

Justification by Grace Through Faith: A Reformed Perspective on the Salvation of Unbelievers



Daniel J. Adams

One of the most problematic of all theological issues is the relationship between grace and faith in the process of justification or salvation. How much of human salvation is due to God's grace, and how much is due to human faith? The phrase "justification by grace through faith" has sometimes been used to summarize the nature of the relationship between grace and faith.¹ Properly speaking, of course, the doctrine of salvation includes both justification and sanctification, and perhaps one can say that grace is more prominent in the process of justification, and faith more prominent in the process of sanctification. In the phrase "justification by grace through faith" however, the focus is upon the first part of salvation and not upon the second. The concern is with not sanctification but with justification.

In recent years, especially within the Asian context where Christianity is a minority religion, the relationship between grace and faith in the process of justification has been posed in the form of questions concerning the salvation of unbelievers. Will only Christians be saved? Is there any possibility for non-Chris-

1 I am indebted to Prof. Kim Choon-Ki for calling this phrase to my attention in a lecture presented to the twenty-sixth annual meeting of Presbyterian theological seminary professors in Korea held at Mokpo from 23–25 June 2005.