

# **False Reformation**



**Four Tenets of Luther and Calvin's  
Egregious False Gospel**

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# Chapter One

## What is the Gospel?

There is no word more haplessly thrown about among Christians than the word, “gospel.” The way we have been programmed to use the word in church is indicative of the gargantuan problem we have in present-day Christianity. The word is usually taken to speak of the salvific works of Christ, but is also used in very general terms to speak of everything *truth and church*. Hence, we hear people say, “That’s the gospel truth.” And that’s the problem. Subtly, the simple words, “Christ died for our sins” have become a prism that encompasses all reality. Virtually any question that arises among Christians in our day can be safely answered with “the gospel” and “Jesus.” Yes, these two answers are silver bullets that will prevent the scorning face that says, “You’re a Pharisee.”

The most effective lies are always closest to the truth. “The gospel” is in fact a biblical term that speaks of the full counsel of God. Which of course also includes Christ’s specific saving works. The gospel (“good news”) of Christ’s specific saving works and the good news of God’s full counsel are used interchangeably throughout Scripture. This book addresses the Reformed distortion of Christ’s saving works specifically. But in that distortion, all of God’s counsel becomes, “Christ died for our sins,” and the remainder of the Bible is relegated to being a “story” that further defines the works of Christ only. Hence, commands are posited as things that Christ has accomplished for us while framing them in a way that will exasperate our efforts and show us that Christ must do it all in our stead. The very way we function as Christians is at stake.

Saving faith is placed in what is of “first importance” (1Corinthians 15:3,4 [order of importance, not the sum total of the whole]) which is the saving work of Christ, but also puts trust in what will be learned with a commitment to obey. Whatever that might be.

The church is to make learners (“disciples”) and doers, not saved people (Matthew 28:19,20). Saving faith puts trust in the full counsel of God, not just John 3:16. No act of obedience saves us, but certainly it takes a proper understanding of the gospel which is a commitment to the full counsel of God; again, not just a mental ascent to John 3:16. Commitment and trust saves us and seals us before we do anything. Therefore, throughout Scripture, *gospel*, *receiving the word*, *repentance* (a change of mind), *obeying the gospel*, and, *The Way*, are used interchangeably [2]. Reformed theology has made the first thing that must be understood in God’s full counsel for salvation—the whole thing. This will be addressed in further detail in chapter five. The premise of their first tenet makes this approach to Scripture a necessity. The faulty premise leads to the lies that must cover and explain the first one. The result is a “Christianity” that is turned completely upside down.

This chapter (and the book) addresses the gospel of first importance—the commitment to the rest notwithstanding. When presenting the gospel, the following should be included and explained: justification, sanctification, and glorification. We must come to grips with the fact that most Christians in our day do not understand the meaning of these words or how they relate to each other, and we are not talking about theology here, we are talking about actual Bible terminology that explains the gospel of first importance (1 Corinthians 1:30, 6:11, Romans 8:30).

How can this be? No word is used more among Christians than “gospel,” but yet we don’t understand the principles that the Holy Spirit uses to explain it—the very gospel that we have been entrusted with to show forth to the world. Again, how can this be? The answer is simple: we have relegated the interpretation of gospel reality to those of the Reformed tradition. They are the gatekeepers of the gospel; they explain how it should be applied to reality. Obviously, it takes an expert to see Jesus in every verse of the Bible. We must trust them to tell us how to live a “gospel-driven life.”

This all reminds me of my father's driving instructions. He was big on *defensive driving*. He could have been the poster child for the often heard safety-mantra of that day: "Watch out for the other guy." Whenever we were out driving and indications of intent were displayed by other drivers via turn signals etc., he would ask aloud, for example, "He says he's turning, do you believe him?" Prominent leaders of our day state the following about the gospel:

“In Chapter 2, we offered our diagnosis of the problem with American evangelicalism: It is sick and dying because it has abandoned its Calvinistic foundations. Our prescription for a cure is that our churches return to the old paths from whence they drifted.

We have reasons to hope for a full recovery.

