

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 33. *What is justification?*

A. 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.

Q. 34. *What is adoption?*

A. 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.

Question 32 asked what benefits does one enjoy in being "effectually called" by the Holy Spirit. It states three explicit benefits: justification, adoption, and sanctification. Justification and adoption go together. We'll consider sanctification and the "several benefits" that flow from these next week.

Notice in the answers of Qs. 33 & 34 the word "act." The Catechism wants to distinguish justification and adoption from sanctification (for which Q. 35 uses the word "work"). Justification and adoption are one-time, completed acts of God. For those who have been effectually called, justification and adoption are present, complete benefits to be enjoyed. If you have embraced Jesus Christ, by effectual assistance of the Spirit, you can be sure that you are justified and adopted. Let's look more closely at what both of these benefits are.

There are two sides to the coin of justification. One side is the removal of the guilt of sin. The other side is the crediting of positive righteousness. This occurs in a singular, judicial declaration. When we put our faith in Christ, God declares us forgiven of our sin and completely righteous in his sight. Both of these are absolutely necessary for our salvation.

Both the pardon of our sin and the imputation of righteousness are based solely on Jesus Christ. His sacrificial death satisfies the justice of God. His perfect life and righteousness are credited to us as our own. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 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." It's a glorious transfer!

Adoption occurs simultaneously with justification when one embraces Jesus as his savior. If justification is the judicial declaration for our salvation, adoption is the familial and relational transfer in salvation. In our sin, we were enemies of God (Rom. 5:10), but through the reconciling work of Christ, applied by the Spirit, we are made children of God (1 John 3:1; Rom. 8:15-17). We have a heavenly Father who loves us and delights in us (Zeph. 3:17)!