

**JUSTIFICATION IN CHRIST**  
**The Privileges of the Christian Life**  
**Westminster Presbyterian Church**  
**December 13, 2020**

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” – Rom 1:16–17*

*“If this article [of justification] stands, the church stands; if this article collapses, the church collapses.”*  
 – Martin Luther

## I. Review

- A. In everyday life, to “justify” means to declare the truth of a prior claim, to declare that a prior claim you made was right. E.g., predicting the Falcons will win the Super Bowl.
- B. In the biblical context, justification is about showing/declaring that one is righteous according to a legal standard. One would normally assume that for one’s life to be declared righteous that (a) one’s works would be evaluated and (b) the evaluation would be done at the end of one’s life.
  - 1. **Prov 17:15** – *“He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.”*
  - 2. **Deut 25:1** – *“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked ...”*
- C. On the surface, biblical (gospel) justification makes “no sense” because (a) one is not justified by his/her own works, and (b) one is justified in the middle of life, not at the end. Isn’t judgment at the end?!
- D. At a deeper level, biblical justification makes glorious sense because: (a) the legal requirement of works is fulfilled, not in my life, but in the life of Christ (!), and (b) given that the work performed is not ours, we do not need to wait to the end of life to be justified; hence, we can be justified now.

## II. Justification and Christ

- A. **1 Tim 3:16** – *“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:  
   He was manifested in the flesh,       **vindicated by the Spirit,**  
   seen by angels,                               proclaimed among the nations,  
   believed on in the world,                   taken up in glory.”*
- B. **Rom 1:1–4** – *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

*“The resurrection is a public announcement to the world that the penalty of death has been borne by Christ to its bitter end and that in consequence the dominion of guilt has been broken, the curse annihilated forevermore.” – Geerhardus Vos*

- C. **Rom 4:25** – “He (Jesus Christ) was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

### III. Justification and Us

- A. **Westminster Shorter Catechism #33** - “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.”
1. **2 Cor 5:21** - “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
  2. **Gal 2:16** – “[W]e know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

“Therefore when we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us for justification and that we are just before God through imputed righteousness and not through any righteousness inherent in us, we mean nothing else than that the obedience of Christ rendered in our name to God the Father is so given to us by God that it is reckoned to be truly ours and that it is the sole and only righteousness on account of and by the merit of which we are absolved from the guilt of our sins and obtain a right to life.” – Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. II, p. 648

### IV. Implications for Us

- A. The curse of the law is removed forever and God accepts you as righteous in his sight.

“Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the ‘righteousness of God’ had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love.” - Martin Luther

- B. As we regularly repent of sins, we can bring all of our shame to God through Christ.
- C. It moves you to strive in sanctification with freedom and joy.

“[Justification] is the main hinge on which religion turns, so that we devote the greater attention and care to it. For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of his judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God<sup>1</sup>.” – John Calvin

- D. It reminds you that God disciplines us as a wise and gracious Father, not punish us as our Judge.
- E. It assures us that God will be faithful to his own righteousness, not only in dealing with us, but also when dealing with his enemies.
- F. We can wake up every day “preaching justification to ourselves.”