

## Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 13, Justification II, Historical Reconnaissance, Sys. Form. Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Peterson, Salvation, Session 13, Justification II, Historical Reconnaissance, Sys. Form. Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture on salvation, specifically session 13, focuses on the **doctrine of justification**. The session provides a **historical overview by examining the Roman Catholic view of justification as expressed in the Council of Trent and the Catechism of the Catholic Church**, contrasting it with the **Reformation understanding rooted in *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, and *sola gratia***. Peterson highlights the **Reformer's belief in forensic justification** – God's declarative act of righteousness based on Christ's imputed righteousness received through faith alone – as opposed to the Catholic emphasis on transformative justification involving inward change and sacraments. The lecture also begins a **systematic formulation of justification**, identifying condemnation as its need and God's grace as its ultimate source, drawing from biblical passages and theological perspectives.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Salvation, Session 13 – 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\_  
Session 13.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Salvation, Session 13, Justification II, Historical Reconnaissance, Sys. Form

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Justification (Session 13)

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 13 of his teaching on Salvation, focusing on the doctrine of justification. The lecture covers a historical comparison between Roman Catholic and Reformation views on justification and introduces systematic formulations of the doctrine from a Protestant perspective. Dr. Peterson expresses his "zeal for the gospel" and aims to be fair in his representation of Roman Catholic teachings while firmly upholding Reformation doctrines.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification:

- **Key Documents:** Dr. Peterson highlights the Council of Trent as the historical statement of Roman Catholic doctrine on justification, repudiating Reformation views and clarifying Catholic dogma. He also emphasizes the significance of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) as a current and authoritative, albeit less thorough, expression of these teachings, influenced by Vatican II but not rejecting Trent's anathemas.
- **Agreement and Disagreement:** Peterson acknowledges some points of agreement, such as the merit of Christ's passion for justification: "Justification has been merited for us by the passion of Christ, the sufferings of Christ, who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men." (CCC 1992, cited by Peterson).
- **Points of Contention: Justification and Inward Righteousness:** Peterson disagrees with the Catechism's assertion that justification "conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy." (CCC 1992, cited by Peterson). He rejects the idea of God making us inherently righteous as part of justification.

- **Justification Conferred in Baptism (Ex Opere Operato):** Peterson strongly objects to the Roman Catholic teaching that justification is automatically conferred in baptism "ex opere operato," by the work worked. He clarifies this means a Catholic priest, ordained by a bishop, has the authority to baptize and offer the mass.
- **Inclusion of Progressive Sanctification:** A major point of contention is the Catechism's apparent conflation of justification with progressive sanctification. Peterson quotes the Catechism: "justification is not only the remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior person" (quoting Trent, CCC 1992, cited by Peterson). He argues this leads individuals to seek God's favor through good works as Catholics, rather than through faith in Christ alone. He further notes the Catechism speaks of "divinization" and cites Athanasius on deification in this context.
- **Cooperation of Grace and Free Will:** Peterson notes the Catechism teaches that justification "establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom" (CCC 1993, cited by Peterson), where humans must actively say "yes" to God's word.
- **No Reflexive Certainty of Salvation:** Referring to Rahner and Vorgrimler's *Dictionary of Theology*, Peterson highlights the Roman Catholic view that there can be no reflexive certainty of salvation and that justification can be lost through serious sin and increased through good works.

## 2. The Reformation and Justification:

- **Central Focus:** The 16th-century Protestant Reformation was primarily a theological movement centered on the "rediscovery of the message of salvation."
- **Diversity within Unity:** While the Reformation produced various denominations, they unitedly embraced the gospel based on the principle of *sola scriptura*.
- **The Five Solas:** Peterson outlines the five key tenets of the Reformation:
  - **Sola Scriptura:** The Bible alone is the ultimate authority for theology and ethics.
  - **Sola Fidei:** Salvation is through faith alone in Christ, not good works.
  - **Sola Gratia:** We are saved by God's grace alone.
  - **Solus Christus:** Christ alone is the only mediator between God and humanity.
  - **Soli Deo Gloria:** All glory belongs to God alone.

