

How 'Protestant' Are You?

In surveys to date the following questionnaire, has shown that a large proportion of Protestants are more Roman Catholic than Protestant in their concepts of Justification.

Please think each question out carefully before answering. The correct answers represent Biblical truths from the faith once delivered to the apostles and then the Great Reformation.

The answers are at the end and we encourage readers on completion of the test to study carefully the article below '*Justification - A Truth Under Siege*', and to review various articles on Justification/Sanctification, (eg. On our website and in the Salvation Doctrines section).

In each of the following ten questions, mark either (A) or (B) as correct.

1. (A) God gives a man right standing with Himself by mercifully accounting him innocent and virtuous.
(B) God gives a man right standing with Himself by actually making him into an innocent and virtuous person.
2. (A) God gives a man right standing with Himself by placing God's goodness and virtue to his credit.
(B) God gives a man right standing with Himself by putting Christ's goodness and virtue into his heart.
3. (A) God accepts the believer because of the moral excellence found in Jesus Christ.
(B) God makes the believer acceptable by infusing Christ's moral excellence into His life.
4. (A) If a Christian becomes 'born again' (regenerate, transformed in character), he will achieve right standing with God.
(B) If the sinner accepts right standing with God by faith, he will then experience transformation in character.
5. (A) We receive right standing with God by faith alone.
(B) We receive right standing with God by faith which has become active by love.
6. (A) We achieve right standing with God by having Christ live out his life of obedience in us.
(B) We achieve right standing with God by accepting the fact that he obeyed the law perfectly for us.
7. (A) We achieve right standing with God by following Christ's example by the help of His enabling grace.
(B) We follow Christ's example because His life has given us right standing with God.
8. (A) God first pronounces that we are righteous in His sight, then gives us his Spirit to work out that righteousness.
(B) God sends His Spirit to make us righteous, and then he will pronounce that we are righteous.
9. (A) Christ's intercession at God's right hand gives us favour in the sight of God.
(B) It is the indwelling Christ that gives us favour in God's sight.
10. (A) Only by faith in the doing and dying of Christ can we fully satisfy the claims of the ten commandments.
(B) By the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, we can fully satisfy the claims of the ten commandments.

Justification - a Truth Under Siege?

At the time the great Reformation commenced the lamp of the truth of Justification was barely alight. Today I believe that flame is again barely flickering.

As the Bible became more accessible to the common people, various Reformers began to attempt to restore Biblical truths to the masses. The Reformers were unanimous in their emphasis of, and in the teaching on justification by faith alone, through Christ alone, not of works, (Eph.2:8,9).

The word 'justification' comes from the Greek word 'dikaiow' which means: to regard as innocent, to render just, in a judicial sense as a legal and forensic thing. The word is mostly used in connection with judgement or in a legal sense: '*For I know nothing by myself yet am I not justified; but He that judges me is the Lord*', (1Cor.4:3,4). Many other verses could be used to show the legal and judicial sense of the word. The Reformers therefore taught that justification was a legal and forensic *declaration* in Heaven which means a person is now right with God. The word forensic is used in connection with a court of law. Today we have forensic scientists and forensic psychologists who are specialists in legal matters and give evidence in a court of law.

This declaration of justification in the sight of God is described in the Bible as an 'imputed' thing (Rom.4:11,22,23,24; James 2:23). The Greek word is translated as 'credited', 'declared', 'reckoned', 'accounted'. In Romans chapter 4 Paul progressively and clearly teaches justification by imputation. In this chapter the words translated 'accounted', 'reckoned' and 'imputed' all come from the same Greek word, '*logizomai*', which is used no less than eleven times in this one chapter! They are legal and judicial words, (see also 1Cor.4:3,4;Matt.12:37; Rom.3:4).

At the Reformation, the Reformers insisted on going back to the Bible in their understanding of Justification. Yet the Roman Catholic Council of Trent placed an 'anathema' (curse) on any who taught that justification comes 'through the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone'. This was despite several Scriptures such as Romans 4:11 which state righteousness is 'imputed (accounted; declared) unto them. The Roman Catholic religion was well aware that a doctrine of imputed righteousness would dispel the need for continuing justifying graces being mediated through priests in the many Roman Catholic sacraments and rituals.

