

conviction *not* culture

WEEK 4 | Ephesians 2:8-10

“Grace Through Faith”

Grace – God’s undeserved favor. Similar to mercy, but grace is preferred since it includes the idea of divine power which equips us to live as Christ-followers. In Paul’s writings, God treats the one who has placed their faith in Christ, though guilty, as if they had never sinned.

Faith – knowledge (*notitia*), mental assent (*assensus*), and personal trust (*fiducia*). This is the human response to God’s grace, which is itself a gift.

I. The Role of Faith in Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church believes that faith is a necessary condition for justification; it has three elements or steps. RC Sproul states the Roman Church teaches faith is...

1. The initium - faith is the initiation or starting place; it begins the process.
2. The fundamentum - the foundation or fundamental structure. No foundation, no justification.
3. The rodex – root, the core

It is not fair to say that the Roman Catholic Church views faith as a minor add-on to their doctrine of justification. Roman Catholics would say that faith is a necessary condition without which justification cannot take place. However, they would also say that while faith is a necessary condition, it is not sufficient. What do they mean by that? The Roman Catholic Church declares that a person, while in a state of faith, can commit a mortal sin and lose their justification.

ARISTOTLE’S CAUSES:

- » Material (Bronze, Etc.)
- » Formal (Form Blueprint)
- » Efficient (Sculptor)
- » Final (End Goal)
- » Thomas Aquinas added the Instrumental Cause (the tools used by the efficient cause)

The Roman Catholic Church says the instrumental cause of justification, the tool that the church uses to bring a person into a state of justified grace, is through the sacrament of baptism.

Reformers would say that the sole instrumental cause is faith, not a sacrament. The faith given as a gift by God is what links us to the work of Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholicism has an analytic view of justification because it teaches that we must have some kind of inherent righteousness; it must inhere in the person in order for them to be justified. In this view, righteousness may be rooted in the grace of God, but the good works that flow from this grace are considered in the pronouncement of a righteous

status. Regarding justification, a Roman Catholic says that “the righteous person is a righteous person.” But God will only declare a person righteous when they have their own righteous deeds to show for it. Therefore, God will not say a person is just or declare them to be just until or unless the person under examination is actually just. If a person dies in a state of having committed a mortal sin, they go to hell. If a person dies with any sin or imperfection on his soul, that person cannot go to heaven but must first go through the purging fires of purgatory until all impurities are cleansed away.

How do Protestants differ?

II. By Grace Through Faith

In Paul’s thinking, faith is NOT something we offer to God and with which God’s grace then cooperates to save us. Faith and grace are gifts that stand above anything we can offer to God, for they are neither a work deserving payment nor anything we can boast in.

Roman Catholicism – Unearned beginning, Cooperation (exhibit faith, repentance, keeping the commandments, sacraments,) Growth & merit (when cooperating, justification increases, sanctified and fit for heaven.)

- » This salvation does NOT originate with us. How could it, according to 2:1, 3, 5a?
- » This salvation doesn’t come from works. Our merit adds nothing.

Read: Rom 4:1-5, Titus 3:4-7

This does NOT mean we are nothing but passive recipients. While salvation and faith are accomplished gifts of God (we have been saved), they must be appropriated in the life of the believer.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

PAUL’S NEXT STATEMENT (V.10) PERFORMS THREE FUNCTIONS:

1. The reason why Paul states salvation is a gift of God is that God re-created Paul and the Ephesians. We are his workmanship.
2. It introduces the new creation and the ethical implications of being one! **See 2:14-16, 4:20-24**
3. It contrasts the way Paul and the Ephesians used to ‘walk’ and the way they now ‘walk’ thanks to God’s saving work. **See 2:1 vs. 2:10**

Good works are both integral to the people God has re-created and are a by-product of God’s initiative, which differentiates us from Roman Catholic theology. Christ-followers were created for the purpose of good works! God intended those whom he has saved by his abundant grace to live a lifestyle characterized by good works.

- » These good works are neither the basis of salvation nor are they given equal status with faith.
- » These good works are the consequence (‘created’) of a new creation that is already taken place.
- » The good works that God’s people do have all been planned since the beginning of the world. Therefore, even when believers walk in a manner worthy of their calling, they have nothing to boast about because in this too God took the initiative by carefully preparing these good works beforehand, in fact, before the foundation of the world.

Protestants affirm synthetic justification. Therefore, in the matter of justification, Protestants say that “the righteous person is an unrighteous person to whom the perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed.” We learn something new in this statement, namely, that justification is not a declaration of our righteousness but of Jesus’ righteousness. The righteousness we enjoy through the gospel is Christ’s righteousness, not our own.