

MINI-BOOK SERIES

New Calvinism For Dummies

TheTruthAboutNewCalvinism.com

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HISTORY: New Calvinism and Adventism

Like the Reformers, Seventh-Day Adventists have always struggled with their assertion that sanctification finishes justification. For years, there was infighting within SDA in regard to how that works. The primary consensus was that Christ saves us from all of our past sin, and then the Holy Spirit helps us finish our justification via the new birth or infused grace. But finishing justification is still the goal rather than justification being finished. Catholicism is the same way, except they lean more toward ritual for aptly finishing justification. Either way, the idea that justification has to be maintained is the major problem in these gospels: the idea that justification has a standard that must be maintained until we get to heaven.

In 1888, SDA notables EJ Waggoner, AT Jones, and Ellen White presented the answer: the authentic Reformed gospel of justification by faith alone. But remember, that's justification by faith alone in sanctification as well. In fact, if you don't live your Christian life by faith alone, and instead add your works to it, even Holy Spirit enabled works, according to the Reformers, you lose your salvation because of works. You must only add the works of Christ to your sanctification and not anything of your own. Christ obeys for us until we get to heaven. Still, it sparked a revival because it freed the SDA faithful from the fear of not measuring up in their collaborating with the Holy Spirit. In contrast, evangelicals believe that measuring up for justification is a non-issue since justification is a finished work. Evangelicals believe that kingdom living (sanctification) progresses but our justification is secure. We collaborate with the Holy Spirit in sanctification and sanctification does not maintain or finish our justification. The 1888 revival fizzled out and the controversy in SDA circles continued.

In the 1960's, a SDA theologian by the name of Robert Brinsmead re-investigated the 1888 revival and ignited the SDA Awakening movement with the authentic Reformed doctrine of Justification by faith alone [in both salvation and sanctification]. However, the fact that these revivals had always died did not escape Brinsmead.

He was joined by two Anglican theologians, Geoffrey Paxton and Graeme Goldsworthy in forming the Australian Forum; a Reformed think tank. They systematized the Reformed doctrine for contemporary presentation and launched it into hyper-revival. They were later joined by Reformed Baptist Jon Zens who is the father of New Covenant theology.

It became Sonship theology in 1986, Gospel Transformation in 2000, Gospel Sanctification in 2004, and New Calvinism in 2008. It has covertly taken over large portions of every religious group existing today.

DOCTRINE

A good place to start in understanding Calvin's all-out assault on biblical truth is his definition of righteousness. As with most of the Reformers, he defined righteousness as a perfect keeping of the law. Sounds very logical, but once we are drawn into that definition and accept its premise—we are in grave danger of being led astray. Let's begin by reading some citations from the Calvin Institutes on this point:

“But in order that a sense of guilt may urge us [**Christians**] to seek for pardon, it is of importance to know how our being instructed in the Moral Law renders us more inexcusable [**the need for perpetual pardon**]. If it is true, that a perfect righteousness is set before us in the Law, it follows, that the complete observance of it is perfect righteousness in the sight of God; that is, a righteousness by which a man may be deemed and [*]pronounced righteous at the divine tribunal. Wherefore Moses, after promulgating the Law, hesitates not to call heaven and earth to witness, that he had set life and death, good and evil, before the people. Nor can it be denied, that the reward of eternal salvation, as promised by the Lord, awaits the perfect obedience of the Law... (CI 2.7.3).

Therefore, if we look merely to the Law, the result must be despondency, confusion, and despair, seeing that by it we are all cursed and condemned, while we are kept far away from the blessedness which it holds forth to its observers. Is the Lord, then, you will ask, only sporting with us? Is it not the next thing to mockery, to hold out the hope of happiness, to invite and exhort us to it, to declare that it is set before us, while all the while the entrance to it is precluded and quite shut up? I answer, Although the promises, in so far as they are conditional, depend on a perfect obedience of the Law, which is nowhere to be found, they have not, however, been given in vain (CI: 2.7.4).

To declare that we are deemed righteous, solely because the obedience of Christ is imputed to us as if it were our own, is just to place our righteousness in the obedience of Christ.... And so indeed it is; for in order to appear in the presence of God [*]for salvation [***to stand in a future judgment to determine salvation**], we must send forth that fragrant odour, having our vices covered and buried by his perfection. (CI: 3.11.23).

