

Various Teachings on Justification

	INCORRECT OR SCRIPTURALLY UNSUPPORTED TEACHING	CORRECT, SCRIPTURALLY SUPPORTED TEACHING
CALVINISM	Holds only to <i>limited atonement</i> . God's action of reconciling sinners to Himself, through the merits of Christ, is offered only to the predestined; atonement effective only in the "Elect."	According to Scripture: Christ died for all people (1 John 2:2). God's act of acquitting sinners is not like a lottery or contest in which only a very few can be winners. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29; see also 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 2:9)
EASTERN ORTHODOXY	Bases many of its teachings on writings other than the Bible. Does not stress that the <i>primary</i> purpose of the work of Christ was to bring sinners acquittal of their guilt and pardon from all penalties. Stresses that the goal of Christ's incarnation (becoming human) and redemption is human "deification." Does not view sinners as totally depraved by sin (Romans 3:23) or saved through faith alone.	Jesus said. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). The Bible teaches man is totally corrupt and without hope: "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8; see also Ephesians 2:1). Scripture says sinners are justified by divine grace alone received through God's gift of faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).
POPULAR EVANGELICALISM (Now predominant non-denominational movement in the U.S. and missionizing in former USSR.)	Has a tendency to emphasize justification as brought about "on account of" the presence of faith God sees "in the life" of an individual or because a person is in a "living relationship to Christ." This is dangerous subjectivism that undermines the glory that belongs to Christ alone, as well as leads the struggling believer into spiritual uncertainty (Galatians 3:3; 5:1; Romans 4:20-21).	Justification is a fact and not just a mere possibility. All that needs to be done for our salvation has been done by Christ (John 17:4). "It is finished" (John 19:30). God has pronounced all sinners justified because of Christ (2 Cor 5:19). His imputed righteousness, rather than our faith, brought justification to us (Luke 18:13-14).
ROMAN CATHOLICISM	Uses writings in addition to the Bible. Rejects the Biblical truth that justification is <i>through faith alone</i> . Denies that a person can be sure of being perfectly acquitted of all sins. Teaches that divine grace simply starts the sinner on the <i>drawn out process</i> toward salvation. Salvation <i>may</i> come at the end of the long road of "spiritual development." God will lend the aid of his grace, but sinners must also contribute something.	Our justification is already a perfectly accomplished reality that doesn't need to be "sought for" or supplemented by our inadequate works or faith. Because Christ has lived the perfect life for us, and has "imputed" all his merits to our account, we are certain we are certain that we have been saved (2 Timothy 1:9, 12).
CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN THEOLOGY	Only due to the graciousness and mercy of his heart, God has accepted the merits of his Son for the justifying of the sinner. It comes to them as the gift of new perfect status, "justified!" To them is credited Christ's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21) and the release from sin's debt, guilt and corresponding penalties (Romans 4:7-8). From God's perspective all that needs to be done to open heaven to sinners has been done (2 Corinthians 5:19). With such peace with God also comes to forgiven sinners the inner peace of the certainty of salvation. All sinners are invited into heaven's open door through faith (2 Corinthians 5:20; Romans 5:1-2).	