

JUSTIFICATION IN CHRIST – Part 1
The Privileges of the Christian Life
Westminster Presbyterian Church
December 6, 2020

I. Introduction: A Time-Out

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| * Knowing God | * Bible (Sufficiency) |
| * Image of God | * Union with Christ |
| * Covenant of Grace | * Effectual Calling |
| * Providence | * Justification |

“It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation.”

– John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 3.2.36

- A. **Rom 12:1–2** – *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*
- B. **Matt 22:37** – *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* See Jerry Bridges: “Cruise-Control” vs. “Race-car” Obedience
- C. **1 Cor 2:12** – *“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”*

II. Justification: In General and In Scripture

- 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.

III. 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, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ 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.”

IV. Justification and Us

- A. **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.”

1. **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.”

- B. **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.”

“We define justification as follows: the sinner, received into communion with Christ, is reconciled to God by His grace, while, cleansed by Christ’s blood, he obtains forgiveness of sins, and clothed with Christ’s righteousness as if it were his own, he stands confident before the heavenly judgment seat.” – John Calvin, Institutes, 3.17.8

“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, 2:648