The word 'imputed' is an outside event. It is here that Catholicism is diametrically opposed to Scriptural and Reformation theology. Catholic doctrine focuses heavily on justification as being an *infusion* and a process occurring inside a person. Roman Catholic doctrine in fact confuses and at times marries Justification with Sanctification. It is here too that many Christians today lack the teaching to discern the difference. As John Bunyan said: '*...If you do not put a difference between Justification wrought by the man Christ without, and Sanctification wrought by the spirit of Christ within...you are not able to divide the word aright; but contrariwise, you corrupt the Word of God, and cast stumbling blocks before the people....*' ('*The Riches of Bunyan*', P.140). Even men like Wesley and other holiness preachers who placed much emphasis on Sanctification, were united with the Reformers in the teaching of Justification.

Justification is an outside, legal, objective and forensic work of Christ for us, (Rom.4&5). The Greek tenses and 'moods' show clearly a once only act, (Rom.4:1-13; 8:32-34), where the sin question is settled forever, (Rom.5:1; 6:23). Sanctification, however, is an inside subjective work of the Holy Spirit in us (Phil.2:12,13; 1:6). This Sanctification is both positional at salvation and progressive throughout our life on this earth before Glorification, (Phil.2:12,13; 1Jn.1:7-10; 3:3). Justification is imputed, (righteousness accounted to; 'unto' us); Sanctification is imparted to us from within by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is the blessing of Justification. At Justification the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to make us holy and to do the work of Sanctification in us. Paul speaks of two gifts - the gift of righteousness (Rom.5:17), and the gift of the Spirit, (Rom.5:5).

This imputation or 'transaction' of righteousness is repeatedly taught in Romans using different translated English words: '*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness*' (Rom.4:3)...'*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness...faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness*' (vs.5-9) '*...it was imputed to him for righteousness...but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead*', (vs.21-24). All the above underlined words come from the same Greek word '*logizomai*'. This righteousness that comes through the above mentioned 'imputation' ('*logizomai*') is not in ourselves or on earth, but in Heaven! Our righteousness is '*The Lord our righteousness*', (Jer.23:6), who sits at the right hand of the Father! John Bunyan said: '*Indeed this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world - namely that a righteousness that resides with a person in Heaven should justify*

me a sinner on earth'. Man's experience and outworking of this is in Sanctification through the Holy Spirit. Paul says the Spirit brings life '*because you have been justified*', (Rom.8:10).

As with Sanctification, similarly '*regeneration*' is the fruit of Justification. Catholicism teaches the reverse - that regeneration is a condition for Justification, hence the emphasis on works to procure it. However, only the justified receive the gift of the infilling Spirit which regenerates them. Man cannot bring about Justification in any way - no man comes to Jesus unless drawn by the Father, (Jn.6:44). However, Catholic tradition sees Justification as the renovating of the internal man, ie. human sanctification by works (eg. sacraments). Rome says we are justified by infusion of righteousness and that this is linked to a continuous impartation of graces through the sacraments which are mediated out through a priest. Because this is never completed it amounts to a program of faith and works to attain justification. The problem with this theology is that one never knows whether he or she is saved or how much of this type of sanctification is necessary to be justified in the end! It invariably falls into working for one's salvation. Hence doctrines such as Purgatory - a place after death to purge and atone for sin so as to be righteous enough to enter Heaven. Rome says that we are justified by God's work of grace in man. Yet the Reformers taught that we are justified by God's work of grace through Christ and that any work in man is rather Sanctification by the Holy Spirit as a result of Justification. It could be said that Catholic theology is subjective and man centred, while the other is objective and Christ centred. Of one you can never be sure if you have enough of God's grace in your heart; the other is sure because Christ has done it all. Romans 3:24 says: '*...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*'. In other words, rather than being justified by anything in us we are justified by what God did outside of us in Christ. We cannot feel it. We should never look within for salvation or we will only see ourselves (and 'filthy rags'), but we should look to Him - our Lord and Saviour - 'our righteousness' (Jer.23:6)! By faith we have the possession of Justification and from that comes peace and assurance because it is based on a finished work done by Christ alone! '*...By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*', (Rom.5:19).

