

# Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 12, Justification I, Historical Reconnaissance Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Peterson, Salvation, Session 12, Justification I, Historical Reconnaissance, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture** on salvation, specifically **session twelve focusing on justification**, begins with a historical overview. He outlines the lecture's progression from a **biblical introduction** to an examination of the **Roman Catholic view of justification**, including the **Council of Trent** and the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**. Peterson contrasts this with the **Reformation's understanding of justification**, emphasizing key theological differences such as **sola scriptura and sola fide**, alongside concepts like the **imputation of Christ's righteousness**. The lecture analyzes the Council of Trent's decrees on justification, highlighting its rejection of Reformation theology and its emphasis on faith and works, the role of sacraments, and the possibility of losing and regaining justification, ultimately contrasting these views with Protestant beliefs regarding assurance of salvation.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Salvation, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Salvation).**



**Peterson\_Salvation\_  
Session12.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Salvation, Session 12, Justification I, Historical Reconnaissance

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Justification - Historical Reconnaissance

##### Executive Summary:

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture on the historical understanding of justification, the third key area of historical theology investigation in his series on salvation. The lecture focuses primarily on the Roman Catholic view of justification as articulated by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), contrasting it with the Reformation understanding. Peterson highlights the fundamental differences between these perspectives, particularly concerning *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, the nature of righteousness (imputed vs. infused), the role of works, the assurance of salvation, the loss and recovery of justification, and the condemnations issued by the Council of Trent against Reformation theology.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

##### 1. Introduction and Outline:

- The session focuses on the historical reconnaissance of the doctrine of justification, following a brief biblical prelude.
- The lecture will cover the Roman Catholic view (Council of Trent and the Catechism of the Catholic Church), the Reformation view, and systematic formulations of justification.
- Key aspects of justification to be explored include its necessity, source, basis, means (faith vs. works), and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

##### 1. Biblical Prelude on Righteousness:

- Righteousness in Scripture is defined not just as covenant faithfulness but as "conformity to a norm and conformity to a standard, and the standard is ultimately the holy character of God himself."
- God's righteousness is manifested in both judging the wicked and saving those who trust in Him.
- Crucially, "God's righteousness is forensic; God's righteousness is also forensic and not transformative. We are declared righteous, not made righteous." This is presented as a key distinction.

- Salvation is both forensic (justification) and transformative (other aspects like regeneration and sanctification).
- The cross demonstrates the convergence of God's judging and saving righteousness through Christ's willing sacrifice.
- For believers, "God's righteousness is imputed to them via union with Christ. Believers are justified by faith alone..."
- Good works are seen as "the necessary evidence or fruit of justification, not its basis."

#### 1. **Historical Reconnaissance and the Importance of Historical Theology:**

- Understanding the historical debates surrounding justification is "simply essential for this topic" to properly understand the Bible's teaching.

#### 1. **The Roman Catholic View of Justification and the Council of Trent (1545-1563):**

- The Council of Trent was the Catholic Church's response to the Reformation, addressing both theological criticisms and ecclesiastical abuses.
- The Council aimed to clarify and redefine Catholic doctrine, correct abuses, and strengthen papal authority as part of the Counter-Reformation.
- Trent rejected key Reformation doctrines:
- ***Sola Scriptura***: Rome asserted dual authority of Scripture and Holy Tradition. Peterson quotes Luther's counter-argument that "the scriptures must judge holy tradition because it contradicts itself...and more importantly, at times, it contradicts the Bible." Peterson clarifies that *sola scriptura* means the Bible is the "chief norm, the so-called norming norm that sits in judgment on our reason, our traditions, and our experience as the supreme test of truth for both doctrine and ethics."
- ***Sola Fide***: Rome taught justification is by faith and works.

#### 1. **Trent's Decree on Justification (January 1547):**

- The Council used "justice" as a synonym for "righteousness."
- **Preparation for Justification**: Adults must prepare themselves with God's "prevenient grace," which "allows adults to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that said grace." Peterson notes that while the concept of God's grace preceding faith is biblical, the

Arminian view of *universal* prevenient grace (allowing all to believe) is contested by the lecturer.

