

The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation of the 16th Century

Part II: Roman Catholicism: Infused Righteousness- justification by Faith Alone or Work?

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC INFUSION OF GRACE THAT BRINGS JUSTIFICATION

"Let it therefore remain settled...that we are justified in no other way than by faith, or, which comes to this same thing, that we are justified by faith alone."- John Calvin

SCRIPTURE ALONE, NOT SCRIPTURE PLUS TRADITION:

"Rome professes to hold that the Bible is the Word of God...she also nullifies or destroys the Word. She maintains that alongside of the written Word there is also an unwritten Word, an oral tradition, which was taught by Christ and the apostles but which is not in the Bible, which was handed down generation after generation by word of mouth. This unwritten Word of God, it is said, comes to expression in the pronouncements of the church councils and in papal decrees. It takes precedence over the written Word and interprets it. The pope, as God's personal representative on the earth, can legislate for things additional to the Bible as new situations arise. The Council of Trent, the most authoritative of all Roman councils and the one of greatest historical importance, in the year 1546, declared that the Word of God is contained both in the Bible and in tradition, that the two are equal authority, and that it is the duty of every Christian to accord them equal veneration and respect."- Loraine Boettner

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT 1546-1564

Because of Rome's doctrine of *Semper Idem*, Rome cannot repudiate or correct Trent. The council's sixth session teaches Rome's view of Justification, set forth in response to the Protestant teaching. Rome set forth the importance and necessity of grace by salvation. Also the necessity of faith:

"We are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification." {Council of Trent: VI Session; Chapter VIII}

1) Justification is by faith (*per fidem*), 2) Faith is the "beginning" (*initium*) of salvation, 3) Faith is the "foundation" (*fundamentum*) of all justification, and 4) Faith is the "root" (*radix*) of all justification.

There is an agreement on "faith" with the Reformers, but an exclusion of "alone" from Rome's teaching. Rome believes in "justification by faith", but not "justification by faith alone."

According to the reformers, faith is the instrumental cause ("by"), or the means by which Christ's work is appropriated.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS

Reformers contend for two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper- the Roman Catholic Church celebrates seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony. Roman Theology, contrasted to Reformed Theology, teaches that the Sacraments remove sins: "...supernatural life is generated by Baptism; brought to growth by Confirmation; nourished by the Eucharist; cured from diseases of sins and from the weakness

arising from these by Penance and Extreme Unction."- Ludwig Ott, Roman Catholic Theologian. The sacraments work *ex opere operato*, by the power of the completed act, and their validity does not depend on the orthodoxy of the minister or his state of grace. Grace is infused into the sinner, through the Sacraments making the sinner righteous, thereby God will then justify the sinner.

Reformed: The Reformers taught that the Righteousness of Christ (or merit of Christ) is the sole ground of our justification, and Christ's Righteousness is imputed to the believer by faith (instrumental, not meritorious cause). **Rome:** The Roman Church teaches that the sacrament of Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification. Baptism is the primary instrumental cause of justification in that it is the 1st or initial cause of justification. This grace of justification received in Baptism may be lost, the secondary instrumental cause of justification is the sacrament of Penance. {Council of Trent: VI Session; Chapter XIV}

New Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Justification is conferred in Baptism, the Sacrament of faith. It conforms to the Righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of His mercy."

The Roman Catholic Church teaches clearly that the infusion, rather than the imputation of Christ's Righteousness, makes justification possible if the believe assents to and cooperates with this grace:

"...Jesus Christ himself continually infuses his virtue into the said justified...this virtue always precedes and accompanies and follows their good works, which without it could not in any wise be pleasing and meritorious before God- we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified, to prevent their being accounted to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained also in its due time, if so be, however, that they depart in grace...neither is our own justice established as our own as from ourselves; nor is the justice of God ignored or repudiated: for that justice which is called ours, because that we are justified from its being inherent in us, that same is (the justice) of God, because that it is infused into us of God, through the merit of Christ...after this Catholic doctrine on Justification, which whoso receives not faithfully and firmly can not be justified..." {Council of Trent: VI Session; Chapter XVI} The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is itself a necessary condition for justification. At this point Rome affirms that the doctrine of justification is an essential article of the faith, essential to salvation itself.

What if Roman Catholics and Evangelicals agreed to unite and affirm: "We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ," would there be true unity based on Scriptural teaching? **Rome:** "because of Christ" means infusion...**Evangelical Reformed:** "because of Christ" means Imputation.

Next Class: [Roman Catholicism: The Sacraments](#)

Read: The Book of Galatians, Chapters 4-6

For Further reading: ; [Roman Catholicism](#)- ed. John Armstrong / [Justification by Faith Alone](#)- John Gerstner, R.C. Sproul, Joel Beeke, John Armstrong / [Faith Alone](#)- R.C. Sproul

