of Christ alone. You may argue, ‘Scott, but then we see in the book of James and where he says something contrary. See James 2:20-24

Every word expressed in the book of James is true and accurate; however, do not miss the trees for the forest; the distinction between the outworking of justification through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and that which saves a man are totally different. As previously mentioned, it is either all of Christ or none. Christ came to pay a debt no man would ever be able to pay. All of our offerings, outside of Christ’s work are pungent, filthy rags to the nostrils and

eyes of a Holy God. Rome argues that in the Covenant of Redemption, God actually worked into the covenant requirements, our works along with Christ's work in our justification. This flatly rails against what Paul says above. The problem with this thinking is that we can find no treatment of this idea in the scriptures posed earlier in this paper. We confirm that the Godhead covenanted; we see no mention of men being included in that covenant as far as participators. The forensic nature of that covenant would require only the eternal Godhead as participants and rightfully so. Why would an omnipotent God need the creature to create an efficacious contract? This would essentially make our God, impotent-unable to save to the uttermost. Holiness is at its epicenter. It could never be said that fallen men are holy, hence, destroying that argument.

As previously noted, the forensic nature of the Covenant of Redemption would by default, obviously exclude sinful man and works in our justification; here is where Rome errs. How could it be that the Holy Godhead would covenant with that which is unholy? You see none of this idea in scripture outside of the account from James and to be understood as such, would be aberrant. Sanctification and justification are not one and the same! Sanctification is the result of the justification Christ brings. It must be only Christ as Christ is the epitome of holiness and surety. It is He who is the eternal priest, according to the order of Melchizedek. The level of sacrifice must be perfect, the Judge requiring perfection. God does not allow the creature to drag their trash into the equation stinking up the place, for lack of a better term.

The other important distinction to note in light of James' work is, justification is once. It is not continual or a process; this idea is often confused with the doctrine of sanctification. If we follow James, our justification would never be final.

To begin with, let's address what justification is not:

### **Justification is in time.**

Some propose that men are justified from eternity. This idea is a bit problematic. Men are not justified from eternity. Yes, God is outside of time, however, creation is in time. To consider that God has justified me outside of time does serious damage to the order of salvation; where would faith fit into this shift if it were true? Some theologians make faith no longer a requirement for justification and reduce it to a mere *realization* of sorts for those who have been justified.

When we look at the Westminster Confession of Faith on the subject, we read:

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XI: Of Justification

IV. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect,[11] and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification:[12] nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.<sup>16</sup>

Notice that the divines clearly make the needed distinction in regard to when God decreed personal justification, Jesus dying for the elect and the Holy Spirit applying it to the believer.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996.

One might consider that Christ died in time. Scripture tells us that Christ was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. How do we reconcile these two ideas so as to remain biblically consistent? The distinction between God's decrees outside of time and the outworking of those decrees in time assist us to better understand these things. Another thought would be 'Was Jesus justified from eternity as well and if so, why were the sins of His people then laid on him if He were already justified?' Why would God have to punish a man that was already justified? These are a few of the problems with this line of thinking. Men are not justified from eternity.

### **Justification is not a process.**

Rome's error of first and second justification.

John Owen writes:

Those of the Roman church do ground their whole doctrine of justification upon a distinction of a double justification; which they call the first and the second. The first justification, they say, is the infusion or the communication unto us of an inherent principle or habit of grace or charity. Hereby, they say, original sin is extinguished, and all habits of sin are expelled. This justification they say is by faith; the obedience and satisfaction of Christ being the only meritorious cause thereof. Only, they dispute many things about preparations for it, and dispositions unto it. Under those terms the Council of Trent included the doctrine of the schoolmen about "meritum de congruo," as both Hosius and Andradius confess, in the defence of that council. And as they are explained, they come much to one; however, the council warily avoided the name of merit with respect unto this their first justification. And the use of faith herein (which with them is no more but a general assent unto divine revelation) is to bear the principal part in these preparations. So that to be "justified by faith," according unto them, is to have the mind prepared by this kind of believing to receive "gratiam gratum facientem," — a habit of grace, expelling sin and making us acceptable unto God. For upon this believing, with those other duties of contrition and repentance which must accompany it, it is meet and congruous unto divine wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, to give us that grace whereby