- **Rejection of Synergism:** The Reformers opposed the Roman Catholic view of salvation as a synergism between God and humans, advocating for a monergistic view where God alone saves sinners from beginning to end.
- **Justification as Forensic:** Luther and the Reformers understood justification as a judicial or forensic act of God, not a transformative process. It is a declarative act where God "once and for all declares righteous and forgives every believer in Jesus."
- **Justification by Faith Alone:** Drawing from Galatians 2:16 ("a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ"), Peterson emphasizes that justification is received by faith, not works.
- **Simul Justus et Peccator:** Peterson explains Luther's concept of believers being simultaneously righteous and sinners ("simul justus et peccator"). God declares believers righteous in Christ, but in themselves, they remain sinners.
- **Inseparable from Regeneration and Sanctification:** While justification is not transformational itself, it is inseparably linked to regeneration (God giving new life) and progressive sanctification (God enabling growth in holiness). Peterson criticizes Rome's confusion of these distinct aspects.
- **Rejection of Merit Theology:** The Reformers rejected the idea that humans can earn God's favor, emphasizing that such a view nullifies the grace of God (Galatians 2:21).

### 3. Systematic Formulations of Justification (Protestant Perspective):

- **Biblical Pictures:** Peterson notes that the application of salvation is depicted through various biblical metaphors from different spheres (e.g., calling - hearing, regeneration - death/life, sanctification - ritual uncleanness/holiness, conversion - change of direction, adoption - family court, justification - criminal court).
- **Justification as a Legal Image:** Like adoption, justification is a legal concept, but it originates in the criminal court, portraying God as the lawgiver and judge. Fallen humanity stands before God as guilty sinners.
- **Westminster Shorter Catechism:** Peterson quotes Question and Answer 33 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as a concise definition of justification:  
"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."

- **The Need for Justification:** The fundamental need for justification is condemnation due to:
- **Adam's Original Sin:** Leading to the condemnation of all (Romans 5:18-19).
- **Actual Sins:** All have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).
- **The Source of Justification:** The sole source of justification is God's grace (Romans 3:24, Titus 3:6-7). Peterson quotes Luther on God's love bestowing good on sinners, not because they are attractive but making them attractive by his love.
- **Imputation of Righteousness:** When God joins us to Christ, he imputes our sins to Christ and Christ's righteousness to us (2 Corinthians 5:21). This includes Christ's active (lifelong obedience) and passive (suffering obedience on the cross) righteousness.

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Peterson's lecture provides a clear contrast between the Roman Catholic and Reformation doctrines of justification. He critiques the Catholic understanding for its inclusion of inward transformation and works, its sacramentalism, and its perceived confusion between justification and sanctification. He firmly defends the Reformation view of justification as a forensic act of God's grace, received by faith alone through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, addressing the fundamental human need for pardon and acceptance before a holy God. The lecture sets the stage for a more detailed exploration of the basis of justification in the saving work of Christ in the subsequent session.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Salvation, Session 13, Justification II, Historical Reconnaissance, Sys. Form

### Study Guide: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Justification

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Peterson, what are the two key Roman Catholic documents discussed in relation to justification, and what is their significance?
2. What is the meaning of *ex opere operato* in the context of Roman Catholic sacramental theology, and how does Dr. Peterson react to this concept concerning baptism and justification?
3. How does Dr. Peterson characterize the main point of disagreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformers regarding justification?
4. Explain the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* and how it influenced the Reformers' understanding of salvation, particularly justification.
5. Describe the difference between the Roman Catholic view of justification as transformational and the Reformers' view of it as forensic or declarative.
6. What is Luther's concept of *simul justus et peccator*, and how does it relate to the Reformers' understanding of justification?
7. According to Dr. Peterson, what is the relationship between justification, regeneration, and progressive sanctification in Protestant theology?
8. What does it mean that God imputes Christ's righteousness to believers in the context of justification?
9. Using the legal analogy presented by Dr. Peterson, explain the need for justification and how God fulfills this need.
10. What is the ultimate source of justification according to the scripture passages cited by Dr. Peterson, and how does Luther describe God's love in this context?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The two key Roman Catholic documents are the Council of Trent (historical statement against Reformation doctrines) and the Catechism of the Catholic

Church (1992, a more popular application of Vatican II, reflecting Trent). They are significant for understanding the official Roman Catholic stance on justification.

