

Remembering the Doctrine of Justification

- Martin Luther (1483-1546)
- John Wycliffe (1320-1384)
- John Huss (1372-1415)
- Luther's 95 Theses
- The Protestant Reformation
- Five Solas
 - *Sola Scriptura*

The Bible is the only inspired, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God, the only source for Christian doctrine, and is accessible to all in that, it is clear and self-interpreting

- *Sola Fide*

Justification for salvation is received by faith alone without any mixture of or need for good works

- *Sola Gratia*

Salvation comes by God's grace or "unmerited favor" alone as a free gift, not as something merited by the sinner

Monergism – God acting alone

Synergism – God and man working together

- *Solus Christus*

Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that salvation is through no one else

- *Soli Deo Gloria*

All glory is to be due to God alone, because salvation is accomplished solely through His will and action

- First, the *importance of justification*

- Jesus saw the issue of justification as the main issue in salvation

- Two books of the Bible were primarily focused on clarifying the doctrine of justification, the books of Romans and Galatians

- Martin Luther saw justification as the most necessary doctrine in all of Christianity: “This one, and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine . . . If this article stands, the Church stands; if it falls, the church falls”

- Without justification there is no true salvation, and hence, there is no true church

- Second, the *definition of justification*

- Justification is a right standing before God where the sinner stands righteous before Him

- Justification distinguishes Christianity from all other religions because it is based on faith alone where all other religions are based on works
- Justification in the Old Testament is a legal or forensic term, describing God's judicial act of declaring a person not guilty
- In justification God is the Judge, the sinner is the one on trial for his sins, and God's law is the law of the court by which the sinner is judged
- Third, the *faith of justification*
 - Justification is based on *penal substitution*: a sinner is justified by the sole work of Jesus Christ and His work at Calvary in the place of the sinner and His resurrection from the dead on behalf of the sinner
 - The cause, ground, or reason for our justification is the finished work of Christ alone
 - All men are fallen and under the curse of God and incapable of saving themselves from God's wrath and curse. But God, on the basis of the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ alone (*solus Christus*), grants sinners judicial pardon, which is received solely through faith
 - This justifying faith merely receives Christ and all his benefits, which include His active righteousness (His work on the cross) and His passive righteousness (His perfect obedient life)
 - Christ's righteousness is imputed by God to the

believing sinner so that his divine verdict and pardon is based upon nothing in himself, nor even his own faith, but solely upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness alone received through faith alone

- Fourth, the *grace of justification*
 - No person can believe in Jesus Christ because every person is totally depraved or totally ruled by sin, preventing that person from coming to Christ for salvation
 - God's grace makes Christ's work so attractive that His offer of salvation cannot be rejected, therefore, grace is not coercive or forced but irresistible to the sinner
 - Grace guarantees that everyone God determines to be saved is saved, but never against their will
- Fifth, the *immediacy of justification*
 - Justification is not progressive but immediate upon the faith of the sinner
 - When Abraham believed God, righteousness was immediately put to his account, it was not progressively deposited (Genesis 15:6)
 - When the tax collector was saved, Jesus said he went home justified, not partially or progressively justified (Luke 18:14)

- Sixth, the *completeness of justification*
 - Justification does not need addition, it is the final word from God concerning our standing before Him
 - In 1994 Evangelicals and Catholics signed a document expressing their acceptance of one another and their unity in the gospel
 - This ecumenical coalition thinks it has resolved their disagreement on the doctrine of justification: “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ”
 - Protestants and Roman Catholics have always believed that a person is justified by grace through faith because of Christ, but there is a completely different understanding of this by both groups:
 - Roman Catholics believe that justification is by God’s grace through faith as the sinner is progressively justified through the sacraments, basing justification on faith and works, meaning that justification is never completed in this life
 - Protestants believe that justification is at a final, completed point in time (immediate), never having to be added to by the sinner
 - The official position of the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of justification as stated in the Council of Trent canons (1544)
 - CANON 9: “If any one says, that by faith alone the [sinner] is justified; in such a way 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 accursed”

- CANON 12: “If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified ... let him be accursed”
- Canon 24: “If any one says, that the [justification] received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be accursed”
- Canon 30: “If any one says, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such a way, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be accursed”
- In 1963 Pope John XXIII affirmed that the precepts of the Council of Trent are still binding on the church, and in 1965 Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the same position

- The doctrine of justification is important because:
 - It makes the difference between heaven and hell
 - It defines the true church of Christ
 - It brings eternal disaster if it is denied or confused

References

- Deuteronomy 25:1
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Romans 3:20-22
- Romans 4:3
- Romans 4:20-22
- Genesis 15:4-6
- Romans 4:23-25
- Romans 5:1
- Galatians 3:5-7
- Romans 9:30-33
- Romans 3:23
- Romans 5:10
- 2 Corinthians 4:3
- Ephesians 2:8
- Titus 2:11-13
- Romans 3:24-28
- Acts 13:38-39
- Galatians 5:4
- Galatians 1:8-9