we are justified. And this, according unto them, is that justification whereof the apostle Paul treats in his epistles, from the procurement whereof he excludes all the works of the law. The second justification is an effect or consequent hereof, and the proper formal cause thereof is good works, proceeding from this principle of grace and love. Hence are they the righteousness wherewith believers are righteous before God, whereby they merit eternal life. The righteousness of works they call it; and suppose it taught by the apostle James. This they constantly affirm to make us “justos ex injustis;” wherein they are followed by others.<sup>17</sup>

In essence, Rome redefines terms used by Paul and James to make their system work logically for the end in mind. Roman Catholicism fails to be Roman Catholicism if the terms remain biblically sound.

Rome considers Protestants anathematized who hold to imputation by justification by faith alone.

We read in the document from the council of Trent:

CANON IX.-If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.

CANON XII.-If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified; let him be anathema.

CANON XIV.-If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly

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<sup>17</sup> Owen, John. *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold. Vol. 5. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.



justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema.<sup>18</sup>

Most all forms of aberrant justification can be best understood in light of the familiar theologies of Rome, Pelagius and J. Arminius. All theologies that deny justification by faith alone are works based righteousness and denigrate the work of Christ. Rome is most likely the largest theological organization to hold to such an aberrant justification. Arminianism is impotent. It transfers the responsibility of salvation to the creature. Men can fall from grace based on sin and lack of good works. If God cannot keep His sheep from falling away, what does this say for the efficacious nature to justification? It waffles based on the faithfulness of the believer. Rome describes this type of justification as ‘first and second justifications’.

James Buchanan writes in regard to Arminianism:

If the righteousness of man be sufficient, the righteousness of God is superfluous; if the righteousness of God be necessary, the righteousness of man can have no place. Nor can any conciliation or compromise be effected between them, so as to admit of their being combined in one complex ground of acceptance; for they represent two methods of justification which are irreconcilably opposed,-the one by grace, the other by works.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Schaff, Phillip. *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*. Vol. 2. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890.

<sup>19</sup> Buchanan, James. *The Doctrine of Justification*. Edited by Banner of Truth Trust. 1867.  
—, *The Doctrine of Justification*. Banner of Truth, 1867.

## Imputation vs infusion

When we say that Christ imputes His righteousness to the elect, what do we mean by that? Lets again look at the Westminster Confession for a brief description:

### Chapter 11: Of Justification

I. Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. <sup>20</sup>

And here in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Quest. 33. What is justification?

Ans. 33. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins,(1) and accepteth us as righteous in his sight,(2) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us,(3) and received by faith alone.(4 ) Rom. 3:24-25; 4:6-8. (2) II Cor. 5:19, 21. (3) Rom. 5:17-19. (4) Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9. <sup>21</sup>

You might inquire, "Scott, how is imputation different from infusion-they sound very similar?"

The Belgic Confession states:

### Article 23: The Justification of Sinners

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<sup>20</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996.

<sup>21</sup> *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos

Research Systems, Inc., 1996.

We believe that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins because of Jesus Christ, and that in it our righteousness before God is contained, as David and Paul teach us when they declare that man blessed to whom God grants righteousness apart from works. And the same apostle says that we are justified “freely” or “by grace” through redemption in Jesus Christ. And therefore we cling to this foundation, which is firm forever, giving all glory to God, humbling ourselves, and recognizing ourselves as we are; not claiming a thing for ourselves or our merits and leaning and resting on the sole obedience of Christ crucified, which is ours when we believe in him.

That is enough to cover all our sins and to make us confident, freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror of God’s approach, without doing what our first father, Adam, did, who trembled as he tried to cover himself with fig leaves.