- **Definition of Justification:** "Justification is not a declaration of righteousness... but an infusion of God's grace." This grace enables justification through righteousness inherent in the believer, infused by God through Christ's merit.
- Justification involves not only forgiveness of sin but also "the sanctification and renewal of the inward man." This directly contradicts the Reformation understanding of justification as a separate, forensic act.
- Peterson quotes Karl Rahner's criticism of imputed righteousness as "a robe thrown over a corpse," a "legal fiction." Peterson counters by stating it's a "legal truth" belonging to the "criminal division of the court" where God declares believers righteous based on Christ's credited righteousness, distinct from the "family court" of adoption and the transformative aspects of salvation.
- Peterson emphasizes that confusing justification with an infusion of grace "is to confuse the gospel with the Christian life."

#### 1. **Faith and Justification (Trent, Chapter 8):**

- Trent stated that we are "justified by faith because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification." While seemingly aligning with Reformation language, the context reveals a different understanding where faith initiates a process involving works.

#### 1. **Good Works, Merit, and Justification:**

- Trent taught that "life eternal is to be proposed to those working well unto the end and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ and as a reward, which is according to the promise of God himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits." Peterson strongly objects to the latter part, asserting, "The only good work that saves us is Jesus' good work on the cross."

#### 1. **Increase of Justification:**

- Trent taught that those justified can "increase in that justice... which they have received through the grace of God and are still further justified through the observance of the commandments of God and of the church, faith cooperating with good works." Peterson critiques this as a "merit theology," stating, "It is

impossible to increase the righteousness of Christ imputed to our spiritual bank account." He argues this undermines the assurance of salvation.

#### 1. **Assurance of Salvation:**

- Trent condemned the "vain confidence of heretics who claim their sins are forgiven, and... boast of confidence and certainty of the remission of their sins." It emphasized perseverance to the end for salvation and cautioned against absolute certainty.
- Peterson contrasts this with the biblical assurance grounded in God's promises (Romans 8:1, 38-39, 1 John 5:12), which includes both the imputation of Christ's righteousness and the non-imputation of sins (Romans 4, Psalm 32). He clarifies that perseverance is indeed necessary but is assured by "the overcoming grace of God." He notes that 1 John 5:12 was written to ordinary Christians, not just "super saints."

#### 1. **Loss of Justification:**

- Trent taught that justification, "once justified by his grace," can be lost if God is "first forsaken by them." Furthermore, "the received grace of justification is lost not only by infidelity... but also by any other mortal sin whatever."
- Peterson highlights the distinction between mortal and venial sins in Catholic theology. He contrasts this with the Protestant understanding of the believer's security in Christ.

#### 1. **Recovery of Justification:**

- Trent stated that those who fall away "may be again justified through the sacrament of penance," involving contrition, confession to a priest, absolution, and satisfaction (performing works for temporal punishment).
- Peterson explains the role of penance in forgiving eternal punishment (though temporal punishment remains, necessitating purgatory). He emphasizes the dogmatic nature of these pronouncements by the Council and Popes speaking ex cathedra, which are considered unchangeable and binding for faithful Catholics. He notes the discrepancy between official Catholic doctrine and the beliefs of some American Catholics.

## 1. Perseverance and Justification (Transition to Canons):

- Trent linked perseverance to salvation but within the context of their broader theological understanding.
- The Council followed its decrees with canons, stating that "whosoever receives not faithfully and firmly cannot be justified," aiming to clarify what Catholics must believe and what to avoid.

## 1. Condemnations (Anathemas) in the Canons:

- Peterson highlights the strong condemnations (anathemas, meaning "damned") directed at those holding Reformation views in the 33 canons. He provides three examples:
- **Canon 9:** Condemns anyone saying justification is by faith alone without the necessity of cooperation or preparation by one's own free will.
- **Canon 11:** Condemns anyone saying justification is by the sole imputation of Christ's righteousness or the sole remission of sins, excluding infused grace and love, or defining grace merely as God's favor. Peterson notes this directly contradicts Luther's understanding of grace as God's goodwill despite our deserving his displeasure.
- **Canon 33:** Condemns anyone saying that the Council of Trent's teaching on justification detracts from God's glory or Christ's merits. Peterson expresses his strong reaction to this.

## 1. Next Steps:

- The following lecture will address the more modern articulation of justification in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992).

