

Grace Presbyterian Church of Hanover, Pennsylvania

Dr. Jeffery A. Sheely, Pastor

July 29, 2004

Presbytery of Philadelphia
c/o The Rev. Robert P. Harting, Stated Clerk
202 North Broad Street
Middletown, Delaware 19709-1002

To The Presbytery of Philadelphia,

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone is at the heart of Reformation Theology. To remove any word from that statement, in the Reformed tradition, would be treason. Over the last several years I have seen this take place in the Presbytery of Philadelphia and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a denomination. I have heard ministers and elders redefine the meaning of words in certain contexts and claim adherence to confessional and Reformed theology, but in reality they are denying the very theology they claim.

The justification controversy is not new. It is the Norman Shepherd salvation by grace plus works controversy that the Presbytery never dealt with. The issue at stake is the heart of the gospel. The Reformers have clearly taught justification by grace through faith alone. It is an alien righteousness. It was the finished work of Christ imputed to the sinner. Christ's righteousness was placed on the sinner and the sinner's guilt was placed on Christ. The sinner has no earned righteousness of his own that will justify him before God on the last day. It is all of Christ and only Christ!

The seventy-first General Assembly did great harm to the church by not condemning New Justification Theology. By simply reaffirming a

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commitment to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Assembly permitted those who teach New Justification views to continue to do so. Everyone who holds to New Justification teaching claims confessional adherence! In reality, their teaching is quite the opposite of the Confession.

Over the last several years, along with other faithful men, I have tried to resist the liberal intrusion into the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, to no avail. I realize that I am in a small minority, not a majority. Therefore, I have decided that it is best for me to peacefully leave the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and seek membership in another Reformed fellowship.

Therefore, by means of this letter, according to the Book of Discipline Chapter V 2. b. (1), I hereby declare myself independent, and instruct Presbytery to remove my name from the membership role of the Presbytery.

My decision on this matter is firm. I have not made it lightly, but only after much prayer and over a year of consideration of the situation.

I am requesting that a copy of my letter be attached to the minutes for the record.

By Grace Through Faith Alone,

Dr. Jeffery A. Sheely, Pastor
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