In the first place, Calvinistic Christianity is nothing more and nothing less than biblical Christianity. It follows, then, that the future of Christianity itself is bound up in the fortunes of Calvinism. Obviously the future of Christianity itself is not in doubt, for our Lord declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against God's church. And yet we should be quick to acknowledge, of course, that God is not obligated to keep his church existent in America. In God's sovereign providence, Christianity has been wiped out of other cultures over the centuries of its history. Still, we have hope for revival because our hope is in the God who revives. The same God who opened our own eyes can open the eyes of others [3].

“Do you believe them?” Why? What did Jesus say? Heeding my dad's driving advice has saved my life on the road numerous times. Heeding the advice of Christ on the road of life will save your very soul. “Pay attention to what you hear....”

Justification is our first order of business in understanding the gospel of first importance.

And the crux of justification is a concept that is very difficult to wrap our minds around; it is a legal declaration by God that cannot be reversed. We go to court and stand before the judge, and based on our commitment to Jesus Christ, we are declared righteous, and there is no double jeopardy. God does something very interesting in regard to this legal declaration: the righteousness that is imputed to us is His very own, and any standard that could judge the declaration is removed. In other words, the declaration is final and cannot be judged by any standard. The apostle Paul stated it this way:

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— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Why God does this is primarily unknown, though glorious. But it may be speculated that if God's very righteousness is imputed to us as a gift when we believe on Christ, by what would you judge God's righteousness? Could God's righteousness even be judged by anything that mortals can thoroughly understand?

Regardless of these musings, the fact remains: we are declared righteous and will not be judged by the standard of the law. We are no longer under the law, and therefore cannot be judged by it.... FOR JUSTIFICATION:

Romans 6:14 - For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 7:1 - Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.

Bottom line: The law can't touch us. It is no longer a standard for our justification. The keeping of the law is not necessary to maintain the gift. The gift has already been given, declared, and deposited to our account in full. And there can be no withdrawals. Nothing can happen to change that. It is a completed, onetime declaration.

Furthermore, apart from the rabbit trail of how God's sovereignty and foreknowledge weaves together with our will, this was finished before the world was created. Regardless of when we were born, God's election, calling, justification, and glorification are all in the past tense:

Romans 8:30 - And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

For now, let's speak of "glorification" as *when we go to heaven*. In other words, you were declared righteous and guaranteed a home in heaven for all eternity before you were even ~~born~~; no, before the earth was even created:

Ephesians 1:4 - even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love.



So, what can be done to maintain the legal declaration? Nothing by anyone. This is a finished work that guarantees eternal life regardless of anything we do. And as we shall see, this point is where the conception of Reformed error is found leading to oceans of erroneous ink and innocent blood. You do error if you are distracted by the *election/freewill* debate; at stake is a truth-driven gospel. Justification has no standard that maintains it. Many in the Reformed tradition complain that this is “legal fiction” because mortals are unable to live perfect lives. They have a problem with us being declared righteous while our present lives are imperfect. But again, what we do is not the point—what has been imputed to us and deposited in our eternal account is the point. As they themselves often say: “It’s not about what we do, but what Jesus did.” This is their favorite mantra—unless justification’s relationship to sanctification is the subject.

This brings us to the next critical point: justification must be kept separate from other elements of the gospel of first importance. Justification is a finished work, but other elements are not yet finished. Fusing the finished work of justification with other elements that are not yet complete is a disaster that is ruinous to innumerable souls. The biblical elements of this gospel are all good news, but some are finished, and others are not. What is not finished is of works. Let me repeat that: what is not finished is of works. Justification is finished.

We now address the next critical element that is separate from justification: salvation. While justification is primarily the Father’s work in the gospel, salvation is primarily the work of the Son. It is the gift of His life. He secured it by paying the penalty for our sins. Our sins were imputed to Christ so the Father’s righteousness could be imputed to us. This is the proper view of what is sometimes referred to as *double imputation* (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 3:26). We are given the life of the Son in all of its fullness when we are saved. When we think of salvation, we often think of *rescue*. Another way to think of salvation is “health” and *power for change*. Consider Ephesians 1:15-23;

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

We receive all the fullness of Christ's life and power (the same power that raised Him from the dead) with the gift of salvation, but it is not a finished work. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all still working in our salvation (Philippians 2:13, John 14:12-14, John 14:16,17, John 15:1-6). It is not only a rescue from eternal damnation and the final judgment of those under the law and not under grace (Romans 6:14), but also a rescue from the former bondage of sin (2Peter 1:2-4) [please see endnote # 5 for important notation].