## Quotes:

- "God's righteousness is forensic; God's righteousness is also forensic and not transformative. We are declared righteous, not made righteous."
- "Believers are justified by faith alone..."
- "...such faith is not alone. Good works are necessary for justification, but they function as the necessary evidence or fruit of justification, not its basis."
- "The scriptures must judge holy tradition because it contradicts itself for one thing, and more importantly, at times, it contradicts the Bible." (quoting Luther)

- "*Sola scriptura* means not the Bible alone, but the Bible alone as our chief norm, the so-called norming norm that sits in judgment on our reason, our traditions, and our experience as the supreme test of truth for both doctrine and ethics."
- "Justification is not a declaration of righteousness... but an infusion of God's grace." (Council of Trent)
- "The Protestant doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ is a robe thrown over a corpse. It's a legal fiction." (quoting Karl Rahner)
- "Justification without apology is a legal doctrine. It's in the criminal division of the court where God as Father declares righteous everyone who believes in Jesus to whom God credits the saving righteousness of Christ. This is not a legal fiction. It's a legal truth."
- "...to say justification is an infusion of grace is to confuse the gospel with the Christian life."
- "Eternal life is for those working well unto the end and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ... and as a reward that is, according to the promise of God himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits." (Council of Trent)
- "If anyone sayeth that by faith alone the impious is justified in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to be obtaining the grace of justification and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed of by the movement of his own will, let him be anathema." (Canon 9, Council of Trent)
- "If anyone sayeth that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ... or by the sole remission of sins to the exclusion of the grace and the charity... which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost and is inherent in them, or even that the grace whereby we are justified is only the favor of God, let him be anathema." (Canon 11, Council of Trent)
- "If anyone sayeth that by the Catholic doctrine, touching justification by this holy synod inset forth in this present decree, if anyone says the glory of God or the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ are in any way derogated from, and not rather that the truth of the faith and the glory in fine, the glory ultimately of God and of Jesus Christ are rendered more illustrious, let him be anathema." (Canon 33, Council of Trent)

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Peterson's lecture provides a clear historical overview of the contrasting views of justification between the Roman Catholic Church (as formalized at the Council of Trent) and the Reformation. He emphasizes the fundamental differences in understanding the nature of righteousness, the means of justification, the role of works, and the assurance of salvation. The Council of Trent's strong condemnations of Reformation theology underscore the significance of these theological disagreements and their enduring impact. The upcoming session on the Catechism of the Catholic Church promises to offer a more contemporary perspective on this crucial doctrine.



## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Salvation, Session 12, Justification I, Historical Reconnaissance

Study Guide: Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 12, Justification, Number 1, Historical Reconnaissance

### Key Concepts

- **Justification:** The act by which God declares sinners righteous in his sight.
- **Righteousness:** Conformity to a norm or standard, ultimately God's holy character. In Scripture, it encompasses both covenant faithfulness and this conformity.
- **Forensic Righteousness:** God's righteousness is declarative and legal, belonging to the courtroom; we are declared righteous, not made righteous in this act.
- **Transformative Aspects of Salvation:** Other aspects of salvation, such as regeneration and sanctification, are transformative, involving an infusion of grace and a change in the believer.
- **Imputation of Christ's Righteousness:** For those who trust in Christ, his righteousness is credited or reckoned to them.
- **Justification by Faith Alone (Sola Fide):** The Reformation doctrine that justification is received through faith in Christ alone, not by works of the law.
- **Good Works as Evidence:** While not the basis of justification, good works are the necessary fruit and evidence of genuine faith and justification.
- **Council of Trent (1545-1563):** An ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church that responded to the Reformation, clarifying and redefining Catholic doctrine, correcting ecclesiastical abuses, and strengthening papal authority.
- **Sola Scriptura:** The Reformation principle that the Bible alone is the ultimate authority for theology and ethics. Rejected by the Council of Trent, which affirmed the dual authority of Scripture and Holy Tradition.
- **Roman Catholic View of Justification:** Defined by the Council of Trent as not merely a declaration of righteousness but an infusion of God's grace, enabling inherent righteousness within the believer.

- **Prevenient Grace:** God's grace that precedes faith, enabling adults to convert themselves to justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with it (as per Trent).
- **Infusion of Grace:** The Roman Catholic belief that God's grace is poured into the believer, making them inherently righteous.
- **Legal Fiction:** A term used by some Roman Catholic theologians (like Karl Rahner) to describe the Protestant doctrine of imputed righteousness, suggesting it's merely a legal declaration without real internal change.
- **Merit Theology:** The belief that good works contribute to earning or increasing one's righteousness and salvation.
- **Assurance of Salvation:** The confident belief, based on God's promises, that those who trust in Jesus Christ have eternal life. Rejected by the Council of Trent as "vain confidence."
- **Mortal Sin:** In Roman Catholic theology, a grave sin that can lead to the loss of justification.
- **Sacrament of Penance (Confession):** A Roman Catholic sacrament through which those who have lost justification can be restored through contrition, confession, absolution, and satisfaction.
- **Temporal Punishment:** In Roman Catholic theology, punishment due for sins that have been forgiven, often requiring time in purgatory for satisfaction.
- **Dogma:** Officially defined teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that are considered binding on all faithful Catholics.
- **Anathema:** A formal ecclesiastical curse, often used by the Council of Trent to condemn those who held differing theological views (effectively, "damned").

