



"Drowning in the Tiber (Part 12)"

Responding to Francis Beckwith's *Return to Rome:*

Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic

Theology, the Reformation and the Theology of the Reformation | *tiber090609(12)*

Selected Scriptures



I. Theology, the Reformation and the Theology of the Reformation

A. Is Justification progressive as it relates to a Christians salvation?

1. Beckwith refers to the "journey of justification"
2. Three essential biblical doctrines that Beckwith confounds: Justification; Sanctification; and Assurance

a. Erasmus, Luther and the Latin Vulgate

c. Beckwith's misunderstanding of justification

(1) Justification past, present, and future?

(a) Past

Rom. 5:1-2 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Rom. 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Rom. 8:24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?

1 Cor. 6:11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

(b) Present

1 Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Cor. 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

2 Cor. 2:15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

(c) Future

Rom. 2:13 for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

1 Cor. 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

1 Cor. 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1 Tim. 2:15 But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

2 Tim. 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2 Tim. 4:18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

B. What is the Relationship Between Justification, Sanctification, and Assurance?

1. Justification happens once

"True faith, of which we speak, cannot be manufactured by our own thoughts, for it is solely a work of God in us, without any assistance on our part. As Paul says to the Romans, it is God's gift and grace, obtained by one man, Christ. Therefore, faith is something very powerful, active, restless, effective, which at once renews a person and again regenerates him, and leads him altogether into a new manner and character of life, so that it is impossible not to do good without ceasing." [Martin Luther]

"[if works] do not follow, it is a sure sign that there is no faith there; but only an empty thought and dream, which they falsely call faith." [Martin Luther]

2. Sanctification contrasted with Justification

3. Assurance

“... it seems that one can present the Reformed view in such a way that 'works' are as much a necessary condition for justification as they are for the Catholic view. Remember, the Reformed view asserts that good works follow from true conversion and are part of one's post-justification sanctification. Presumably, if one claims to have been converted to Christ, i.e. justified, and no good works follow, then one was not ever really justified. This means that for the Protestant view of justification, good works are a necessary condition for true justification. The fact that the good works occur chronologically after conversion does not change their logical character *as a necessary condition for justification.*” [F. Beckwith, 109]

"And neither view is better at establishing for the believer subjective certitude of heaven. For example, the Protestant, who said the sinner's prayer or answered an altar call, but shows no evidence of justification, is likely to have less certitude about his eternal fate than the faithful Catholic who, confident in God's promises, regularly attends Mass, receives the sacraments, engages in spiritual disciplines, and tries to obey the commands of Christ." [F. Beckwith, 109-110]

Roman Catholicism
JUSTIFICATION (<i>no real distinction</i>) SANCTIFICATION
By Grace infused to the soul through baptism into the Roman Catholic Church, her sacraments (e.g. the Mass), and faith cooperating with works
The Christian is on a journey of progressive justification as he cooperates with grace in order to become more and more righteous (the great majority will need a final purging of sin in Purgatory)
Any assurance of salvation is based on obedience <i>a priori</i> (real assurance is not possible and is forbidden)
God is Neither Sovereign in Justification nor Sanctification. Semi-Pelagian Synergism of Grace and Works

Biblical (Reformation) Doctrine of Lordship and Assurance	
JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing →	← The Essential Fruit of Justification
The True Christian Evidences a Changed Life in the Process of Sanctification Yet is <i>Simul Iustus et Peccator</i> (At Once Righteous and Sinful)	
Assurance is a Fruit of Saving Faith Based Upon the Object of Faith: Jesus Christ the Righteous (Good Deeds are an <i>a posteriori</i> Witness to Justification)	
God is Sovereign in Justification and Sanctification	

In saying that "for Catholics the gift of grace is far more than a legal declaration" Beckwith sets up another straw man. I agree that the gift of God's grace is more than a legal declaration, but that's because I understand God's grace as encompassing not only my justification, but my sanctification and glorification, as well.

"But the grace one receives is legal or forensic. This means that grace is not real stuff that changes nature, but merely the name given to God's graciousness by legally accounting to us Christ's righteousness." [F. Beckwith, 84-85]

The doctrines of grace stand sentry over the purity of the Gospel.

C. Why the Doctrines of Grace?

1. What are the Doctrines of Grace"

1. Beckwith's Free-will Theism ("choosing my religion")

"Certainly such an election is of grace, not at all of merits. For he had before said, "So, therefore, even at this present time, the remnant has been saved by the election of grace. And if by grace, now it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Therefore the election obtained what it obtained gratuitously; there preceded none of those things which they might first give, and it should be given to them again. He saved them for nothing. But to the rest who were blinded, as is there plainly declared, it was done in recompense. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." But His ways are unsearchable. Therefore the mercy by which He freely delivers, and the truth by which He righteously judges, are equally unsearchable." – Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 11.

"The faith of these, which worketh by love, either actually does not fail at all, or, if there are any whose faith fails, it is restored before their life is ended, and the iniquity which had intervened is done away, and perseverance even to the end is allotted to them. But they who are not to persevere, and who shall so fall away from Christian faith and conduct that the end of this life shall find them in that case, beyond all doubt are not to be reckoned in the number of these, even in that season wherein they are living well and piously." —Augustine, *Treatise on Rebuke and Grace*. Chap. 16.— Whosoever Do Not Persevere Are Not Distinguished from the Mass of Perdition by Predestination.

