

DOCTRINE OF SALVATION – Part 2	<i>Ref: The Westminster Shorter Catechism, G I Williamson</i>
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Having considered effectual calling and conversion, we will consider Justification & Adoption.

1 What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life? (WSC Q.32)

Answer: They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

- Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
- Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
- Cor 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

2 What is Justification? (WSC Q.33)

Answer: Justification is an act of God’s free grace wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

- 2 Cor 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
- 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.
- Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 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.
- Job 25:4 How then can man be justified with God?
- 1 Cor 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.
- Gal 3:24 the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
- Rom 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

3 How Can the Guilty Be Declared Righteous?

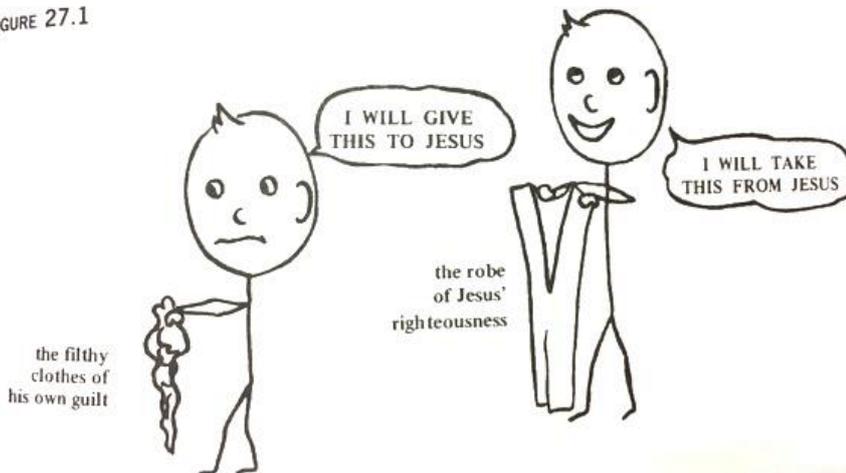
- a) A guilty person stands before a just judge. Moses said in Deut 25:1 “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that *the judges* may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.” When a judge justifies a man, he declares the man to be righteous. Likewise, when a judge condemns a man, he declares him to be wicked. Justification is a declaration - God’s pronouncement of judgment. But we know from Scripture that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), so how can God declare a sinner righteous?
- b) Answer: God Himself makes sinners righteous. This God does by a double-imputation. When we say imputation, we mean that God has imputed (reckoned, regarded) to one person what originally belonged to another. For example, when we speak of the imputation of Adam’s sin, we mean that the sin of Adam – his guilt and condemnation – is laid to the account of all his descendants.
- c) But in the case of Jesus Christ, and His elect people, there is a **double-imputation**:
 - 1) **Imputation of our guilt and condemnation to the Lord Jesus Christ**. “For he [God] hath made him [Christ] *to be* sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21). Our sin was laid to Jesus’ account, and He was treated as if He had sinned our sin.
 - 2) **Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness to us**. We are “made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21b). The perfect righteousness of Christ is ‘laid to our account’. God

treats us as if we had never sinned, as if we had kept all His holy laws perfectly.

d) **God is the author of justification.** “It is God that justifieth” (Rom 8:33). It is God who makes us righteous. It is clearly seen in the following Figure 27.1 (p.149):

- 1) He takes away our filthy garments of our & Adam’s sin & guilt.
- 2) He gives us Christ’s robe of perfect righteousness.

FIGURE 27.1



e) **Illustration.** Long ago, a very poor, lonely orphan boy roamed the streets of a large city in England. He tried to find a job, but failed. Eventually, he was so hungry that he was driven to stealing food from the market on a regular basis. One morning, however, he was caught red-handed by a vegetable seller. “I got you, you little rascal! You thief!” “Gather together, everybody, and we will teach this thief a lesson.” A crowd quickly gathered and the struggling, crying boy was dragged up a platform to receive a severe, public beating. In all the commotion and excitement, no one noticed that the king and some of his servants were walking by. His curiosity being aroused, the king stood at the back of the crowd observing all that was taking place. The poor, crying orphan touched his heart. As the boy was being positioned to receive his public whipping, the king made his way up to the platform. In surprise, the boisterous crowd hushed, awaiting with bated breath what the king was going to say. “Would everyone who had lost money or goods from this boy’s stealing step forward?”, the king asked. Several shop owners appeared. “How much does he owe you?” the king asked in turn. After richly paying each, the king turned to the crowd and said, “Is there any other debt this boy had that I have not paid for? If not, then I declare him to be free from his debts. Release him.” Turning to the amazed orphan boy, the king said, “Come with me. I will care for you. I want to adopt you as my son.” The ragged, debt-ridden juvenile criminal orphan boy suddenly became a respected, rich prince – an adopted son of the king. He received all the rights and privileges of a king’s son. Did the orphan boy earn or deserve his pardon and adoption? Was the orphan’s ‘justification’ one of merit or of grace? How does this story illustrate the two parts of justification?

f) **Justification by faith does not mean that faith is something that makes us righteous.**

- Faith is not a good work that pleases God in such a way that He considers it ‘just as good’ as if we had obeyed His law perfectly. Faith is not the ground of our righteousness: the work of Christ alone is the ground of our righteousness.
- That is why faith, in order to save, must be a faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in any other will not save, because there is no righteousness in any other name. Neither is there any sin-bearer on behalf of God’s elect. Faith is, therefore, an instrument only – the hand by which we receive the righteousness of God. But faith is not the source of that righteousness of God.

g) Please note that there is a difference between making sinners holy, and making sinners righteous. God not only makes sinners righteous (by justification), but also makes them holy (by sanctification).

h) Justification is a One-Time Act of God.

