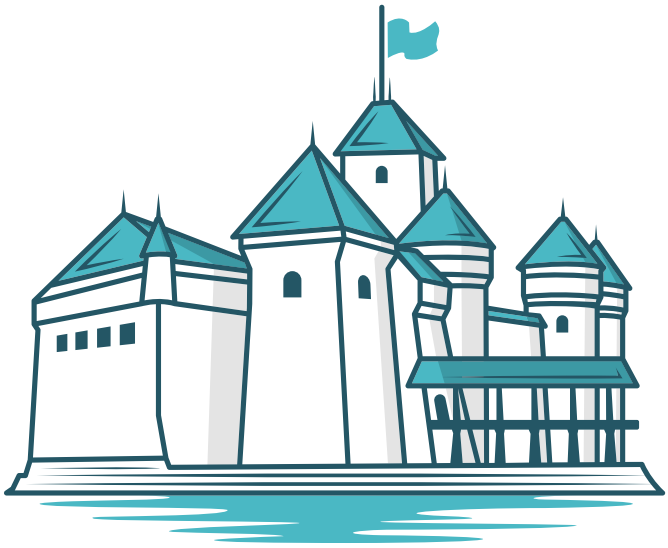


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For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5

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For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

—Philippians 1:8

Longing in Christ

Paul continues greeting his brethren in Philippi by assuring them of his warm affection for them. "How greatly I long after you"! (Phil. 1:8). Paul dearly missed his old friends in Philippi and desired to see them again. What tender feeling stirred in him when he thought of the Philippian jailor and his family. What friendly regard arose in him when he thought of Lydia and her household. Paul and the saints in Philippi had prayed together, sang together, worshiped together, eaten together, suffered together, and comforted each other together. They were "brethren" (Acts 16:40), bound by the deepest of spiritual ties. The salvation of each of them, without exception, had been a miracle of grace. To think that such as these Philippians should be the church of Jesus Christ together! And the Lord had added new brethren to the church in Paul's absence. Paul could not wait to meet them and comfort them, just as he had seen and comforted the others (v. 40). Yes, "How greatly I long after you all" (Phil. 1:8).

Paul's warm affection for his brethren in Philippi was not the mere natural affection that is common to mankind. All men are created by God with a certain natural affection for their fellow man. All men have a sense of humanity in them, according to which they feel a certain kinship with their fellow man and a certain pity for the plight of the distressed. Men call each other "brother" and support each other in their common causes. Oh, not as if this natural affection in man renders man good. Man is incapable of using his affection aright, even in earthly and natural things. Man pollutes his natural affection and turns himself against God and the neighbor. Man holds the truth in unrighteousness and even becomes "without natural affection" (Rom. 1:18, 31). Man does with his natural affection what he does with all his natural light: "this light...man in various ways pollutes entirely, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he is rendered without excuse before the face of God" (Canons of Dordt 3–4.4). No, Paul is not speaking of some natural affection for the people of Philippi.

Rather, Paul's warm affection for his brethren in Philippi was a true spiritual affection that arose from Christ himself. Paul says that he greatly longs after the Philippians "in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:8). By this phrase Paul takes us into the inner life and mind and heart of Jesus. Paul takes us to see what Jesus thinks and how Jesus feels about his people. For what Paul calls "the bowels"—literally, "the viscera"—we today would call the heart. It refers to that feeling and emotion of soul that is so powerful that it manifests itself in the body. It is the powerful affection for one's beloved that forms a lump in one's throat, makes one's eyes well with tears, and causes one's chest to ache—visceral reactions, all. And Christ loves his people! "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched" the leper (Mark 1:41). And "when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them" (Matt. 9:36). And "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). In that love Christ went to the cross and redeemed us from our sin.

The astounding thing about Paul's love for his brethren is that it is really Christ's love for his church. The affections of which Paul speaks are "the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:8). Paul's great longing for his brethren was simply the manifestation within himself of Christ's great

longing for his brethren. Paul is not speaking merely of imitation—Christ loves his people, and Paul imitates him. Rather, Paul is speaking of spiritual union. Paul uses the union language of "in" (v. 8). Christ lived in Paul, and Paul lived in Christ, such that Christ's deep and eternal affection for his people welled up in Paul as Paul's spiritual affection for his brethren.

How mysterious! But how wonderful! For this explains the love not only of the apostle for his brethren but also of we brethren for each other. Our affection for one another in the body of Christ does not come from us; but it arises in us from Christ, indeed, from his very heart.

God's people in Philippi had to know the apostle's affection for them. Paul made them certain of it by an oath: "For God is my record" (Phil. 1:8). The importance of their knowing the apostle's love was not merely that they might know that their friend and teacher still thought of them. Rather, they must know Paul's love because Paul was the apostle of Christ. Paul spoke on behalf of Christ. Thus Jesus Christ said to his people in Philippi, and says to all his brethren yet today, "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in my heart."

