Modern Controversies on Justification: Federal Vision (Part Two)

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Justification "is the foremost [doctrine] in theology, and for us the one most [beneficial]. And if [justification] is suppressed, falsified, or overturned, it would not be possible to keep the purity of the teaching in other [doctrines] or to maintain a true Church" (*Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, vol. 2, 384).

I. What is Federal Vision theology?

A. Justification and faith.

i. FV makes the same move as Shepherd and NPP: _____ justification.

1. Peter Leithart says: "Our justification/ vindication is not completely and fully revealed before the Last Judgment. We are justified in the present, but in another sense we await final public vindication" (*FV*, 239).

ii. FV makes works contribute to justification in the present by _____.

1. This is how they define faith in their Joint Declaration (JD), "Justifying faith encompasses the elements of assent, knowledge, and living trust."

2. Doug Wilson wrote this in a blog post: "life and obedience are essential characteristics of the instrumentality of faith."

B. The covenant of works and the imputation of Christ's active obedience.

i. Like Shepherd, FV undermines the covenant of _____ in the garden of Eden.

1. They reject the idea that "Adam had to earn or merit righteousness, life, glorification, or anything else" (JD).

2. In another blog post, Wilson wrote, "both covenants were to be kept by the grace of God through faith."

ii. Again, like Shepherd, this led FV to undermine the _____ of Christ's obedience.

1. "We deny that faithfulness to the gospel message requires any particular doctrinal formulation of the "imputation of the active obedience of Christ" (JD).

C. Important Protestant distinctions.

i. Justification and Sanctification.

1. Leithart writes, "The Protestant doctrine has been too rigid in _____ justification & sanctification, more rigid certainly than Scripture itself" (*FV,* 217).

2. In a blog post from last year, Wilson writes that Regeneration "is an infused righteousness…. At the end of the day, this means… infused righteousness as the instrument of imputed righteousness."

ii. The visible and invisible church.

1. FV claims that visible/ invisible church is Platonic, medieval, and _____.

2. Wilson argues that we should instead call it the historical/ eschatological church.

iii. The Law and the Gospel.

1. "We believe that any passage, whether indicative or imperative, can be heard by the faithful as good news, and that any passage, whether containing gospel promises or not, will be heard by the rebellious as intolerable demand" (JD).

II. Evaluating Federal Vision theology.

A. A note on their methodology.

i. They want to be as _____ as Scripture is; but that isn't how Scripture works.

ii. They selectively read Reformers and cite _____ literature to prove that they're Ref'd.

B. Important Protestant distinctions.

i. Visible/ invisible church.

1. FV's rejection flows naturally from their view of _____ and election, but it is unconfessional (see WLC 61-62) & fails to address our original concern.

ii. Law/ Gospel.

1. Luther: "Therefore whoever knows well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real _____."

2. Theodore Beza: "Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity."

iii. Justification and sanctification.

1. Rome said that we are justified because and insofar as we are sanctified.

2. But the _____ said: No, we are sanctified because we are justified.

C. Imputation of Christ's active obedience.

i. Luther's breakthrough: our righteousness before God is _____ of ourselves, not inside.

ii. Without imputation, we only have half of justification, only half of the Gospel.

D. Justification and faith.

i. When we say "living faith," we mean a faith that has trust & will produce good works.

ii. When FV says "living faith," they mean a faith that has good works in its definition.

iii. Works are necessary for Christians, but as a result, not a _____, of justification.