

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 21 (Q2LES8) - JUSTIFICATION & ADOPTION QUESTIONS # 33 & 34

1. Prayer

2. Bible reading: Galatians 3: 1 - 29

3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we covered an important step in the process of redemption. Man, being born into an estate of sin and misery, can do nothing by himself to escape from this estate, but must rely on the blessing and mercy of God. God will call his elect. He has given us His Word for direction, and His Spirit to lead and guide us, and to help us understand the Word. God, using the Word and His Spirit, convinces us of our sin and misery, enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renews our wills, which, since the fall have allowed us only the will to do evil. This process is called Effectual Calling. Those that are effectually called are allowed to partake of several benefits, consisting of justification, adoption, sanctification, and the several benefits which, in this life, accompany or flow from them.

4. **Introduction:** The benefits of effectual calling are justification, adoption, sanctification, and the benefits flowing from them. Today, we are going to learn about justification and adoption. At the point where our calling becomes effectual, we are justified through Christ. At that point, we also become adopted members of God's family. Justification and adoption are inseparable. They occur at the same instant. You can't have one without the other.

5. Questions:

Question 33: **What is justification?**

Answer: **Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.**

Question 34: **What is adoption?**

Answer: **Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.**

6. SEQUENCE OF REDEMPTION

- a. Redemption is a process with a sequence of events, orchestrated by God. We begin at birth, born into an estate of sin and misery. God then calls us. To some this calling is effectual, to some it is not. At that point in time, selected by God, when His calling becomes effective, two things happen. We are justified and adopted. Both occur at the same time.

7. JUSTIFICATION

- a. Justification. What is the definition of Justification. Back to my trusty Websters New 20th Century Dictionary.

- Justify/Justification -

- Justify - *to declare free from guilt or blame; to absolve; to clear*

in theology, to pardon and clear from guilt; to treat as just; to pardon.

- Justification - in theology, remission of sin, and absolution from guilt and punishment

- b. From whom is justification received?

God. **(Rom 8:33 “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth”)**

- c. Both the SC q33 and the LC q70 state that justification is an act of God’s free grace.

(Rom 3:24 “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”)

What is meant by “God’s free grace”?

That our sin debt has been paid by someone else, and redemption, to the elect, is a free gift. WCF c11p3 says in part, *“and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead; and both freely, not for anything in them; their justification is of free grace; that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God, might be glorified in the justification of sinners.”*

LC q71 specifically asks this question. It answers, *“Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God’s justice in the behalf of them that are justified; yet in as much as God accepteth*

the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them, and did provide this surety, his own only Son, imputing his righteousness to them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith, which also is his gift, their justification is to them of free grace.”

d. Faith! . **(Rom 3:22 “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.”)** LC q72 asks “What is justifying faith?”. It answers, “Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and the word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery (remember SC q31 on effective calling), and of the disability of himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.”

e. Faith alone!! Doesn't our good works have some input?

No!!! **(Gal 2:16 “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”)**

f. What do we receive from God by his gift of justification.

- Pardon of our sins.
- accepted as righteous in his sight.

g. When are we justified?

When God, through His Spirit, in due time, applies Christ to us, allowing our faith in him to be real. **(Tit 3:3 – 7 “⁽³⁾For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived serving divers lust and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. ⁽⁴⁾But after that the kindness and love of god our Savior toward man appeared, ⁽⁵⁾Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; ⁽⁷⁾that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”)**, See also WCF, Chapter 11, para. 4

h. How is Christ's righteousness made ours?

By imputation.

Imputed. Another great word. Anyone like to take a shot at the definition? Back to my trusty Websters New 20th Century Dictionary.

- impute/imputed - *to attribute (something, especially a crime or a fault) to another; to charge with; to ascribe*

in theology, to ascribe (good or evil) to a person as coming from another.

So this is saying that any righteousness we have is not from us, but is ascribed by God as coming from Jesus Christ.

(Rom 4:6 “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,”) explain?

- i. What is the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to us.
 - His whole obedience to the Law in our stead.
 - His passive obedience in his suffering and death (Eph 1:7)
 - His active obedience, whereby we are accepted as righteous in God’s sight. (Rom 5:19 “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”)
- j. The WCF says of justification, in c11p 1, as follows: “Those who God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by inputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, **they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness** by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.” (Note these words appear again in question 86, which asks “what is faith in Jesus Christ?”)

8. ADOPTION

- a. Both the SC (q32) and the LC (q74) agree that adoption, like justification, is an act of God’s free grace. Therefore, what we said about justification, applies to adoption. It the free gift from God, given to us by God, not for any good works which we have accomplished, but by his grace alone. **(Eph 1:5 “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”)**
- b. Chapter 12 of the WCF covers adoption. It is a short chapter, with only one paragraph. It says about adoption “All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption:

by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.”

The definition of vouchsafe is interesting: “to condescend to grant or bestow”

- b. Adoption, like justification, is an act, which is applied immediately with God’s application of faith in Jesus Christ.
- c. Justification vs adoption
 - Justification is the act of pardoning all our sins and accepting us as righteous in God’s sight.
 - Adoption is simultaneous with justification, and is God’s accepting us into the number, and granting us the privileges of the son on God.
- d. Into the number of what?

Of God’s children. (**John 1:12** *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”*)
God’s elect.

- e. What are the privileges of the Son’s of God?

WCF chapter 12, as quoted above lists several privileges, along with scripture verses. TV sums them up in five privileges.

- God’s fatherly protection of them from temporal and spiritual evils. (**Ps121:7** *“The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.”*)
- God’s fatherly provision of all needful things, both for their soul and body. (**Ps 34:10** *“The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”*)
- God’s fatherly concern correction of them. (**Heb 12:6-7** *“(6)For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. (7)If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ”*)
- God’s audience and return of their prayers. (**1 John 5: 14 – 15** *“(14)And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: (15)and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”*)

- A sure title to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. (**Rom 8:17** *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”*)

9. JUSTIFICATION & ADOPTION

- a. Justification and adoption are acts of God’s free grace, applied immediately, at the time of God’s choosing, when the process of effectual calling is complete. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are lifted out of the estate of sin and misery into which we are born. Justification and adoption differ from sanctification, which we will deal with next week) in that they are applied immediately, whereas sanctification, like effectual calling, is a process.