**Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion***

Lesson 22: Justification by Faith (Book 3, Chapters 11-14)

**Chapter 11: Of Justification by Faith. Both the Name and the Reality Defined**

1. A review of redemption: “Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of Him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.”
2. The importance of justification: Justification is “the main hinge on which religion turns.” He goes on to say: “For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of His judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God.”
3. A definition of justification: “He is said to be justified in God’s sight who is both reckoned righteous in God’s judgment and has been accepted on account of His righteousness.”
4. Justification involves 2 aspects: 1) declared “not guilty” by God Himself and 2) being accepted by God
5. Let’s look at the first aspect. Calvin gives another, simpler definition: “We explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into His favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.”
6. Romans 8:33-34 – “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. **34**Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”
7. Acts 13:38-39 – “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, **39**and by him everyone who believes is freed [justified] from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”
8. To be justified by faith is “He who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and clothed in it, appears in God’s sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.”
9. Next, Calvin discusses the 2nd aspect of his definition which is “acceptance.”
10. Ephesians 1:5-7 – “he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6**to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **7**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace”
11. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “For our [elect] sake he [Father] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Christ] we [the elect] might become the righteousness of God.”
12. Faith is the “instrumental” cause of justification. Faith itself does not justify. God alone justifies in Christ. Faith simply receives Christ. Faith is the vehicle that gets us to the person. Christ is the “material” cause of justification.
13. A problematic view of justification: imputed righteousness [Reformed view] vs. infused righteousness [Osiander, Roman Catholic Church]
    1. Imputed righteousness: a legal declaration by God that a sinner is righteous and accepted in His sight on the basis of the perfect life and death of Jesus Christ.
    2. Infused righteousness: The actual divine essence of God’s righteousness is infused in us [dwelling in us] so that we actually partake of God’s divine essence as human beings.
14. Analogy: 2 plates of dung. One plate of dung is covered by pure snow so that the ugliness and smell of the dung is covered up, but the dung doesn’t change. This is imputed righteousness. The other plate of dung is actually changed into pure snow so that it’s no longer dung. This is infused righteousness.
15. Osiander’s view of Infused righteousness has serious biblical errors:
    1. We become saved through sanctification rather than justification.
    2. It blends justification and sanctification together.
    3. It renders Christ’s humanity, including cross and resurrection, unnecessary since it’s only the divine essence that is infused.
    4. It harms assurance of faith. If we are actually righteous then what about the sin that lingers within us?
    5. It leads either to presumption (I’m holy no matter how I live) or doubt (I still sin so I’m not holy and Christ must really not be in me)
16. The Catholic position of infused righteousness also has serious errors:
    1. It combines faith plus works
    2. Works become a part of our salvation so this in some part is “works-righteousness”
    3. Baptism and penance become the “instrumental” cause of salvation
17. Philippians 3:8-9 – “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9**and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith”
18. Romans 4:2-5 – “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3**For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” **4**Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. **5**And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.”

**Chapter 12: Necessity of Contemplating the Judgment-Seat of God, in order to be seriously convinced on the doctrine of gratuitous justification**

1. For Calvin, if people do not rise up to a contemplation of God in His majestic holiness, they will have no sense of their desperate need for rescue or for divine mercy. So this chapter is concerned with how we accept or receive this doctrine of justification by faith.
2. Only when we see ourselves as under God’s frown, with His just penalty against us because of our guilt and corruption, will our consciences grow worried and seek refuge.
3. When we examine ourselves according to Scripture we are cast down “into complete consternation” yet this is the very thing needed to prepare us “to receive God’s grace.”
4. We will never trust Christ until we are contrite and distrust ourselves.

**Chapter 13: two things to be observed in gratuitous justification**

1. Calvin’s concern in this chapter is to not rob God of His honor nor to rob ourselves of peace and consolation.
2. When we claim honor for ourselves, we cheat God of honor belonging to Him. “Man cannot without sacrilege claim for himself even a crumb of righteousness, for just so much is plucked and taken away from the glory of God’s righteousness.”
3. Conversely, any righteousness we claim as our own cannot give peace of conscience. Our works call for condemnation. If we look to ourselves, we’re not looking to God for our salvation.
4. “We must seek peace for ourselves solely in the anguish of Christ our Redeemer. Believers should be convinced that their only ground of hope for the inheritance of a Heavenly Kingdom lies in the fact that, being engrafted in the body of Christ, they are freely accounted righteous. Faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God’s favor but receiving from Christ that which we lack.”

**Chapter 14: the beginning of justification. in what sense progressive**

1. Calvin breaks people down into 4 classes and these roughly parallel the parable of the soils from Matthew 13 in order to bring further clarity to justification.
2. Unbelievers: Even though unbelievers get to experience God’s common grace (life, provision, giftings, etc.), their “virtue” is only external and because they even twist those common grace gifts, they remain in desert of punishment. External virtue is a sham because the gifts aren’t used for God’s glory and their sin pollutes even those common grace gifts.
3. Nominal Christians: Those who receive the sacraments but deny God in their actions. They possess Christ “in name only.” Lacking faith, they lack Christ, though they profess Him with their lips.
4. Hypocrites: False believers who hide their hypocrisy and wicked heart from others. Religious performances and “good works” amount to nothing. There is no difference between these first 3 classes of people when it comes to justification before God.
5. The Regenerate: This is the only group that escapes divine punishment. The Holy Spirit indwells believers and enables us to more and more die to sin and live lives consecrated to the Lord. Yet, we still fail enough to keep up humble and dependent upon Christ alone rather than trusting in ourselves. We have no room for boasting.

**Westminster Confession of Faith XVI – Of Good Works**

5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, (Rom. 3:20, Rom. 4:2, 4, 6, Eph. 2:8–9, Tit. 3:5–7, Rom. 8:18, Ps. 16:2, Job 22:2–3, Job 35:7–8) but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: (Luke 17:10) and because, as they are good, they proceed from His Spirit; (Gal. 5:22–23) and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God’s judgment. (Isa. 64:6, Gal. 5:17, Rom. 7:15, 18, Ps. 143:2, Ps. 130:3)

6. Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; (Eph. 1:6, 1 Pet. 2:5, Exod. 28:38, Gen. 4:4, Heb. 11:4) not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreproveable in God’s sight; (Job 9:20, Ps. 143:2) but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections. (Heb. 13:20–21, 2 Cor. 8:12, Heb. 6:10. Matt. 25:21, 23)

7. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: (2 Kings 10:30–31, 1 Kings 21:27, 29, Phil. 1:15–16, 18) yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; (Gen. 4:5, Heb. 11:4, 6) nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; (1 Cor. 13:3, Isa. 1:12) nor to a right end, the glory of God, (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16) they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: (Hag. 2:14, Tit. 1:15, Amos 5:21–22, Hosea 1:4, Rom. 9:16, Tit. 3:5) and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God. (Ps. 14:4, Ps. 36:3, Job 21:14–15, Matt. 25:41–43, 45, Matt. 23:23)