

**The Theology of the Westminster Standards**  
**WCF 11.5 – Justification and the Christian Life**

*“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 (or, “What is it?”)

*Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth ... by **pardonning 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 (“How do I get it?”)

*Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is **the alone instrument of justification**: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. (WCF 11.2)*

C. WCF 11.3 – The Ground of Justification (“Where was it secured for me?”)

***Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt** of all those that are thus justified ... [such that] 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)*

D. WCF 11.4 – Justification and the Past, Present, and Future (“When am I justified?”)

*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)*

1. God decreed our justification in eternity past.
2. God secured our justification through Christ’s death/resurrection in history.
3. God applied our justification through faith in the present.
4. God will openly display our justification at the final resurrection of believers.

## II. Our Justification in Christ Never Changes, but We Do!

*God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance. (WCF 11.5)*

A. How does Scripture demonstrate that believers cannot fall out of a state of justification?

1. **John 10:27–28** – “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”
2. **Rom 4:22–25** – “[Abraham’s] faith was ‘counted to him as righteousness.’ <sup>23</sup> But the words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, <sup>25</sup> who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

B. What problems might we face if we believed that justified people never sin anymore?

*“Justification is not a process of transformation from a condition of sinfulness to a state of justice. Believers are simultaneously justified and sinful. Sin’s dominion has been toppled, but sin still indwells believers ... Consequently, whatever works believers perform will always fall short of that righteousness that God’s law requires; nevertheless, they are accepted as fully righteous already through faith in Christ.” – Michael Horton*

C. How does your security in Christ glorify God? How can it help you enjoy God more?

1. **1 John 2:1** – “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”
2. **1 John 1:9** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

D. Why is distinguishing between God’s judgment and his “fatherly discipline” so important? What are the purposes of God’s fatherly displeasure?

*“Though a child of God, after pardon, may incur his fatherly displeasure, yet his judicial wrath is removed. Though he may lay on the rod, yet he has taken away the curse. Correction may befall the saints, but not destruction. ‘My loving-kindness I will not take away’ (Ps 89:33).”*  
– Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 556.

E. Can you describe a time when you experienced God’s fatherly discipline in a way that eventually led you to renew your faith and repentance?