How blessed! We are beloved of Jesus Christ! And therefore we certainly know that we are beloved of God.

—AL

The Scrivener

Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross": Question and Answer Session

This is an edited transcript of the question and answer session following the speech "Martin Luther's 'Theology of the Cross,'" which was printed in *Reformed Pavilion* two weeks ago.[1]

At the beginning of the lecture, I believe you said that Rome still has the practice of indulgences. Is this correct? And has it changed over time since the Reformation?

And then from another person: ***You mentioned that there are indulgences yet today. What form do they take? Does Rome still sell them as Tetzel did?***

There are still indulgences today. I do not know all the details of how Rome peddles those, but peddle them they do. Several years ago, maybe a decade ago now, the pope offered all the young people in the Roman Catholic Church an indulgence for following him on social media.[2] With that kind of empty action of following the pope on social media, one could get out of some time in purgatory. So Rome's practice of indulgences is still alive and well. I would guess there are other works one could perform to obtain an indulgence yet today as well.

Do you see a substantial difference between indulgences and the mercenary merchandise of the gifts of salvation, and the teaching that the experience of salvation is in the way of good works or that forgiveness is only after our preceding repentance?

As I understand it, the question is whether there is a substantial difference between indulgences, on the one hand, and that false doctrine of prerequisite works, on the other hand. No, there is no substantial difference. Luther was at first appalled by the crass and commercial aspect of indulgences as Tetzel sold them. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." That was what caught his attention, along with the cruelty of Tetzel's high-pressure sales tactics, getting people to give away their last money to spring their relatives from purgatory.

[1] Andrew Lanning, "Martin Luther's 'Theology of the Cross,'" speech given on October 30, 2026, at Remnant Reformed Church. The speech can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dVjA8qsrTs. See also *Reformed Pavilion* 4, no. 31 (November 7, 2026): 4–14.

[2] In 2013 the pope gave indulgences to all who participated in the World Youth Day events in Brazil. Those who could not attend in person were granted the same indulgence for following the pope on Twitter during his World Youth Day activities.

But Luther, in his Ninety-Five Theses as well as in the Heidelberg Disputation, also addressed the related issue of making the spiritual gift of forgiveness depend upon man's works. For Luther it was possible to err not only by offering salvation for sale for money but also by suspending salvation on the works or the penance or the penitence of man. In fact, thesis 3 of the Heidelberg Disputation states, "Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins."[3]

There is an insight in the question that is important: even though the sale of indulgences may have been especially crass, the false doctrine of conditional salvation is equally wicked; and we repudiate it. Whether one sells salvation for man's money or for man's works, both make salvation depend upon man instead of Christ.

What were Martin Luther's friends' names?

Luther's friend that he lost at the Heidelberg Disputation was named Johann Eck. And that was especially sorrowful for Luther. Eck and Luther had shared correspondence in which they agreed with each other. They were working together on the fact that the scriptures, not Aristotle, are the source of truth. But after the Heidelberg Disputation, Eck turned on Luther. That was a surprise to Luther; he did not expect it. And it was Eck who, at the next major meeting, called the Leipzig Disputation, sprang a trap for Luther by forcing him to publicly identify with a supposed heretic. Luther would confess that he believed the same as John Hus—a pre-reformer who had been burned a century earlier for his doctrine of the authority of scripture. For Luther it was wonderful to discover that Hus had taught the authority of scripture, and it was wonderful to stand with Hus. But Rome thought it had won a tactical victory by forcing Luther to acknowledge publicly that he agreed with a man whom Rome had burned as a heretic. It was Luther's former friend, Johann Eck, who laid the snare that captured Luther.

Luther did have others with whom he remained friends throughout his life. Amsdorf was one. And a little bit later, Melanchthon, who would teach with him in Wittenberg. Luther had many friends in the Lord. Luther had many who came from all over Germany to speak to him. So he lost many, many friends; but he also gained, as the Lord says, a hundredfold.

And we have seen that as well. Though we lose friends and family in the course of reformation, God causes us to have a hundredfold, brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers in Christ.

Luther talked about opposites in his "theology of the cross." How can this theology be applied to the passive versus active faith debate or controversy? Refer to the Heidelberg Disputation thesis 27, which reads, "Actually one should call the work of Christ an acting work and our work an accomplished work, and thus an accomplished work pleasing to God by the grace of the acting work."

