

The Doctrine of Justification: Its Reformation Formulation and Present Challenges

Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper

This course explores the classical Reformation formulation of justification in both its sixteenth-century and contemporary contexts. There is an emphasis on some recent theological movements which have challenged the traditional understanding of the doctrine, such as: the New Perspective on Paul, Gerhard Forde's Radical Lutheranism, The Finnish approach to Luther interpretation, twentieth-century ecumenical dialogues, and Radical Orthodoxy. Throughout, the explanation offered on the doctrine by the heirs of the Reformation is defended as consistent both with Paul's thought and with the early church.

Objective

The goal of this course is to give students a strong understanding of these four areas:

- The classical exposition of justification as explained in both Reformation and post-Reformation sources
- Contemporary debates surrounding the doctrine of justification, and critiques of Luther's understanding
- A robust defense of the Lutheran formulation of justification in response to such criticisms
- Why the doctrine of justification matters for the contemporary world

Texts for the course

The Doctrine of Justification: A Classic Lutheran Treatment by Matthias Loy

<<https://www.jspublishing.org/complete-catalogue/the-doctrine-of-justification-by-matthias-loy>>

Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges

edited by Bruce L. McCormack

<<https://www.amazon.com/Justification-Perspective-Historical-Developments-Contemporary/dp/0801031311/>>

The Righteousness of One: An Evaluation of Early Patristic Soteriology in Light of the New Perspective on Paul by Jordan Cooper

<<https://www.amazon.com/Righteousness-One-Evaluation-Soteriology-Perspective-ebook/dp/B00EJNA414>>

“A Lutheran Response to *Justification: Five Views*” by Jordan Cooper

<<https://logia.org/logia-online/216>>

Note: As this course is not for credit, the books themselves are not a requirement for participating. They will, however, be the basis for a large part of the discussion and will help you to get the most out of the course.


Schedule:

Class 1 An Outline of the Classical Reformation Approach to the Doctrine

Text: Loy, *Justification*, 1-121.

Class 2: The New Perspective on Paul, Righteousness, and Works of the Law

Text: McCormack, *Justification in Perspective*, 219-264 (the Gathercole and Wright articles), and Cooper, *Righteousness of One*, 1-26 (chapters 1 and 2).



Class 3: Historical Challenges to *Sola Fide*

Text: McCormack, *Justification in Perspective*, 25-72 (Needham and David Wright articles), and Cooper, *Righteousness of One*, 68-135.

Class 4: Challenges to Forensic Justification

Text: Cooper, *Righteousness of One*, 40-67, and McCormack, *Justification in Perspective*, 197-217 (Blocher article).

Class 5: Divergences Between the Lutheran and Reformed Traditions on Justification

Text: Cooper, “A Lutheran Response” and McCormack, *Justification in Perspective*, 73-118 (Trueman and Wubbenhorst articles).