In fact, if we had to appear before God relying—no matter how little—on ourselves or some other creature, then, alas, we would be swallowed up.

Therefore everyone must say with David: “Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servants, for before you no living person shall be justified.” Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:6 Rom. 3:24 Ps. 143:2 <sup>22</sup>

The best way to understand imputation is to understand that it is Christ’s righteousness that we are justified by; nothing we do will add to this righteousness nor is anything else needed. We are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. When the Lord looks upon believers, He sees the Son standing in the gap for us. This imputation is made effectual by the faith we place in Christ that He is able, even to the uttermost to save. See Heb 7:25 This faith is ours; it is not Christ’s faith. Men are to exercise faith in salvation. However, it is important to understand that technically speaking, there is no antecedent to justification. This faith we have is a gift and it directly points

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<sup>22</sup> Schaff, Phillip. *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*. Vol. 2. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890.

to the work Christ accomplishes on the believers part. It heralds our inability in and of ourselves and rests on the merits of Christ alone. It cries out, like Isaiah, ‘woe is me’.

John Murray writes:

That we are justified by faith advertises the grand article of the gospel of grace that we are not justified by works of law. Faith stands in antithesis to works; there can be no amalgam of these two (cf. Gal. 5:4). That we are justified by faith is what engenders hope in a convicted sinner's heart. He knows he has nothing to offer. And this truth assures him that he needs nothing to offer, yea, it assures him that it is an abomination to God to presume to offer. We are justified by faith and therefore simply by entrustment of ourselves, in all our dismal hopelessness, to the Saviour whose righteousness is undefiled and undefilable. Justification by faith alone lies at the heart of the gospel and it is the article that makes the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing. Justification is that by which grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; it is for the believer alone and it is for the believer by faith alone. It is the righteousness of God from faith to faith (Rom. 1:17; cf. 3:22).<sup>23</sup>

When we speak of Rome's claim of infused righteousness, it is more of cooperation between the righteousness of Christ and what the person adds. Christ's righteousness is infused into the nature of the believer. It is a catalyst to fuller justification. It does not complete the justification of a believer but give the believer the tools needed for justification; Some of these works can be exemplified in the Roman Catholic sacraments, indulgences etc. It is not a complete justification. Based on this fact, Roman Catholics cannot have full assurance of salvation. On that day, the

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<sup>23</sup> Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955.

Romanist's agree that they will be judged according to this infused grace and the works they have done. In light of this, believers of the Roman system cannot have assurance of salvation and Rome likes it this way. Consider their doctrine on purgatory. All believers go to purgatory awaiting final purification.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

The Final Purification, or Purgatory:

1031 The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. <sup>24</sup>

When we consider Rome's position on purgatory, it denigrates the sacrifice of Christ. It only makes salvation a possibility. The sacrifice of Christ in time guaranteed nothing. In this, we can see how the mass of Rome is such a heretical thing as well; the miracle that occurred 2000 years ago at Calvary was insufficient and Christ needs to be re-sacrificed mass after mass else His people perish. Like the blasphemous mass, purgatory is a process that completes what Christ was

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<sup>24</sup> Church, Roman Catholic. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican City, Rome, 1994.

unable to complete. Interestingly and shockingly, the scriptures do not speak of such calamity and hence, claims as such fall to the ground like wilted flowers.

## Romans 10

<sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. <sup>4</sup> For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

## **Justification versus sanctification**

When we consider this portion of my paper, it is here where Rome and the Reformed emphatically differ. In fact, if you reject justification by faith alone, you are by default an Arminian. When you consider the realm of so called Christianity, 2/3 that claims the moniker are Arminian, if not more. That's shocking to say the least, but true. Most people, who call Christ Lord, dethrone Him by this aberrant theology. In Justification, we are made righteous by the righteousness of Christ. It happens when one believes. It is immediate! Regeneration is from above. See John 3:3 and John 1:12,13. Upon belief, in the order of salvation, men are given the gift of faith, by grace alone. As mentioned, repentance is the other side of the same coin that faith is delivered on. The Arminian believes that if we backslide, we lose our salvation, hence, we will get these miraculous gifts again somewhere later on down the line again. This thinking is unavoidable if you are Arminian. Once believers are converted, the process of sanctification begins. The Holy Spirit takes up residence and sin loses its flavor for the elect. Sanctification is not justification and justification is not sanctification. Sanctification is continuous and

justification is once. Both of these spiritual components are fully efficacious. Both are based on the word of God and as we all know, when God speaks, the universe cranes its neck; even rocks would cry out if commanded.