This is another good insight into an application of the theology of the cross, that God reveals himself or is known under the opposite. The controversy over passive versus active faith does not mean to deny that the scriptures and the confessions, and we, speak about faith in terms of certain activities. Scripture describes faith as *coming*. It describes faith as *believing*. It describes faith as *abiding*. It describes it as *seeking* and *knocking*. It describes it as *asking*. There are many activities in the scriptures that are used to describe faith. Our confessions describe faith as the activities of knowledge and confidence. And yet we say about all of those activities that faith is passive. They are passive activities. They are activities that are not activities, to try to use some of the paradoxical language, perhaps, of the theology of the cross. The idea of faith's being passive is that faith is the opposite of working. It is the opposite of contributing. That is the meaning of faith. That is the meaning of passive activities in faith. The theology of glory, or the doctrine of salvation by works, teaches that faith is a contributing and that faith is a working. The truth of the gospel is that faith is not man's working or contributing whatsoever.

[3] Theses from the Heidelberg Disputation are quoted from https://bookofconcord.org/other-resources/sources-and-context/heidelberg-disputation/.

Faith is a strange gift. It is a hard gift for the mind of man to understand. It is otherworldly. It does not belong to the wisdom of this world. It is a gift from God by which we know as God knows, by which we are united to Jesus Christ our head and know him and see through his eyes and hear through his ears. And that seeing, that hearing, that coming, that eating, that seeking, that asking—all of that is not working, and it is not contributing. It is only having from Christ what God gives to us through him.

As the questioner indicates, thesis 27 of the Heidelberg Disputation wrestles with the non-contributing nature of man's activities. Thesis 27 is not dealing strictly with faith but is dealing more broadly with man's good works. But Luther was searching for language to describe the truth that for all man's working and laboring and activity, none of it contributes anything to man's salvation. Christ's working and laboring and activity alone are the active working; all man's activity is accomplished by Christ.

I appreciate the question. And this illustrates that there are a dozen, a score, a hundred applications of the theology of the cross. You can find whole books written about specific ways to apply it: to biblical interpretation, for example; to the life of the Christian, for example. It certainly can apply to the active/passive faith debate.

Why are so many terms used for justification in Reformed churches nowadays? Eternal justification, objective justification, subjective justification, ongoing justification. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (5:16). "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (v. 18).

All of those passages use *justification* in one sense: the declaration by God of our righteousness for Jesus' sake. Some of the different terms we use for justification today are meant to describe certain aspects of that gift of God in answer to errors. So, for example, when we refer to *eternal justification*, that answers the error that justification is by faith and something else—by faith and repenting or by faith and works or by faith and forgiving someone else. The popular and pervasive error is that justification is by faith *and*. There are a lot of different ways to answer that error, but one of those ways is to see that our righteousness is from eternity. There never was a time when we were not righteous before God, because we were chosen in Christ, and Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Other terms that are used for justification are meant to confuse. I take that to be the term *ongoing justification*. There is a teaching that the child of God is not justified eternally but must perform his daily actions—whatever those may be: his repenting or his forgiving his neighbor—in order to be justified every day anew. But that presentation of ongoing justification by man's activity takes away from an election theology, or a decretal theology, of justification and helps introduce a repentance theory of justification.

The passages that this questioner cites teach beautifully and comfortingly the gospel that our righteousness is nothing of ourselves. That is offensive to man. The theology of glory says that our righteousness is of ourselves. But in all of those passages, our righteousness is of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. And that is the theology of the cross. God has declared sinners righteous, even as he declared the righteous one a sinner. Christ was made "sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21).

Have we seen unforeseen things or things not understood until after the reformation of 2021, even as Luther found out in the 1500s? How about the reformation of 1924? The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) have had the theology of the cross removed from their midst. The lecture tonight has revealed this clearly.

As far as the first part of that, yes, I believe that we have learned things that we didn't even know we didn't know. We have learned those things since

2021. In every reformation God takes his church back to the truth, stands her feet upon that truth, and delivers to her those old paths of the truth again, so that the church in reformation says, as it were, "We are new men. We have learned things we never knew before. They were always there; they were always the truth; but we have learned them anew." I believe there are such things in our own lives. For example, I believe that we have been led to understand justification by faith alone more than we ever knew it. That was always a phrase that could easily roll off everyone's lips. Every catechumen who had ever sat in a catechism class could say, "Justification by faith alone." But what did that mean? And we see today in our mother church, for example, that there is gross confusion about it, so that, according to synod, justification is by sanctification. Well, that is not justification by faith alone. If a man's sanctification may not be slighted in assuring a man of his justification, that is justification by sanctification. We were in that mess. That is our mother. That is the kind of thinking that by nature we would love.

But the truth of what justification by faith alone is has been restored to us. And we are still learning what that justification by faith alone is. We are still learning the wonder of it. And our flesh is always trying to bring in some of our works. As we have talked about many times before, our flesh cannot help but think that we are better. We are better than mother. We are better than the Protestant Reformed Churches. We are better than everyone else. That is simply the way the flesh thinks. It doesn't know how to think any differently.