This brings us to sanctification:

“Sanctification comes from the verb sanctify. Sanctify originates from the Greek word hagiozo, which means to be "separate" or to be "set apart." In the Bible, sanctification generally relates to a sovereign act of God whereby He "sets apart" a person, place, or thing in order that His purposes may be accomplished.

In the book of Exodus, God sanctifies a place of worship. "And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory," says Exodus 29:43. Even a day can be sanctified as seen in Genesis 2:3 where the seventh day is "set apart" as a holy day of rest. "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Similarly, when a person is sanctified he or she is being set apart by God for a specific divine purpose. The very moment we are saved in Christ we are also immediately sanctified and begin the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. As God's children we are "set apart" from that moment to carry out His divine purposes unto eternity. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" [4].

And there are three aspects to sanctification: A setting apart when we were justified before the foundation of the Earth (1Corinthians 6:11[definitive sanctification]); a progressive setting apart that appropriates the power of salvation (Philippians 2:12, Ephesians 4:20-24, 2Timothy 2:21, 1Thessalonians 4:3, 4:4 [progressive sanctification]), and *final sanctification*, or "glorification" (Romans, 7:24, 8:30). Technically (in more detail), the components of the gospel of first importance are listed as follows:

**Definitive Sanctification:** We were first set apart for a specific purpose (Galatians 1:15, 1Corinthians 6:11 Romans 1:1).

**Justification:** Romans 8:30, 1Corinthians 6:11.

**Salvation:** All of the fullness of Christ and heavenly blessings infused into the believer at salvation (Galatians 3:2, Ephesians 1:18-20, Philippians 2:12,13) [5].

**The New Birth / Regeneration:**

1 Corinthians 15:22 - For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

John 3:3 - Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

1 Corinthians 3:16 - Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

### **Progressive Sanctification:**

1Peter 2:1 - So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

**Assurance:** This comes from obedience;

2Peter 1:5 - For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And also the guarantee of the indwelling Holy Spirit:

2 Corinthians 5:1 - For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

**Final Sanctification / Glorification / Resurrection / Redemption:** Luke 21:28, Romans 7:24.

Among the primary parts of the *gospel of first importance*, we only participate in one: progressive sanctification. We are in good hands! All three persons of the Trinity are at work in our salvation. God even supplies us with the will to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12,13), but given the will, we must exercise it. And it may not always *feel* like we have the will, but by faith we know that we do:

Hebrews - 12:11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

We must work out what God has worked in. We are collaborators with God in our progressive sanctification (1Corinthians 3:9, 2Corinthians 6:1, 1Thessalonians 3:2). And our collaborating will be judged (1Corinthians 3:10-15, 2Corinthians 5:10). Before his beliefs changed for the worst, Reformed pastor RC Sproul stated it well:

“Sanctification is cooperative. There are two partners involved in the work. I must work and God will work. If ever the extra-biblical maxim, “God helps those who help themselves,” had any truth, it is at this point. We are not called to sit back and let God do all the work. We are called to work, and to work hard. To work something out with fear and trembling is to work with devout and conscientious rigor. It is to work with care, with a profound concern with the end result [6].

And we can participate aggressively without fear because justification is separate from the law, and our glorification is guaranteed (John 6:39). However, though we will not be judged by the law in regard to our justification, we are informed by it for our sanctification:

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—

Romans 4:2 - For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

Be sure to also note Galatians 4:21.

Again, Note that we are not justified by the law, but informed by it for sanctification. We do not look to the Bible for ways to obey commands to keep our justification; for one, it is no longer a standard for our justification, but rather faith alone is the standard.

But when it comes to being informed on how to colabor with God in sanctification, the apostle asked the question, “For what does the Scripture say?” Also:

1 Thessalonians 4:2 - For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Before we were saved, we were under the law and in danger of being judged by it in the last day. It will no longer be our judge for justification, but rather informs on “how to control his [/her] own body in holiness and honor....” Sanctification means to “set apart,” and the growing gap between us and our old worldly ways is indicative of true biblical change.