## Quiz

1. How does Peterson define righteousness in the scriptures, and what does he emphasize about God's righteousness in relation to judgment and salvation?
2. Explain the distinction Peterson makes between justification and other aspects of salvation, particularly regarding the concepts of forensic versus transformative.

3. What were the primary motivations and goals of the Council of Trent, and why does Peterson consider understanding this historical council essential for grasping the doctrine of justification?
4. Contrast the Roman Catholic view of authority (as defined by Trent) with the Reformation principle of sola scriptura, highlighting the key difference in their sources of theological truth.
5. Describe the Roman Catholic understanding of how an adult prepares for justification, according to the Council of Trent, and explain the role of prevenient grace in this process.
6. According to the Council of Trent, what is justification, and how does this differ from the Reformation understanding that Peterson advocates?
7. Explain why Peterson rejects the Roman Catholic concept of justification as an "infusion of grace," and what potential problem does he see with this view?
8. Summarize the Council of Trent's teaching on the relationship between faith, good works, and justification, and how this contrasts with the Reformation doctrine of sola fide.
9. What was the Council of Trent's stance on the assurance of salvation, and how does this compare to the Reformers' understanding based on Scripture?
10. Briefly outline the Roman Catholic process for the recovery of justification after committing a mortal sin, as described in the excerpts.

### **Quiz Answer Key**

1. Peterson defines righteousness in Scripture not merely as covenant faithfulness but as conformity to a norm, ultimately the holy character of God. He emphasizes that God's righteousness manifests in judging the wicked and in saving those who trust in him; importantly, this saving righteousness is forensic, meaning declarative, not transformative.
2. Peterson distinguishes justification as a forensic (legal courtroom declaration) act where God declares believers righteous, from other aspects of salvation like regeneration and sanctification, which are transformative processes involving an infusion of God's grace and a change in the believer's nature. He states we are declared righteous, not made righteous in justification.

3. The primary motivations of the Council of Trent were to respond to the Reformation's theological criticisms and address the Roman Catholic Church's ecclesiastical abuses. Peterson considers understanding Trent essential because the debates surrounding justification during this period are crucial for properly understanding the Bible's teaching on the subject.
4. The Council of Trent rejected sola scriptura, asserting that ultimate authority rests in both the Bible and Holy Tradition, which they believe do not contradict and that tradition can provide information not explicitly clear in Scripture (like purgatory). Sola scriptura, on the other hand, holds the Bible as the supreme and final authority ("norming norm") for doctrine and ethics, judging tradition, reason, and experience.
5. According to Trent, adults prepare for justification through their free will, which was weakened but not extinguished by the fall, by freely assenting to and cooperating with God's prevenient grace. This preceding grace enables them to turn towards their own justification, requiring their cooperation for further grace and eventual salvation.
6. The Council of Trent defines justification as not merely the forgiveness of sins but an infusion of God's grace that enables inherent righteousness within the believer, achieved through the merit of Christ. This contrasts with the Reformation understanding, which Peterson advocates, that justification is a declaration of righteousness imputed to believers through faith in Christ alone, not based on inherent righteousness.
7. Peterson rejects the idea of justification as an infusion of grace because he believes it confuses the gospel (how one becomes a Christian through faith) with the Christian life (how one lives after becoming a Christian). He emphasizes that good works are a result of salvation, not the means of obtaining justification.
8. The Council of Trent taught that justification is by faith, but emphasizes that this faith must cooperate with good works, and that eternal life is both a grace promised through Christ and a reward for good works and merits. This directly opposes sola fide, the Reformation doctrine that justification is by grace alone through faith alone, with good works being a subsequent result, not a contributing factor to justification.
9. The Council of Trent rejected the assurance of salvation as a "vain confidence of heretics," stating that no one can have absolute certainty of perseverance to the end. In contrast, the Reformers believed that the Bible offers a confident

assurance of salvation to those who trust in Jesus Christ and his imputed righteousness, based on God's promises and the non-imputation of sins.

