

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 11.4 – Justification at the Moment of Faith

“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.” (WSC 33)

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

I. Review

A. WCF 11.1 – The Nature of Justification

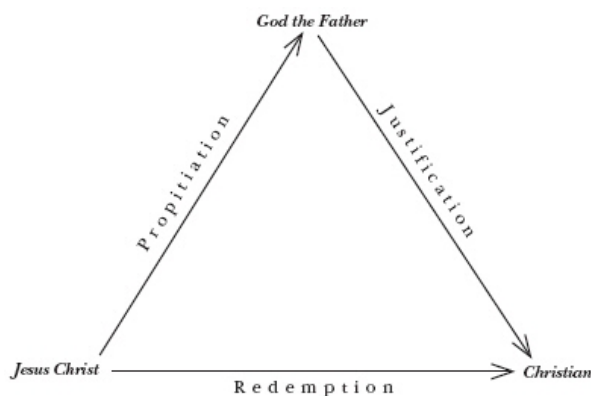
Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth ... by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous ... by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him ... (WCF. 11.1)

B. WCF 11.2 – Faith as the “Instrument” of Justification

Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification ... (WCF 11.2)

C. WCF 11.3 – The Ground of Justification

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. Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them ... their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. (WCF 11.3)



1. **Redemption (“buying back”)** – *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” (Gal 3:13)*

2. **Propitiation (turning aside of wrath)** – *“Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” (Heb 2:17)*

1. **Justification – (declaring righteous)** – *“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.” (Rom 3:22–26)*

II. Justification at the Moment of Faith

God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them. (WCF 11.4)

A. Justification and eternity past

1. The confession links justification with eternity past. What is the link, exactly? Are we justified from all eternity?
2. **Rom 8:30** – *“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”*

B. Justification and history

1. Were we justified at the cross, when Jesus died? What does Scripture teach?
2. **Gal 2:16** – *“...yet we 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.”*

“This act of faith is not directed to the fact that we have been justified but is directed to Christ in order that we may be justified (cf. Gal 2:16)” – John Murray

C. Justification and the present

1. Why do you think justification at the moment of belief is important?
2. **Rom 16:7** – *“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.”*

D. BONUS (!): Justification and the future

1. Is there a link between our justification and the future when Christ returns? How might the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 38) help in answering this question?

WSC Q. 38. *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?*
 A. At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

2. **2 Tim 4:8** – *“Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”*