Jesus Christ said that if we love Him—keep His commandments. In the very next sentence, Christ said the following:

John 14:25 - These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

The Holy Spirit is our “helper.” He does not love Christ for us. Christ is our Lord, not the Lord over the Holy Spirit. We are followers of Christ, and He displayed His love for the Father in the same way:

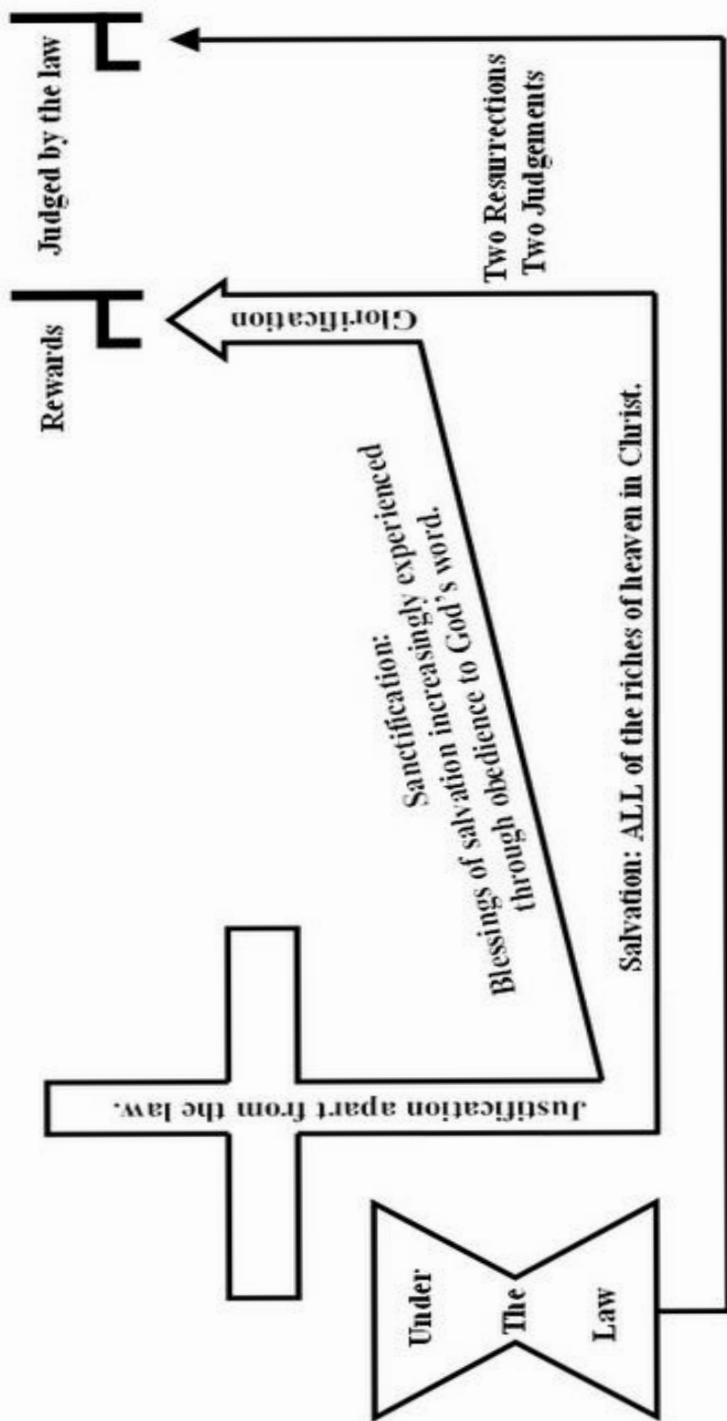
John 14:31 - but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

As one fact among many others regarding Reformed doctrinal atrocities, we will see how the Reformation gospel steals our ability to please the Lord and love Him. It circumvents one of the primary goals of being a Christian:

2Corinthians 5:9 - So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

On the page following, there is an illustration that will help summarize the first chapter as far as an illustration is able to.





*Illustration 1*