10. According to the excerpts, the recovery of justification in Roman Catholic theology involves the sacrament of penance, which includes contrition (inner sorrow for sins), confession (acknowledging sins to a priest), absolution (priestly words of forgiveness), and satisfaction (performing works to demonstrate the reality of confession and address temporal punishment).

## Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze and compare the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) with the Roman Catholic understanding of justification as articulated by the Council of Trent. What are the key theological differences, and what are the implications of these differences for the understanding of salvation and the Christian life?
2. Discuss the significance of the Council of Trent in the history of Christian theology. How did this council shape Roman Catholic doctrine in response to the Reformation, particularly concerning the doctrine of justification and the authority of Scripture and tradition?
3. Evaluate Dr. Peterson's critique of the Roman Catholic view of justification, focusing on his arguments regarding forensic versus transformative righteousness, the role of grace, and the concept of imputed righteousness. Do you find his arguments persuasive? Why or why not?
4. Explore the relationship between faith and good works in the context of justification, contrasting the Protestant perspective (where good works are the fruit of justification) with the Roman Catholic perspective (where works cooperate with faith in the process of justification and merit eternal life).
5. Examine the differing perspectives on the assurance of salvation between the Reformation and the Council of Trent. What are the theological foundations for each view, and what are the practical consequences of holding one view over the other?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Absolution:** The act of a priest in the Roman Catholic Church declaring forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of penance.
- **Anathema:** A formal ecclesiastical curse or condemnation, declaring someone excommunicated and damned, used by the Council of Trent against those who disagreed with its doctrines.
- **Assurance of Salvation:** The confident belief that a person who has faith in Jesus Christ has eternal life, based on God's promises in Scripture.
- **Council of Trent:** An ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church (1545-1563) that formulated Catholic doctrine in response to the Protestant Reformation.
- **Dogma:** A core, officially defined teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, considered to be divinely revealed and binding on all Catholics.
- **Forensic Righteousness:** A legal declaration by God that a sinner is righteous in his sight, based on the imputed righteousness of Christ, rather than an actual change in the person's inherent nature.
- **Good Works:** Actions and behaviors that are morally upright and pleasing to God. In Protestant theology, they are seen as the result of genuine faith, not the means of earning salvation.
- **Imputation:** The act of crediting or reckoning something to another. In theology, it refers to God crediting Christ's righteousness to believers and not counting their sins against them.
- **Inherent Righteousness:** Righteousness that is possessed internally by a person, often through the infusion of God's grace, as emphasized in Roman Catholic theology regarding justification.
- **Infusion of Grace:** The Roman Catholic belief that God's grace is poured into the believer, transforming their nature and enabling them to become inherently righteous.
- **Justification:** The act by which God declares a sinner righteous in his sight through faith in Jesus Christ.

- **Merit:** The idea that good works can earn favor or reward from God. Roman Catholic theology includes the concept of merit in relation to justification and eternal life.
- **Mortal Sin:** In Roman Catholic theology, a grave sin committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent, which can result in the loss of salvation if not forgiven through confession.
- **Penance:** A sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church involving confession of sins to a priest and the performance of actions (satisfaction) to show repentance.
- **Prevenient Grace:** God's grace that comes before a person's decision for Christ, enabling them to respond to the gospel. The nature and extent of prevenient grace are points of disagreement among different theological traditions.
- **Purgatory:** In Roman Catholic theology, an intermediate state after death for those who die in God's grace but still need to be purified from remaining temporal punishment due to sin.
- **Righteousness:** Conformity to God's holy standard or character. It can refer to God's own attribute, as well as the state of being declared righteous by God.
- **Sacrament:** A religious ceremony or act viewed as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments.
- **Sanctification:** The process by which believers are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Sola Fide:** Latin for "faith alone," a central tenet of the Protestant Reformation emphasizing that justification is received by faith in Christ alone, without works of the law.
- **Sola Scriptura:** Latin for "Scripture alone," a foundational principle of the Protestant Reformation asserting that the Bible is the ultimate and sole infallible authority for Christian faith and practice.
- **Temporal Punishment:** Punishment for sins that have been forgiven, often believed in Roman Catholic theology to be expiated in purgatory.
- **Tradition (Holy Tradition):** In Roman Catholic theology, the body of teachings, practices, and interpretations of Scripture passed down through the Church, considered a source of authority alongside the Bible.

