

## The Reformed View of Justification

October 26, 2008

- *Ordo Salutis*
  - Effectual calling → Repentance & Faith (Conversion) → Justification → Adoption → Sanctification → Perseverance → Glorification
  
- Justification is by Faith
  - Legal declaration – once and for all, instantaneous
  - Not a process, like sanctification
  - Does not make one inherently good, holy, or upright
  - Regeneration institutes a change in nature; justification involves a change of status
  - We don't say "we have no sin;" rather, "we have no guilt" (Heb. 10:14)
  
- Basis for Justification
  - "Imparted" righteousness, "Imputed" righteousness – righteousness that is reckoned to one's account
  - God causes the sinner to legally possess a righteousness and be freed from unrighteousness even while a sinner
  - The merits of Christ are received apart from any works of man; the sole ground is the obedience of Christ
  - Faith is the alone instrument of justification
  
- Justification Differs from Sanctification
  - Justification – once and for all *declared* holy, legal, absolved from all guilt and punishment of sin
  - Sanctification – gradual and progressive *purging* of all pollution and practice of sin, so that sin is progressively weakened, and inherent holiness becomes progressively stronger until finally the person becomes (at death) actually as righteous as he has been legally
  
- Biblical Passages on Justification by Faith Alone
  - Galatians 2:15-21
  - Galatians 3:10-14, 21-25
  - Romans 3:20-28
  - Romans 4:1-5, 23-25
  - Romans 5:1-11

## Westminster Confession of Faith on Justification - 1647

- Shorter Catechism Question 33: What is justification?
  - Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins (Rom. 3:24-25; 4:6-8) **and accepteth us as righteous in His sight** (2 Cor. 5:19, 21) **only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us** (Rom. 5:17-19), **and received by faith alone** (Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9).
  
- Chapter XI.1
  - Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth (Rom. 8:30; 3:24): **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; nor 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** (Rom. 4:5-8); 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Rom. 3:22-28; Titus 3:5, 7; Eph. 1:7; Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Rom. 5:17-19), **they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith**; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God (Acts 10:44; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9; Acts 13:38-39; Eph. 2:7-8).
  
- Chapter XI.2
  - **Faith**, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, **is the alone instrument of justification** (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 3:28; Rom. 5:1): yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love (James 2:17-26; Gal. 5:6).
  
- Chapter XI.3
  - **Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf** (Rom. 5:8-10, 19; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 10:10, 14; Dan. 9:24, 26; Is. 53:4-6, 10-12). Yet, in as much as He was given by the Father for them (Rom. 8:32); and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead (2 Cor. 5:21; Mt. 3:17; Eph. 5:2); and both, freely, not for any thing in them; their justification is only of free grace (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7); that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners (Rom. 3:26; Eph. 2:7).

## Federal Vision View on Justification – c. 2002

- The Federal Vision (aka “Auburn Avenue Theology” or “The New Perspective on Paul”), is a recent movement within Reformed circles that is creating controversy within the PCA and other Reformed denominations. Essentially, proponents of the Federal Vision are redefining justification and other Reformed doctrines in a subtle way. Proponents claim that they are faithful to the Reformed faith; opponents claim that the Federal Vision is a heresy and is a movement toward the Roman Catholic view on justification.
- Key emphases of the Federal Vision view
  - Stresses the necessity of water baptism as the point of conversion; it is an act of regeneration through union with Christ
  - Works of faith are not simply the fruit or evidence of saving faith; rather, works of obedience are necessary to be justified or saved
  - Justification is a process, blurring the distinction with sanctification; personal godliness, abiding in Christ, and keeping His commandments, although not the grounds of justification, are all nevertheless necessary for continuing in a state of justification leading to salvation
  - Unlike Roman Catholicism, does not require penance to prepare for justification
  - Wants to emphasize “faith” without attaching the word “alone” to it
  - Apostates forfeit justification
  - Justification refers to initial justification or initial election; however, final justification is a mystery
- The Federal Vision is a hybridization of the Roman Catholic view on justification
  - Fundamentally, both systems advocate a works salvation
  - Both systems view works as intrinsically linked with justification
  - Both systems believe that men are justified at their water baptism
  - Both systems believe that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is not what totally saves us
  - Both systems believe that the Law of God does not demand perfect obedience
  - Both systems believe that justified men can lose their salvation