The Belgic Confession helps greatly on this subject:

#### Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners

We believe that this true faith, produced in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a "new man," causing him to live the "new life" and freeing him from the slavery of sin. Therefore, far from making people cold toward living in a pious and holy way, this justifying faith, quite to the contrary, so works within them that apart from it they will never do a thing out of love for God but only out of love for themselves and fear of being condemned.

So then, it is impossible for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being, seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls "faith working through love, which leads a man to do by himself the works that God has commanded in his Word.

These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable to God, since they are all sanctified by his grace. Yet they do not count toward our justification—for by faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do good works. Otherwise they could not be good, any more than the fruit of a tree could be good if the tree is not good in the first place.

So then, we do good works, but not for merit—for what would we merit? Rather, we are indebted to God for the good works we do, and not he to us, since it is he who "works in us both to will and do according to his good pleasure"—thus keeping in mind what is written: "When you have done all that is commanded you, then you shall say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have done what it was our duty to do.'"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Schaff, Phillip. *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*. Vol. 2. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890.

## **Sanctification is definite.**

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

When we consider the differences between justification and sanctification, the Reformed acknowledge the fact that in justification, men are justified immediately upon belief. There is no process; it happens once. In regard to sanctification, it can be said that we *are* already sanctified, See 1 Cor 1:2, 1 Cor 6:11, Rom 6:6, Heb 13:12, being sanctified, see 2 Tim 2:21, 2 Thes 2:13, Rom 6:1-23 and will be sanctified, Heb 2:10-11.

Aaron Orendorff explains this nicely:

Definitive sanctification, as defined by John Frame, is "a once-for-all event, simultaneous with effectual calling and regeneration, that transfers us from the sphere of sin to the sphere of God's holiness, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God." Definitive sanctification marks us out (or separates us) as God's chosen people – His treasured and covenantal possession (Acts 20:32; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11). So too, definitive sanctification redeems (or frees) us from the dominion (or slavery) of sin by uniting us to Christ, particularly in His death, resurrection and ascension. Sanctification, in this sense, refers to a decisive and radical break with the power and pleasures of sin.

Progressive sanctification, as defined by Wayne Grudem, is "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives." According to John Frame, "We can think of sanctification as the outworking of the new life given in regeneration." It involves the gradual, incremental and (S)piritual work of both putting to death the remains of "indwelling sin" as well as putting on the likeness of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Orendorff, Aaron. Monergism.com/taxonomy



David Mathis writes:

It would be better to say that progressive sanctification is based on definitive sanctification. Christian growth means learning to live like who we already are in Jesus, living out in and through us the holiness that is already ours in him. But even on this best possible reading, there is so much more to be said, and this epithet for sanctification ends up betraying a sloppy understanding of justification or sanctification or both. Justification by faith alone is a beautiful, wonderful, essential doctrine, worth defending to the death. True Christian theology can't do without it and must not minimize it in any way. It is an essential aspect of our relationship to Jesus. But it's not the whole. The Scriptures have much more to say to us than simply get to know your justification. That way of saying, it is careless at best, if not tragically misguided. What we need for practical sanctification is not one Christian doctrine, but all of them. Not one or a handful of Christian Scriptures, but every one. Not part of Jesus, but the whole Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Having said all, I have in this paper, it is apparent that the doctrines of Justification and repentance are often misunderstood, even by many who call themselves Reformed. It is good food for us all to revisit these truths often to be reminded of the worthiness of the scriptures and how truth prevails in light of them.

