

The Theology of the Westminster Standards

WCF 12 – Adoption in Christ (Part 1)

“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.” (WSC 34)

I. Review: Justification in Union with Christ

Q. 33. What is justification? A. 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)

Q. 69. What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ? A. The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him. (WLC 69)

II. Adoption in Union with Christ (WCF 12)

All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth [i.e., graciously grants], in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation. (WCF 12)

A. WCF 12 says that “All those that are justified” are also adopted as God’s children. Why is this the case? What’s the gospel-logic behind this?

1. **1 Cor 3:21–23** – “So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours,²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

B. In what ways are justification and adoption similar? In what way are they different? What is adoption?

1. **Rom 8:33** – “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.”
2. **2 Cor 6:18** – “... and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

“Of all the magnificent riches of the gospel, none is more to be treasured and pondered than our adoption in Christ. When the Father lavished his love upon us and made us his children, we weren’t just street-wandering orphans looking for a good meal and a warm bed. We were self-absorbed slaves to sin and death. Indeed, we weren’t in the orphanage of loneliness; we were in the morgue of hopelessness. Adoption, therefore, is the quintessential freedom for which we long, and for which we’ve been redeemed.” (Scotty Smith)

- C. WCF 12 says we were adopted into God's redeemed family "in and for his only Son Jesus Christ." What does this mean? How should it inform how you think about God?

1. **Eph 1:4-5** – *"In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace ..."*
2. **Gal 4:4-5** – *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."*

- D. How should your adoption into the family of God change your view of yourself? What about the church?

1. **1 John 3:1** – *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."*

Do I, as a Christian, understand myself? Do I know my own real identity? My own real destiny? I am a child of God. God is my Father; heaven is my home; every day is one day nearer. My Savior is my brother; every Christian is my brother, too. Say it over and over to yourself the first thing in the morning, last thing at night, as you wait for the bus, anytime when your mind is free, and ask that you may be enabled to live as one who knows it is all utterly and completely true.

For this is the Christian's secret of—a happy life?—yes, certainly, but we have something higher and profounder to say. This is the secret of a Christian life, and of a God-honoring life, and these are the aspects of the situation that really matter. May this secret become fully yours, and fully mine." - J.I. Packer, Knowing God, 207, 228.