- 1) A man can only be justified once. Justification is not a work (gradual) but an act (one-time completed in a moment).
- 2) When Christ finished His life of obedience on earth, He offered up to the Father His elect people a perfect righteousness.
- 3) And when He received a terrible punishment for their sins, He made a full payment for all of their sins.
- 4) When a man repents of his sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is from that moment onward, legally righteous before God. He is no more subject to God's wrath and condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.
- 5) But no man is justified until he repents and believes.

i) Erroneous views on Justification:

- 1) Since Christ died for the ungodly many centuries ago, some people believe that God's elect people were already justified at that moment when Christ's work was finished.
- 2) Some think that they were justified from eternity because God had planned to justify them before the world began. But the Bible clearly teaches us this is not so.
 - i. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:" Col 1:21-22.
 - ii. "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." Gal 2:16
 - iii. The reason for this is that there is a difference between God's plan, and the execution of God's plan.

j) True Faith Produces Good Works.

- 1) In Gal 2:16, the Apostle Paul says that we are justified by faith in Christ alone - a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith in Christ. We do not need to add to faith and repentance, some obedience to God's law in order to be justified. No matter how sinful a man has been, if he will only repent of his sin and believe, he will be justified immediately.
- 2) Some will object that such teaching will encourage men to live in sin. But the Bible clearly teaches that when a man is truly repentant and believing - when a man is justified - he will begin to do "good works". These good works will be the fruit of faith - a result of justification.
- 3) Hence the Reformers say, "we are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone." For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:26).
- 4) So important is this doctrine of justification by faith that it has been well said that the church rises or falls on this doctrine. Here is seen the power and glory of the gospel of Christ. If this doctrine is not faithfully taught, believed and upheld, the church is no longer a church of Jesus Christ.

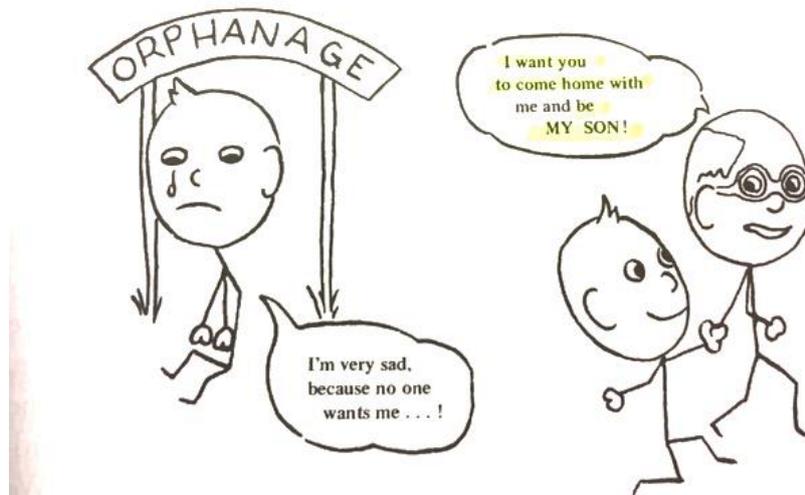
4. What is Adoption? (WSC Q.34)

- a. 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.
- b. 1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
- c. 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*:
- d. 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.

5. Adoption Explained.

- a. Adoption is the *act of God*, by which a person (who has been regenerated, converted, and justified) is *transferred* from the lost human race *into the fellowship of the redeemed*. As soon as a man has repented and believed, he is not only justified but also adopted as a son of God. God cannot accept anyone into his family unless and until that one is made righteous before Him. This is depicted in the Figure 28.1 below.

FIGURE 28.1



- b. ***When a person is adopted, he becomes a member of the redeemed family of God.*** We see this homeless boy suddenly taken into a new relationship – He now has someone who cares for him; he will never be forsaken. Gal 4:4-7 "... God sent forth his Son ... To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."
- c. **Adoption is not the same as "universal brotherhood of man"** – all men are by nature children of the same creator, and brothers of each other. While it is true that God had made of one blood all men on earth (Acts 17:26), we are His offspring because He created us. Hence, the Christian considers every man a proper object of his concern and love (Lk 10:29f; Mt 5:44-45). Despite these verses, it is not proper to speak of the "universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man" because all men sinned in Adam and fell with him in his first sin. When this happened, all men are alienated from God. They ceased to be children of God, but became children of the devil. When Jesus said of the unbelievers 'ye are of your father the devil' (Jn 8:44), He made it clear that sinners are not the children of God. When they were without Christ, they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" (Eph 2:12). Hence, only some are adopted children of God.
- d. ***Note the following truths about Adoption:***
- Adoption is an act of God that happens at one point in time.
 - Adoption remains in effect permanently. Once adopted, never forsaken. Jesus says, "no man is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand." (Jn 10:29)
 - God makes us aware we are His adopted children, call Him "Abba Father" (Gal 4:6). The "Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom 8:16).
- e. ***How can we be sure we are adopted?***
- Joint witness of the Holy Spirit and our spirit testifying that we are children of God;
 - Scripture is the Spirit's testimony (Isa 8:20); The witness of our spirit with the Holy Spirit is only experienced when we say of ourselves that which is true of true believers.