2. *Ex opere operato* means that sacraments confer grace "by the work worked," automatically upon reception. Dr. Peterson disagrees with this, particularly concerning baptism and justification, believing justification is not automatically conferred.
3. The main point of disagreement is whether justification is a transformational process involving God's grace and human cooperation (Catholic view) or a forensic declaration by God received through faith alone (Reformer's view).
4. *Sola scriptura* asserts that the Bible alone is the supreme authority for theology and ethics. This principle led the Reformers to reject the equal authority of sacred tradition and to understand salvation, including justification, based solely on scripture.
5. The Roman Catholic view sees justification as a transformative process that inwardly changes the sinner and may lead to final salvation through synergism. The Reformers viewed it as a forensic or declarative act where God judicially declares sinners righteous in Christ, a monergistic act of God.
6. *Simul justus et peccator* is Luther's phrase meaning "at the same time righteous and a sinner." It describes the believer who is declared righteous by God in Christ but remains a sinner in their earthly existence.
7. In Protestant theology, justification is a forensic declaration by God that is inseparable from regeneration (giving new life) and progressive sanctification (growth in holiness), although distinct from them. Justification is not transformational in itself, but it is always accompanied by transformation.
8. Imputation of Christ's righteousness means that God credits Christ's perfect obedience and righteousness to believers, so they are seen as righteous in God's sight, even though they are still sinners.
9. The need for justification, in the legal analogy, is condemnation as guilty sinners before God, the judge. God fulfills this need by declaring righteous those who trust in his Son, Jesus Christ, imputing Christ's righteousness to them.

10. The ultimate source of justification is God's grace, as highlighted in Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:6-7. Luther describes God's love as flowing forth and bestowing good on sinners, who are loved not because they are attractive but are made attractive because they are loved.

## Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast the Roman Catholic and Protestant understandings of justification as presented by Dr. Peterson, highlighting the key theological differences and their implications for the Christian life.
2. Analyze the significance of the Reformation principle of *sola fide* in shaping the Protestant doctrine of justification, and discuss how this principle differs from the Roman Catholic perspective on faith and works in salvation.
3. Evaluate Dr. Peterson's assertion that the Roman Catholic Catechism of 1992 demonstrates a "tremendous confusion" between justification and progressive sanctification, providing specific examples from the text to support your analysis.
4. Discuss the legal framework used by Dr. Peterson to explain the doctrine of justification, including the concepts of condemnation, imputation, and forensic declaration, and analyze the effectiveness of this analogy in understanding salvation.
5. Explore the relationship between justification and other aspects of salvation, such as regeneration and sanctification, as presented in the source material, and discuss the importance of maintaining their distinctiveness while recognizing their interconnectedness in Protestant theology.



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Justification:** A legal declaration by God in which he pardons the sins of those who believe in Jesus Christ and accepts them as righteous in his sight, based on Christ's righteousness being imputed to them and received by faith alone.
- **Sanctification:** A progressive work of God's grace and the Holy Spirit by which believers are made more and more holy, conformed to the image of Christ, through obedience to God's Word and the Spirit's power.
- **Regeneration:** A supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which God gives a spiritually dead person new life in Christ, enabling them to believe the gospel and experience a fundamental change of heart and disposition.
- **Imputation:** The act by which God credits or reckons something to someone's account. In justification, God imputes Christ's righteousness to believers and their sin to Christ.
- **Forensic:** A term derived from the law court, referring to a legal declaration or verdict. In theology, forensic justification means God's declaration of a sinner as righteous in his sight.
- **Transformational:** In the context of justification, the view that justification involves an actual inward change or transformation of the sinner, making them inherently righteous.
- **Ex opere operato:** A Latin phrase meaning "by the work worked," used in Roman Catholic theology to describe the efficacy of the sacraments, which are believed to confer grace automatically when properly administered and received.
- **Sola Scriptura:** A Latin phrase meaning "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.
- **Sola Fide:** A Latin phrase meaning "faith alone," a core tenet of the Protestant Reformation asserting that justification is received by faith in Christ alone, apart from good works or adherence to the law.
- **Sola Gratia:** A Latin phrase meaning "grace alone," a Reformation principle emphasizing that salvation is solely the work of God's grace, unmerited by human effort or worth.

- **Solus Christus:** A Latin phrase meaning "Christ alone," a Reformation belief that Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, and the sole basis for salvation.
- **Soli Deo Gloria:** A Latin phrase meaning "glory to God alone," the ultimate purpose of all things according to the Reformation, including salvation.
- **Simul Justus et Peccator:** A Latin phrase coined by Martin Luther meaning "at the same time righteous and a sinner," describing the believer's state of being justified by God's grace in Christ while still struggling with sin in their earthly life.
- **Synergism:** The belief that salvation involves cooperation between God's grace and human free will.
- **Monergism:** The belief that God is the sole active agent in salvation, working in the hearts of individuals to bring about regeneration and faith.
- **Prevenient Grace:** In Roman Catholic theology, the grace of God that precedes human decision and enables a person to turn to God and cooperate with his grace for salvation.
- **Active Obedience of Christ:** Christ's perfect lifelong obedience to the Father's will and the requirements of the law.
- **Passive Obedience of Christ:** Christ's suffering, death, and submission to God's wrath on the cross as atonement for human sin.
- **Imprimatur:** An official license granted by a Roman Catholic bishop indicating that a publication is free of doctrinal or moral error.
- **Anathema:** A formal ecclesiastical curse or condemnation, often used by the Roman Catholic Church against those who contradict its doctrines.