## **5. FAQs on Peterson, Salvation, Session 12, Justification I, Historical Reconnaissance, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on Justification Based on Dr. Peterson's Session 12**

#### **1. How does Dr. Peterson define "righteousness" in the context of scripture, and what is its significance for understanding justification?**

Dr. Peterson explains that biblical righteousness is not merely covenant faithfulness but conformity to a norm and standard, which is ultimately the holy character of God. Since God is righteous, His righteousness is manifested in judging the wicked and saving those who trust Him. Importantly for justification, Peterson emphasizes that God's righteousness in this context is forensic, meaning declarative or belonging to the courtroom. We are declared righteous by God, not made righteous in this initial act of justification.

#### **2. What was the primary purpose of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and why is understanding it crucial for grasping the doctrine of justification?**

The Council of Trent was the Roman Catholic Church's formal response to the Protestant Reformation's theology and criticisms of church abuses. Understanding Trent is essential because it clearly defined and redefined Roman Catholic doctrine, particularly on justification, in direct opposition to Reformation teachings. Peterson argues that to properly understand the Bible's teaching on justification, it is necessary to grasp the historical debates and the specific theological positions articulated at Trent.

#### **3. According to the Council of Trent, how does an adult prepare for justification, and what role does free will and prevenient grace play in this process?**

Trent teaches that adults must prepare themselves for justification. While acknowledging that the fall attenuated and bent human free will, it did not extinguish it. God's prevenient grace, which precedes faith, allows adults to convert themselves towards justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with this grace. This cooperation leads to further grace that enables salvation. Peterson contrasts this with the Reformation view and notes the Arminian concept of universal prevenient grace, which he finds lacking in biblical support.



#### **4. What is the Roman Catholic view of justification as defined by the Council of Trent, and how does it differ from the Protestant understanding?**

The Council of Trent defines justification not as a declaration of righteousness but as an infusion of God's grace. This infused grace enables individuals to be justified by the righteousness inherent within them, which they see as the "justice of God" communicated through Christ's merits. Furthermore, Trent asserts that justification involves not only the forgiveness of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inner person. This directly opposes the Protestant understanding of justification as a forensic declaration of righteousness based on the imputation of Christ's righteousness received by faith alone, apart from works.

#### **5. How does the Council of Trent view the role of faith and good works in justification?**

According to Trent, individuals are "justified by faith" because faith is seen as the beginning, foundation, and root of all justification. However, Trent explicitly rejects "sola fide" (faith alone), teaching that justification is by faith *and* works. They view eternal life as both a grace promised through Christ and a reward rendered according to good works and merits. Furthermore, Trent suggests that justification can increase through the observance of God's and the church's commandments, with faith cooperating with good works, which Peterson strongly critiques as a merit-based theology.

#### **6. What is the Roman Catholic perspective on the assurance of salvation as outlined by the Council of Trent?**

The Council of Trent rejects the "vain confidence of heretics" who claim their sins are forgiven with absolute certainty. Instead, they emphasize perseverance to the end as necessary for salvation and caution against promising oneself anything as certain. Peterson contrasts this with the Protestant understanding of assurance of salvation, which is based on the promises of God in scripture to those who trust in Jesus Christ and the imputation of His righteousness.

#### **7. According to the Council of Trent, can justification be lost, and if so, how can it be recovered?**

Yes, Trent teaches that the received grace of justification can be lost not only through unbelief (which destroys faith itself) but also by any other mortal sin. However, faith itself is not necessarily lost through mortal sin. The recovery of justification, for those who have fallen away, is said to be possible through the sacrament of penance, which involves contrition, confession to a priest, absolution, and performing acts of satisfaction for temporal punishment due to sin.

**8. What are some of the specific condemnations (anathemas) issued by the Council of Trent against those who hold differing views on justification, particularly those of the Reformation?**

The Council of Trent issued numerous canons condemning those who disagreed with its doctrine of justification. Canon 9 anathematizes anyone who says that justification is by faith alone in such a way that nothing else is required for cooperation or preparation by one's own free will. Canon 11 condemns those who say that justification is by the sole imputation of Christ's righteousness or the sole remission of sins, excluding the grace and love poured into the heart by the Holy Spirit and inherent within, or who believe that grace is merely God's favor. Canon 33 anathematizes anyone who claims that the Council's teaching on justification detracts from the glory of God or the merits of Christ. These condemnations highlight the fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the Roman Catholic and Reformation understandings of justification.