Northwest Bible Church - October 26, 2003 Worship Service - Alan Conner

**Justification and the “New Perspective”**

**INTRO**

**I. THE REFORMED/BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION**

A. The Westminster Shorter Catechism: *Q. 33. 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.*

B. The key elements.

1) We are justified by God’s free grace. *GRACE ALONE.* Rom. 3:24.

2) We are justified when God forgives all our sins, and imputes Christ’s righteousness to us, so that we are accepted as righteous in His sight. *CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE.* Rom. 4:6-7; 5:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9.

3) We are justified by faith alone. The righteousness of Christ is the sole ground of our justification, faith is the instrumental cause of justification. *FAITH ALONE.* Rom. 3:28;

4:5; 5:1; Gal. 2:16.

**II. WHAT IS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW OF JUSTIFICATION**

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| Protestant View of Justification  Ground: Christ’s righteousness  Basis: imputed righteousness  Nature: completed act  Means: faith alone | Roman Catholic View of Justification  Ground: our personal righteousness  Basis: cooperation with infused Rness.  Nature: on-going process  Means: faith and good works/sacraments |
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**III. WHAT IS THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL?**

1) The reformers were wrong on their interpretation of Romans and Galatians. Luther and Calvin misunderstood the beliefs of first century Judaism, so that they misinterpreted Paul when he wrote about “justification,” “righteousness of God,” “imputation/reckoning.”

2) Paul’s argument with Judaism was not about salvation but about acceptance within the covenant community. They believe that Judaism was not a religion of self-righteousness that taught salvation by merit. They say that first century Jews believed in salvation by the grace of God. Their keeping of the law was not to get into the covenant community but out of gratitude for having the covenant and to “stay in.”

The problem with the Gentiles was that they were not keeping the covenant “**badges**” of the law which indicated that one was in the covenant community: circumcision, dietary laws, etc.

CON - many passages in the Bible do not assume that the Jews keeping the “badges” of the law were legitimate members of the covenant. See **Nicodemus** in Jn. 3; the self righteous **Pharisee** in Lk. 18, and Christ in **Mt. 23**. All had the “badges” but were lost.

3) NP teaches that Paul’s expression of “works of the law” refer to these covenant badges. Rom. 3:28.

CON – 1) the context does not limit the “works of the law” to these badges. See **3:19-20 and Gal. 3:10**. 2) Clearly, keeping the “badges” of the law makes one accountable to keep the whole law, and violation of any of these laws brings one under the curse of the law. Gal. 5:3; Jas. 2:10

4) Justification has nothing to do with salvation whereby guilty sinners are forgiven and declared righteous before God, but only deals with God’s declaration about who is already a member of the covenant community.

CON - Romans is full of condemnation for those who break God’s laws. The issue is judgment and condemnation, not identifying who is already a member of the covenant community. Rom. 1:18; 2:1-3, 5; 3:9, 19; 5:9, 16.

**IV. DANGERS AND ERRORS**

1) Ignorance is bliss.

2) Fascination with what is “new.” Cf. Acts 17 Athenians.

3) Put too much emphasis on secular writings than on the context of the Bible. Not *Sola Scriptura.*

4) The NP eliminates imputed righteousness, atonement, personal salvation. Not *Solus Christus.*

5) Emphasis on corporate salvation, not individual salvation leads to the Roman Catholic view of baptismal regeneration and arminianism. Not *Sola Gratia.*

6) The NP view of justification is like the RC - justification by works. This is another gospel and is **anathema** (Gal. 1), and gospel heresy. Not *Sola Fide.*