For the meaning is—As by the sin of Adam we were alienated from God and doomed to destruction, so by the obedience of Christ we are restored to his favour as if we were righteous (CI: 2.17.3).

We see from these quotations with emphasis added that a perfect keeping of the law is the definition of righteousness. This would be true if Christians did not remain in their mortal bodies for a time, but biblically, imperfect obedience in sanctification does not exclude the truth that we are presently righteous in the truest sense. Therefore, Calvin's definition of righteousness is fundamentally flawed and the problems caused thereof can be seen in these same citations.

First, note that the law must be kept perfectly by Christ in order for us to be “pronounced righteous” at “the divine tribunal.” And: “for in order to appear in the presence of God for salvation.” And what must we do to procure the perfect obedience of Christ to fulfill the law?

“But in order that a sense of guilt may urge us [**Christians**] to seek for pardon, it is of importance to know how our being instructed in the Moral Law renders us more inexcusable [**the need for perpetual pardon**].

In Calvinism, the purpose of the law is to drive the Christian to guilt for the purpose of seeking “pardon.” This pardon, for the Christian, is perpetual because it “renders us more inexcusable.” What kind of pardon? Pardon for the same salvation that we originally received. Not forgiveness in sanctification to restore intimacy with Christ and the Father, but forgiveness for salvation. Calvin makes this clear:

“Moreover, the message of free reconciliation with God is not promulgated for one or two days, but is declared to be perpetual in the Church (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). Hence believers have not even to the end of life any other righteousness than that which is there described. Christ ever remains a Mediator to reconcile the Father to us, and there is a perpetual efficacy in his death....(CI: 3.14.11).

So, as the law of God shows us our continual need for pardon, we seek pardon for salvation not just once, but perpetually. This continually satisfies the righteous demand of the law which is perfection. In a future judgment, we must present “that fragrant odour, having our vices covered and buried by his perfection.”

What work must we do to keep our salvation? We must use the Bible to see our continual need for pardon and seek continual re-salvation. As the New Calvinist mantra of our day states: “We must preach the gospel to ourselves every day.” Robert Brinsmead, the father of present-day New Calvinism, stated it this way:

“After a man hears the conditions of acceptance with God and eternal life, and is made sensible of his inability to meet those conditions, the Word of God comes to him in the gospel. He hears that Christ stood in his place and kept the law of God for him. By dying on the cross, Christ

satisfied all the law's demands. The Holy Spirit gives the sinner faith to accept the righteousness of Jesus. Standing now before the law which says, "I demand a life of perfect conformity to the commandments," the believing sinner cries in triumph, "Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying; mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, and suffered, and died as He did . . ." (Luther). The law is well pleased with Jesus' doing and dying, which the sinner brings in the hand of faith. Justice is fully satisfied, and God can truly say: "This man has fulfilled the law. He is justified."

We say again, only those are justified who bring to God a life of perfect obedience to the law of God. This is what faith does—it brings to God the obedience of Jesus Christ. By faith the law is fulfilled and the sinner is justified.

On the other hand, the law is dishonored by the man who presumes to bring to it his own life of obedience. The fact that he thinks the law will be satisfied with his "rotten stubble and straw" (Luther) shows what a low estimate he has of the holiness of God and what a high estimate he has of his own righteousness. Only in Jesus Christ is there an obedience with which the law is well pleased. Because faith brings only what Jesus has done, it is the highest honor that can be paid to the law (Rom. 3:31). (As cited in The Truth About New Calvinism: Paul M. Dohse Sr.; pp. 101,102).

Therefore, in Calvinism, the Christian life is a continual re-salvation by faith alone as we see our sinfulness in the Bible. The goal is to use the law we cannot keep to reveal our corruption more and more which drives us to repentance. When we repent, Christ's perfect obedience to the law is presented to the Father and our justification is maintained. This is the gospel of Calvinism. It is working by faith alone to maintain our salvation by acknowledging that we cannot keep the law; for all practical purposes, antinomianism. What are the differences between "I can't keep the law," "I won't keep the law," or "I don't have to keep the law"? Calvinism's version of antinomianism is the idea that an antinomian believes that the law

doesn't have to be kept. They piously object that it must be kept while not mentioning that we can't keep it—Christ must keep it for us.