But faith knows the truth. Faith sees the scandal stone and stands on it. Nothing of my works, nothing of my goodness, may be found there but only the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "It is finished"—and he meant it! There and there alone is my righteousness before God.

Then also, in 2023 we learned about worship. And it is interesting that that reformation of worship did not come out of the law. The second commandment and the regulative principle were prominent, but the reformation did not arise out of the law. It arose out of the same gospel of salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone. As we sang the psalms when we were Protestant Reformed yet, we came to words like this: "For good the Lord rewarded me, because I kept his ways aright."[4] Well, how can I sing that? And if you go to the psalm, to Psalm 18, then the wording is even stronger than it is in the Psalter. "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me" (Ps. 18:20). Well, how in the world can I sing that? So we were learning already in the Protestant Reformed Churches that the psalmist is actually Jesus. Maybe everybody already knew that. Maybe I am the only one who didn't know that. Sometimes I wonder. But that was a revelation. That was a wonderful gift of God, that Jesus is the psalmist; and now the psalms come to life.

And so when we became Reformed Protestant, being cast out of the PRC, it was this truth of Jesus the psalmist that gripped our hearts. Many of the Psalter numbers that we sang in the Reformed Protestant Churches were introduced by an explanation of how Jesus is the psalmist—not then yet as much as the Lord has given that to us now, but already we were beginning to see these things. And now, if something must be added to the psalms—if the hymns of man must be added to these psalms of Christ—that becomes intolerable for the church. So that arose out of the gospel, and that is something we are still learning and will be learning for the rest of our lives. Our next generation is learning that. They know way more about the psalms than we ever did. And, Lord willing, they will continue to learn in the next generation yet. So yes, there certainly have been things we did not even know needed reformation. But as the Lord has given that reformation, we have been blessed by what he has shown.

Then the statement regarding the theology of the cross: "The PRC has had the theology of the cross removed from her midst. The lecture tonight has revealed this clearly." I do agree with that. The theology of the cross has left the PRC. That is evident in the doctrine that is tolerated

[4] 1912 Psalter number 34, stanza 10.

in the preaching of the PRC. That is evident in the decisions of the synods. And that is evident even in what seems to be the energy within the Protestant Reformed denomination. Where is the energy in the PRC? Not in doctrine, as far as I can tell. I don't have my finger so much on the pulse of the PRC anymore, but from what little I know, it is not doctrine that grips the PRC. As one small example, when the greatest living theologian in the Protestant Reformed Churches writes his dogmatics book, there is nothing but crickets from the PRC. I don't know what anybody in the PRC thinks about that dogmatics book.

But what is interesting, apparently, to many in the PRC is all the relationships that are being forged, all of the joint conferences, all of the ecumenical work, all kinds of things that we could not have imagined five or ten years ago but now are commonplace and the energy in the PRC. Well, the PRC have arrived. That denomination is finally a big player on the Reformed scene. The PRC finally have a seat at the table; and men are listening to them, finally. That is the theology of glory. That is what our flesh wants too. Who wants to be a backwater church that nobody knows about, cares about, thinks about? Who wants to lose his life? That is the theology of the cross though: that glory and victory are hidden under loss and shame and defeat. The wisdom of God is always wiser than men.

Over and over again in the history of the church, men have turned away from the theology of the cross to the theology of glory. Could you comment on this in light of Galatians 6:14? "Never bypass the cross."

Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And I think the last statement, "Never bypass the cross," is the conclusion of the matter. In the preaching of the gospel, let Jesus Christ and him crucified be the one thing that we know in our midst. Let Jesus Christ and him crucified be the one thing that matters, so that our name, our reputation, our life, our advancement, or whatever else—as individuals or as a church—not be what drives us. But may we behold the cross of Christ by faith, and let our only glory be in it. Galatians 6:14 captures well this theology of the cross.

The word *cross* was an unsavory word in the day that Paul wrote this. The word *cross* was like our four-letter words. You wouldn't go to a dinner today and suddenly, in the middle of the dinner, shout out a four-letter word. That was what the word *cross* was like. You wouldn't go to a dinner and shout the word *cross* or even say the word *cross*. It was a shameful concept, a shameful idea. Paul turns that on its head. He says, "I glory in that cross. I boast in it. That is all I boast in. And God forbid that I ever boast in anything else than the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh yes, by that cross I am crucified to the world. It hates me. And by that cross the world is crucified to me. I can't find my life in it. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let that be the gospel that is proclaimed. Let that be the message—Jesus Christ and him crucified—that is proclaimed. For then we sinners have nothing of our own works or lives left, but we have all the righteousness and life of Christ by faith.

—AL

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