## 5. FAQs on Peterson, Salvation, Session 13, Justification II, Historical Reconnaissance, Sys. Form, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Justification

#### 1. What is the central disagreement between the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church regarding justification?

The core disagreement centers on the nature of justification itself. The Protestant Reformers, grounded in *sola scriptura* and *sola fidei*, understood justification as a forensic or legal declaration by God, where He imputes Christ's righteousness to believers and forgives their sins, received by faith alone. This is a one-time, declarative act. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church views justification not only as the remission of sins but also as a transformative process that includes sanctification and renewal of the inner person, conferred in baptism and involving the cooperation of God's grace and human free will. They see it as something that can be preserved and increased through good works and the sacraments, rather than solely through faith.

#### 2. How do the concepts of "imputed righteousness" and "infused righteousness" differ in the context of justification?

The Reformation understanding emphasizes "imputed righteousness," meaning God credits or reckons Christ's perfect righteousness to the believer. This righteousness remains Christ's but is counted as belonging to the believer for their justification. The Roman Catholic view tends towards "infused righteousness," suggesting that God's grace makes believers inwardly just or righteous, transforming their nature. While acknowledging Christ's merit, they see justification as God's power cleansing sin and communicating His righteousness within the individual.

#### 3. What is the significance of the Reformation slogan *sola scriptura* in the debate about justification?

*Sola scriptura*, the belief that the Bible alone is the ultimate authority for theology and ethics, is foundational to the Reformers' understanding of justification. They argued that their doctrine of justification by faith alone was derived directly from scripture, particularly the writings of Paul. This principle led them to reject the Roman Catholic view that placed sacred tradition alongside scripture as equally authoritative, and to

critique Catholic doctrines on justification that they believed lacked clear biblical support.

**4. How does the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of sacraments, particularly baptism, relate to their doctrine of justification?**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that its sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, meaning "by the work worked." In the context of justification, they believe that baptism is the sacrament of faith through which justification is conferred, cleansing individuals from sin and making them inwardly just. This contrasts with the Reformation view, which sees baptism and other sacraments as visible signs and seals of a grace already received through faith, not the means by which justification is automatically granted.

**5. What is the Reformers' understanding of the relationship between justification and good works?**

The Reformers firmly believed that justification is by faith alone, apart from works of the law. However, they also emphasized that saving faith is never alone. While good works do not contribute to or earn justification, they are the inevitable fruit and evidence of genuine faith and gratitude for God's grace. Believers, having been justified, are then enabled and called to live lives of obedience and good works, not to maintain their justified status, but as a result of it.

**6. What is the theological concept of *simul justus et peccator* and how does it relate to the Reformation doctrine of justification?**

*Simul justus et peccator* is a Latin phrase coined by Martin Luther, meaning "simultaneously righteous and a sinner." This concept is central to the Reformation understanding of justification. It describes the believer's paradoxical state: in God's sight, they are declared righteous through the imputation of Christ's righteousness received by faith, and their sins are forgiven. However, viewed in themselves, they remain inherently sinful. This highlights that justification is God's declarative act, not a complete eradication of sin in this life.

## **7. Why did the Reformers see the Roman Catholic view of justification as a potential threat to the gospel?**

The Reformers were concerned that the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification, with its emphasis on human cooperation, inherent transformation, and the necessity of sacraments and good works for salvation, obscured the centrality of God's grace and Christ's finished work. They believed it could lead people to seek God's favor through their own efforts and adherence to religious practices, rather than relying solely on faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice. They saw this as a form of merit theology that undermined the free gift of salvation offered by grace.

## **8. How does the legal analogy of a courtroom help to understand the Reformation doctrine of justification?**

The Reformation often uses the legal analogy of a courtroom to illustrate justification. God is the judge, humanity are guilty sinners who have broken His law, and Christ is the advocate and the one who bore the penalty for their sins. Justification is God's legal declaration that believers are righteous in His sight, not because of their own merit, but because Christ's righteousness is imputed to them, and their sins are pardoned. This is a forensic act, a change in legal standing before God, based entirely on Christ's work and received by faith.