Psalm 119:101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep your word. 102 I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

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<sup>27</sup> Mathis, David. "Acting the Miracle, God's Work and Ours in the Mystery of Sanctification." *desiringgod.org*. [http://cdn.desiringgod.org/website\\_uploads/documents/books/acting-the-miracle.pdf](http://cdn.desiringgod.org/website_uploads/documents/books/acting-the-miracle.pdf).

**Closing remarks:**

In light of what has been said in this paper on the doctrine of justification, one must take into account that at the epicenter of all life is God's sovereignty. Justification is not by chance. It is a doctrine worked out between the Godhead before mankind ever existed. It is not our plan or works, but that of a divine, immutable creator putting all things under the feet of our suffering Servant, Jesus Christ to ultimately glorify the Father.

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

When we consider these words of our Savior, what did He mean when he said, 'it is finished'? Volumes have been written on these words alone. So much theology is packed into this statement; surely, Christ was not referring to the sanctification of the elect. Hence, it had to do with the work required to fulfill the jot and tittle of the law of God and that covenant made outside of time between the Father and Son. Surely He was not using this specific language to imply an additional work needed to bring about His divine decrees. Knowing our frames, how irresponsible, and in many ways impotent would it be if God took His hand off the cup, passed along that baptism that he grieved over with even drops of precious blood and shared this trial with the creature. Did we suffer as Christ did? Were the sins of all creation cast upon us as well? These are obvious implications that cannot be escaped from if we deny the doctrine of justification by faith alone. By default, outside of a correct view of this doctrine, this is where you end up. We cannot forget that it is God directing all things in our life. It is He who knows

the number of hairs on our heads; it is He who feeds those birds that do not ‘store up in barns’. It is He who has cast all the stars into the immeasurable universe and placed them accordingly. The work of our great King Jesus was sufficient. It had to be else Christ had died in vain. The doctrine of justification is the lynch pin of our faith. Without it, we fall into many errors; it is a chain reaction that occurs which one cannot avoid. The doctrine of justification is true; it protects the elect from self-righteousness. It bellows the level of grace given us when we deserve nothing more than Hell. It amplifies the sin of the reprobate. It glorifies the Godhead and places the throne in its proper place. Misunderstanding this doctrine causes an unnatural revolt in the royal order of things.

What did the prophet Isaiah mean to convey when he wrote:

Isa 53:11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

And what of the Apostle Paul when he wrote in Romans:

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.<sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “*The just shall live by faith.*”

It is easy to conclude that in this faith Paul speaks of and the justification that Isaiah holds to is not based on a works righteousness that God’s creation must establish; It is not Christ plus the works of the creature. Taking into account the whole of scripture, God’s word validates this precious doctrine and that it must be Christ alone who is able. It is He is He alone who is a

‘Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek’! What kind of Priest needs the assistance of those bringing sacrifices to the temple to make those sacrifices acceptable? This thinking is no less than preposterous and based on an irrational theology. Sadly to say, so many in the ages since the crucifixion are enveloped in these errors. The elect know the truth. God’s word is truth; as Jesus said, ‘My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me (John 10:27). The Lord does not leave the elect in errors such as these. The path is narrow, not wide. The masses will always get this wrong, as it is exactly how the Lord has determined to bring about His decree. The doctrines of Rome and the Arminians bring only death. How much work is required? Where is the blessed assurance spoken of in scripture when we consider this aberrant form of justification? What exactly did Christ accomplish dying at the hands of His people? Apparently, it was not enough. The christ of Rome and the Arminians is weak, unable to truly accomplish what he set out to do. In fact, he procured nothing ultimately. Ours is a mighty savior, able to save even to the uttermost. He is mighty, strong and lifted up; His gown fills the temple of God. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, ruling even now. All the work ever needed is ‘finished’. Nothing can be added to that precious work, nor removed! In this, we are set free from the oppressive doctrines of those aberrant groups spoken of earlier. May we heed these truths as we grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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