II. The Reformation: Revival or Rebellion?

A. 33,000 different denominations?

B. The greatest revival this side of Acts chapter two:

"The Protestant Reformation possessed definite characteristics, many of which set it apart from any other revolution in history. One of the distinguishing features was its territorial scope. It began simultaneously and independently in various European countries. About the time that Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses on the church door in Wittenberg in 1517, John Colet, dean of St. Paul's in England, was denouncing the abuses of the Catholic Church and upholding the supremacy of the Bible as the rule of faith. Lefevre in France and Zwingli in Switzerland were at the same time preaching against the evils of the church and pointing to Christ as the door of salvation. Although Luther is called the originator of the Reformation, the other Reformers discovered and preached the same message that he did, without having received knowledge of it from him.

There was a power, however, that brought the Reformation into existence and made its progress possible and that was the Holy Scriptures. The Greek New Testament prepared by Erasmus was a help to scholars all over Europe in learning the way of truth and life. After the Reformation once got under way, there existed a great friendship and fraternization among the Reformers. There was frequent interchange of ideas, and hospitality was freely extended. One of the surprising features of the Reformation was this extent of contact and cooperation among the Reformers as they encouraged each other in their efforts. The Reformation spread with great rapidity. Of course, consolidations, refinements, and extensions needed to be made; but that so tremendous a revolution, on such a vast scale, could be executed in so short a time, bringing with it a complete change in thought and habit, still remains one of the amazing events of history.

The Protestant Reformation actually began in Europe's citadels of learning, her universities. There were scholars, such as Luther and Melancthon at Wittenberg; Erasmus, Colet at Oxford; Bilney, Latimer, and Cartwright at Cambridge; and Lefevre and Farel at Paris. Almost without exception the leaders of the Reformation were highly trained men of that generation. In some instances, as Beza and Tyndale, they ranked high as men of letters. Others, like Cranmer and Valdes carried responsibilities at court....

Why was this so necessary at that time, when in other ages men of lesser abilities and education have been used effectively to preach the gospel with power? At least two answers can be given: Only the educated knew the Hebrew, Latin, and Greek necessary to read the Bible as it then existed. Then, too, it was essential that the Bible be translated into the vernacular of each country so that the common people could have the privilege of reading the Scriptures in their own tongue. This task demanded scholarship.

All the preaching of many Luthers, Latimers, Zwinglis, Knoxes, and Wisharts would have failed to accomplish the Reformation if, at the same time, the Bible in the vernacular had not been provided for the common people. If at the moment Latimer was preaching at Cambridge it had not happened that Tyndale, who had fled to the Continent, was smuggling back thousands of copies of the English New Testament so that every Englishman could read the way of salvation for himself, there would have been no Reformation in England. A similar situation occurred in Germany, France, and other countries.

With these two phases must be combined the indispensable third: the invention of printing, which had made possible the publication of the translations of the Bible and had brought the price within range of the common man's purse. Within a ten-year period many of the nations of Europe had received translations of the Bible in their own tongue. Luther had translated it for Germany in 1522, Lefevre for France in 1523, Tyndale for England in 1525, Brucchioli for Italy in 1532. Within the next ten years Francisco Enzinas had translated the Bible into Spanish, and Petri had translated it into Swedish. Shortly after, Karoli, one of the most energetic of Magyar preachers, had done the same in the Magyar tongue. Another noteworthy characteristic of the Reformers was the basic agreement on important doctrines. The tenet upon which all Reformers agreed was justification by faith. They believed that salvation is not obtained by works, fasting, money, or penance, but that it is God's free gift. This doctrine formed the cornerstone of the Reformation. Agreement also existed on the supreme and sufficient authority of the Scriptures, Communion in both kinds, and the disavowal of saint worship, images, relics, purgatory, mass, celibacy, and the pope as head of the church. . . .

The Reformation proper, the break with Roman Catholic authority, was accomplished in a relatively short time; but not all the papal teachings were abruptly terminated....The Reformation was a continuous, all-enveloping movement of action and reaction, accruing more glory by the addition of more light. It was a glorious spiritual awakening." [Gideon & Hilda Hagstotz, *Heroes of the Reformation* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland Publications, 1951) pp. 12-16]

C. World Evangelization Over the Past 500 years

1. Translating Bibles in the name of John Wycliffe
2. Missions and evangelism in Roman Catholic nations

D. Beckwith's use of Evangelical Quotes

1. The New Perspective on Paul

"The soteriological sympathies of the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), to the degree that these sympathies exists, are not with Protestantism, but with Roman Catholicism." [Guy Prentice Waters]

2. Carl Trueman and others

E. What is the Gospel?

1. Regeneration and John 3

2. The missing doctrine of regeneration

Romans 5:1 Having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil. 3:8-9 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

"Pope Benedict XVI reasserted the primacy of the Roman Catholic Church, approving a document released yesterday that says other Christian communities are either defective or not true churches and Catholicism provides the only true path to salvation." [Nicole Winfield, Associated Press, July 11, 2007]

3. The Riches of Christ's Mercy

Upon Luther's complaint that in spite of his repeated promises to God to overcome his sin, sin was always the victor within him, Staupitz replied: "More than a thousand times have I sworn to our holy God to live piously, and I have never kept my vows. Now I swear no longer, for I know I cannot keep my solemn promises. If God will not be merciful towards me for the love of Christ and grant me a happy departure, when I must quit this world, I shall never, with the aid of all my vows and all my good works, stand before him. I must perish!"