The Reformers contended that Justification was by faith alone, ('Sola Fida'), without works: '*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*', (Rom.3:28); '*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*', (Eph.2:8,9). Justification by faith alone without works essentially means that a man may believe in what God has already done for him, not in himself. Catholicism in practice tends to focus on works rather than faith for righteousness. Yet the Bible is littered with passages that mention faith without any mention of works or the law for righteousness, (Rom.3:21,22; 4:1,13; 9:30; 10:6; Gal.5:5; Phil.3:9; Heb.11:7; etc).

In the Twentieth Century there was a shift by various so called 'Protestant' groups to a more Roman Catholic theology on Justification. This has been enhanced by experiential and 'impartational' type teaching/preaching, not just in Pentecostal/ Charismatic circles, but also across the neo-evangelical church scene. The emphasis is increasingly on the Holy Spirit and less on Christ. 'Anointed' leaders focused on an 'impartation' of spiritual power through 'power encounters'. Subjective mystical New Age type experiences were mediated out.

Today the Holy Spirit is increasingly being glorified. Yet Scripture says He must never attract attention to Himself and that He will always point only to Christ, (Jn.16:13,14). The current waves of teaching in the signs and wonders movement are truly lapping on the shores of a Roman Catholic sanctification! The ecumenical thread running through the above movements is unmistakable. The increased acceptance of, and unity between, Catholicism and Charismatism/Pentecostalism, has in recent years dramatically weakened the original teaching on Justification by faith alone. More than ever we need to return to the foundation and teaching of the doctrine of Justification, as well as the other Reformation truths such as 'Sola Scriptura' (Scripture Alone). These truths were upheld at the expense of many martyrs and much blood shed at the hands of the Roman Catholic religion.

With an understanding of Justification comes a peace, assurance and an increased appreciation of the grace of God and the finished work of Christ. With an understanding of the truths of Justification, many will be

better able to discern the true from the counterfeit. The Reformation truths such as Justification were truths that once burned in the hearts of many. Today there is a generation rising up that may well have little or no knowledge of the importance of such doctrines. The lamp of Reformation truth burns dimly. Many seek after revival and signs and wonders. Perhaps what we need is not 'revivals' but another mighty Reformation?

The cost of truth is high. The Reformation was costly in lives. However, the alternative is an increasingly apostate ecumenical church. May the Spirit of the Lord bring back the truth of Justification to the hearts of many in this generation. May the Holy Spirit use us to teach it to the next generation, that this lamp of truth might yet again burn bright.

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Answers To Questionnaire

1. (A) The key word here is '*accounting*' as opposed to '*making*'. Man is not made to be '*innocent and virtuous*' in himself.

2. (A) The key word here is '*credit*' as opposed to the 'heart' which is never made to be '*good and virtuous*'

3. (A) God accepts the believer *by substitution*, not by 'infusing' any excellence.

4. (B) A believer never 'achieves' right standing with God in and of himself. The right standing is 'by faith' and then sanctification follows (which includes '*transformation in character*').

5. (A) It is by faith alone (see Romans chapter 4).

6. (B) 'Right standing' is not by anything '*in us*' - that would confuse Justification with Sanctification. It is Christ's perfect obedience for us that God accepts and thus declares us righteous upon belief.

7. (B) We do not '*achieve*' right standing by any process of '*following*' any standard or with any '*help*'. We follow in Sanctification because of righteousness declared.

8. (A) The order is Justification, then Sanctification. The Spirit does not '*make us righteous*' or '*pronounce that we are righteous*'. It is God who declares us righteous because of Christ's work.

9. (A) It is Christ who satisfies God on our behalf.

10. (A) It is Christ who 'fulfils' the law for us.