

# Sacramental Grace, Imputed Righteousness, Or Neither?

**Introduction:** The influences of these two doctrines, one predominantly from Roman Catholicism, the other from Protestantism, are both felt among true non-denominational Christians. It is wise to know something about them.

## I) Sacramental Grace

- \* This is the idea that through visible forms (sacraments) an invisible grace is imparted and are perceived to have inherent power in themselves, whereby they bestow benefits on the recipient.
- \* The major two are baptism and the Lord's Supper, but the Roman church has seven in all, the others being marriage, penance, orders, extreme unction and confirmation.
- \* An sanctioned administrator is required; a clergyman, church official, or special priesthood, to validate the service. Hence only certain ones can baptize, marry a couple, or serve you the communion.
- \* It is believed that there is a treasury of unused righteous merits stored up by Christ, Mary and the saints that the pope can dispense to the faithful through them doing the good works assigned to them by the priests.
- \* Indulgences and penance - the release from a certain period of punishment or suffering for certain sins, granted in response to works of service.

## The Truth:

- \* The power of God's grace is conditioned upon faith (Ephesians 2:8)
- \* The word sacrament comes from "sacred", meaning to set apart, and the Scriptures nowhere allow for certain commands to be set apart from the rest, as being more important.
- \* Today in the Lord's kingdom, all things are regarded as holy (Zechariah 14:20-21) and our entire lives are a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1)
- \* The idea of holy water or inherent power in the immersion itself is disallowed by implication in I Peter 3:21.
- \* The idea that there is anything inherent in the bread or fruit of the vine, is debunked in I Corinthians 11:28-29. Some of the brethren there had been eating the same elements, in the church services, but in a manner that condemned them.
- \* The Bible nowhere teaches a storehouse of righteousness accumulated for future use. This is the product of a fertile, but vain imagination

\* This is where this doctrine seems to connect with our next one.

## Imputed Righteousness

- \* The idea is that Christ not only died for our sins, but lived a righteous life so that that righteousness could be transferred to us.
- \* It teaches that our sins are “covered” by Christ’s purity. That when God looks at our lives, He does not see our various and sundry sins, but the righteousness of Christ, super-imposed over us.
- \* No matter the sin, whether it be something immoral, or religious error, it makes no difference.
- \* This is needed so that our “sinful natures” can now be overcome.
- \* This allows fellowship to be extended to a broader circle of people.

## The Truth:

- \* The Bible teaches our sins are remitted, which means taken away.
- \* The idea in the Scriptures of sins being covered is not blanketed or hidden from view, but satisfied. Eg. A person in a restaurant with others, when the bill comes, saying, “I’ll cover it.”
- \* The word imputed does not mean transferred in the Bible, but reckoned or account as.
- \* Romans 4:3-11 This favorite passage of those espousing this doctrine does not teach Christ’s righteousness was transferred, nor that any righteousness whatsoever was transferred, but rather says that certain ones are regarded as righteous due to their having faith in Christ and thus being forgiven.

**Conclusion:** Both of these false doctrines have God giving something in a way not promised. And they tend to not promote repentance, reform and the fruit of repentance that the Scriptures do; rather a laxness towards such.