

TEACHING GOAL

To study the element of pardon in the doctrine of Justification.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. What is Justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

S.C. 33, L.C. 70-73, W.C. of F. XI, Savoy 11, Young 50

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Romans 5:1-11

Support Passages: Romans 3:24-25, 4:5-6, James 2:21-25, II Corinthians 5:11-21, Galatians 2:15-18, Titus 3:5-7, Colossians 1:19-23, Isaiah 44:22-23

BIBLE STORY

II Samuel 12:1-28, Psalm 51: David prays to be pardoned from his sin by a gracious act of God. David realizes that cannot reconcile himself to God but that God must act to reconcile Himself to David.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Romans 3:23&24

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION

The only way to have peace with God, to be reconciled to Him is through His own gracious act toward wretched sinners such as we all. This alone is the peace that surpasses all comprehension.

SUMMARY

Justification by faith alone is one of the central issues of the Protestant Reformation, the sole authority of the Scriptures being another. We sharply disagree with Roman Catholicism at this point (and with many others, e.g. the Mass). We will even disagree with Lutheran theology on the issue of Justification so far as its application is concerned. Let us, however, draw out the disagreement with Roman Catholic theology which will help us understand the nature of Justification from the biblical and Reformed viewpoint.

Roman Catholic theology sees justification as a combination of the pardon of our sins, the expulsion of in-dwelling sin and the infusion of divine grace. We of Reformed persuasion see it as a legal act of God involving the pardon of our sin and the putting to our account the righteousness of Christ. We do not see it as anything inward or subjective nor as anything that changes us. If justification is an external legal act of God, then it only comes about by His grace, by His sovereign act in our behalf. As soon as we begin to concede that the inward man is involved, then this inward man gains some control over the process of justification working more or less for his own benefit. We also disagree that justification is a process but we say, rather, that it is an act.

Some have likened God's act of justification to the act of a judge who pardons the sin of a criminal. The criminal deserves the gas chamber but the judge declares that his sin of murder is pardoned and sets him free but this only explains our view of justification in part. Remember that there are two parts to it, pardon and imputation. The criminal who is merely pardoned and set free still has his reputation. He would find it difficult to obtain employment or to be accepted by society or by his family and friends, because people would fear him by virtue of his reputation. Now God the righteous judge not only pardons our sin but gives us a new reputation. Not the old reputation which has been changed but he gives to us the reputation of the Lord Jesus. God puts the righteousness of Christ to our account. If we insist on using the catch phrase just - as - if - I'd - never - sinned to state the meaning of justification in popular terms, we must add in the - first - place to capture the concept of imputation.

The real question must of course be, is our view biblical? Romans 5 instructs us that by means of justification we have peace with God, hope of the glory of God, salvation from the wrath of God and reconciliation to God. These are some of the elements of biblical pardon. When Nathan confronted David with the parable of the rich man and the poor man, David declared of the rich man "As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. And he must make a restitution for the lamb four fold because he did this thing and had no compassion."

Biblical pardon also involves restitution and satisfaction which for sinners chosen by God, is effected for them by the blood of Christ. We must observe that all of these elements of justification are provided by the declaration of God and the blood of Christ. None of them result from our own action or by means

of our own inward cleansing. Examine the other passages suggested to support this thesis. Nowhere will you find that the term justification is used in connection with the inward man. Romans 5 tells us that we are justified through Christ (not anything inside us), Galatians 2:16ff tells us that we are justified by faith in Christ not by the works of the law (or something inward). Colossians 1:20 tells us that we are reconciled through the blood of His cross in His fleshly body through death (not through an inward experience). But consider these questions:

1. Do you believe that the grace of God in your heart is able to make you acceptable in the sight of God?

2. Do you believe that Christ as a divine person can dwell in your heart?

3. Do you believe that the in-dwelling of Christ can make your good works entirely acceptable to God?

If you answered any of these questions with "yes" then you still do not understand the biblical principle of justification. We are justified by the grace of God in Christ, not by the grace of God in our hearts. Christ is an objective person who is seated at the right hand of God in heaven, by whose righteousness we are justified.