Righteousness is not defined by a perfect keeping of the law. The very Reformed definition of righteousness is egregiously flawed. It's works salvation. If it is true, we are not justified APART FROM THE LAW:

Romans 3:19 - Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Abraham was justified apart from the law—the law didn't come until 430 years later (GAL 3:17,18). He was declared righteous because he believed God. Hence, GOD'S righteousness APART from the law has been manifested. If Christ had to keep the law perfectly for our righteousness—that's NOT apart from the law, and moreover, Abraham could not have been justified. “But Christ's perfect obedience was imputed to Abraham when He died on the cross.” Then what is the point that Paul is making in Galatians? Why make a point in regard to when the law came? In addition, Christ had not yet obeyed the law perfectly when Abraham did the following:

James 2:20 - Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by

works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

The Reformed always make it a point to state that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. This is important to them (although the Bible always refers to it as the righteousness of God) because it imputes the perfect obedience of Christ (His life when He came as a man) to us so that the law is fulfilled for our salvation. But again, the Scriptures state:

Galatians 3:11 - Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Galatians 2:16 - yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

If Christ lived a perfect life on earth to fulfill the law so that it could be imputed to us for righteousness—THAT'S NOT **RIGHTOUSNESS APART FROM THE LAW**. Though Christ kept it for us, it is still righteousness based on the law.

Hence, a proper definition of righteousness is believing in God (GEN 15:6), not perfect obedience to the law. The law has no stake at all in righteousness that justifies. It informs our righteousness, but it does not affect it:

Romans 3:21 - But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Galatians 4:21 - Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

But if Christ had to keep the law for us, we are not declared righteous apart from the law, and we are still under it albeit fulfilled by Christ. We are either under law or under grace (Romans 6:14). The Bible never states that we are still under the law and covered by grace—it's either one or the other. If we need the gospel of first importance just as much as we did when we were saved (a popular truism in our day), then we are still under the law which is a biblical idiom for the unsaved.

We are righteous because we have God's seed within us via the new birth and it was attained by faith alone. Perfect law keeping is not the standard, but a DIRECTION of righteousness resulting from a born again believer fighting the remnant of sin that remains in his mortal body:

1John 3:7 - Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

The righteous believer has a mind that serves the law, but is hindered by the remnant of sin left in mortality:

Romans 7:25 - Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Note “I myself,” and “you, yourselves” in the following citation:

Romans 15:14 - I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

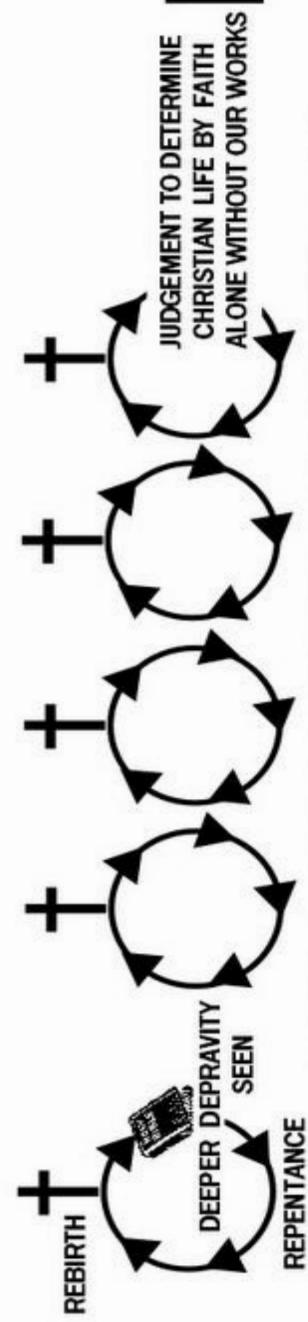
CONCLUSION

Where perfection is commanded in the Bible, the goal is being referenced, not a standard for remaining justified that has to be perpetually implemented through re-salvation. Calvinism denies that we are presently righteous, and therefore denies the biblical new birth. Jesus said we “must be born again.” To redefine the new birth is to posit another gospel. Calvinism keeps Christians under the law and propagates a gospel of perpetual re-salvation to maintain a satisfaction to the law culminating in a judgment to determine if we did so satisfactory. Therefore, assurance of salvation is on shaky ground. It also circumvents our ability to love the Lord by keeping His commandments because the standard is perfection.

It all starts with an unbiblical definition of righteousness, and results in a completely corrupted gospel.

[NOTE ILLUSTRATION ON NEXT PAGE]

JOHN CALVIN'S FALSE GOSPEL OF PROGRESSIVE JUSTIFICATION



“PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF EVERY DAY”

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