

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 24 | Justification and Adoption

APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION

Romans 3.21-26 - *"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*

What is Justification? - WCF 11.1 - "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth:(a) 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 imputing 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,(b) they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness, by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.(c)"

(a) Rom 8:30; Rom 3:24; Rom 5:15-16

(b) Rom 4:5-8; 2 Cor 5:19,21; Rom 3:22-28; Titus 3:5,7; Eph 1:7; Jer 23:6; 1 Cor 1:30-31

(c) John 1:12; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38-39; Phil 3:9; Eph 2:7-8; John 6:44-45,65; Phil 1:29

In WCF 11.1, there are **three main "negatives"**, which justification is said not to be - what are they? What's the danger in believing that justification would be made up of one of these? What were the writers guarding against?

1. And then, in turn, there are **three main "positives"**, which justification is said to be - what are they?
2. "To justify" someone is a legal action, its opposite being "to condemn". It is distinct from "to sanctify" or to make holy.

3. Why not 'merely' pardon? Consider the difference between satisfying a just law and waiving its penalty. Which is true here and how so?
4. "The essence of pardon is that a man is forgiven without righteousness. The essence of justification is that a man is pronounced to be possessed of righteousness. . . . It is evident that God must either sacrifice his law, his elect, or his Son. . . . The cross of Christ is the focus in which the most intense rays alike of divine grace and justice meet together, in which they are perfectly reconciled. This is the highest reach of justice, and at the same time and for the same reason the highest reach of grace the universe can ever see. The self-assumption of the penalty upon the part of the eternal Son of God is the highest conceivable vindication of the absolute inviolability of justice, and at the same time the highest conceivable expression of infinite love."- AA Hodge
5. What are all the "**positives**" centered on?
 1. What are important ways that our discourse and teaching can lose its emphasis upon Christ alone, even in sympathetic or 'spiritual' ways?
 2. What's the difference between making the **Cross of Christ** the central message of Christianity vs. our conversion or testimony?

Justified not by a faith that is alone - WCF 11.2 - "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification:(*d*) yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.(*e*)"

(*d*) *John* 3:18,36; *Rom* 3:28; *Rom* 5:1

(*e*) *Jas* 2:17,22,26; *Gal* 5:6

Guarding against antinomianism ('no-law') and legalism (too much law), we often tend to one side or the other. Which side do you guard against more? That means you probably lean too far the other way! Do you see how these two sides are being addressed here?

Justification and Christ's work of *penal substitutionary atonement* - WCF 11.3 - "Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.(*f*) Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them;(g) and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead;(h) and both, freely, not

for anything in them; their justification is only of free grace;(i) that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.(k)"

(f) *Mark 10:45; Rom 5:8-10,18-19; Gal 3:13; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 1:3; Heb 10:10,14; Dan 9:24,26; Isa 52:13-53:12*

(g) *Rom 8:32; John 3:16*

(h) *2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:2; Phil 2:6-9; Isa 53:10-11*

(i) *Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7*

(k) *Rom 3:26; Eph 2:7; Zech 9:9; Isa 45:21*

God saves a particular people - Otherwise "all that God does looking toward salvation is to afford an opportunity of salvation; so that what is actually contended is not that God does not save some only but that he really saves none - only opens a way of salvation and if any are saved they must save themselves. . . Salvation is the right of no man; that a 'chance' to save himself is no 'chance' of salvation for any. . . . If salvation is truly possible for all, and some are not saved, then the distinguishing difference lies in men. [All other options] end always and everywhere by transferring the really decisive factor in salvation from God to man" (B.B. Warfield).

Justification and our continual sin - WCF 11.5 - "God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified;(o) and, although they can never fall from the state of justification,(p) yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.(q)"

(o) *Matt 6:12; 1 John 1:7,9; 1 John 2:1-2*

(p) *Rom 5:1-5; Rom 8:30-39; Heb 10:14; Luke 22:32; John 10:28*

(q) *Ps 51; Ps 89:30-33; Ps 32:5; Matt 26:75; Luke 1:20; 1 Cor 11:30,32*

What's the difference between "God's fatherly displeasure" and the state we are before God without our justification? How does this change how we approach God?

Overall, if justification provides for our guilt, adoption provides for our shame.

What is Adoption? - WCF 12.1 - "All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption,^(a) by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God,^(b) have his name put upon them,^(c) receive the Spirit of adoption,^(d) have access to the throne of grace with boldness,^(e) are enabled to cry, Abba, Father,^(f) are pitied,^(g) protected,^(h) provided for,⁽ⁱ⁾ and chastened by him, as by a father:^(k) yet never cast off,^(l) but sealed to the day of redemption; ^(m) and inherit the promises,⁽ⁿ⁾ as heirs of everlasting salvation.^(o)

(a) Eph 1:5; Gal 4:4-5 (b) Rom 8:17; John 1:12 (c) Num 6:24-26; Jer 14:9; Amos 9:12; Acts 15:17; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 3:12 (d) Rom 8:15 (e) Eph 3:12; Heb 4:16 (f) Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:16 (g) Ps 103:13 (h) Prov 14:26 (i) Matt 6:30,32; 1 Pet 5:7 (k) Heb 12:6 (l) Lam 3:31-32; Ps 89:30-35 (m) Eph 4:30 (n) Heb 6:12 (o) 1 Pet 1:3-4; Heb 1:14

Gal. 4.4-5 is a key text here. What is the difference between a "son" and a "slave"? Technically speaking, all believers - both male and female - are "adopted as sons". Why is that important?

Union with Christ undergirds all of this. What does that say about our adoption? If Jesus is the firstborn Son, and the firstfruits of the resurrection, what does that say about those adopted as sons? What is our inheritance?

Adoption underscores our new nature as new creatures with new relations among God and our new family. It is truly an amazing grace!

Is there an aspect of WCF 12.1 that surprises you?