

## WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH – CHAPTER 11

### “Justification” – Part 4 of 4

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3. Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. He made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father’s justice in their behalf.<sup>f</sup> Yet, because he was freely given by the Father for them<sup>g</sup>, and because his obedience and satisfaction were freely accepted in their stead,<sup>h</sup> and not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace.<sup>i</sup> It was God’s purpose in the justification of sinners to glorify both his exact justice and his rich grace.<sup>k</sup>  
f. Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:8-10, 18-19; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 1:3; 10:10, 14; Dan. 9:24, 26; Isa. 52:13-53:12 g. Rom. 8:32; John 3:16  
h. 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:2; Phil 2:6-9; Isa. 53:10-11 i. Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7 k. Rom. 3:26; Eph. 2:7; Zech. 9:9; Isa. 45:21
4. God, from all eternity, decreed to justify all the elect.<sup>l</sup> In the fullness of time, Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification.<sup>m</sup> Nevertheless, they are not justified until, in due time, the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them.<sup>n</sup>  
l. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 3:8; 1 Pet. 1:2, 19-20 m. Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Rom. 4:25 n. Eph. 2:3; Titus 3:3-7; Gal. 2:16; Col. 1:21-22
5. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified.<sup>o</sup> Although they can never fall from the state of justification<sup>p</sup>, yet they may by their sins fall under God’s fatherly displeasure and not have the light of his countenance restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sin, plead for pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.<sup>q</sup>  
o. Matt. 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2 p. Rom. 5:1-5; 8:30-39; Heb. 10:14; Luke 22:32; John 10:28  
q. Ps. 89:30-33; 51; 32:5; Matt. 26:75; Luke 1:20; 1 Cor. 11:30, 32
6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.<sup>r</sup> r. Gal. 3:9, 13-14; Rom. 4:6-8, 22-24; 10:6-13; Heb. 13:8

**Section 3** – “Because of our sin, we are debtors to God and cannot pay our debt. We are spiritually and morally bankrupt in the sight of God, and we do not have the resources to pay our debt.” “When we talk about our debt being paid by Christ, we are not talking about a financial debt.” “We are talking about a moral indebtedness that Christ paid on our behalf. The Father is not bound by justice to accept the payment. But, in His grace, He willingly accepts the payment that has been made on our behalf, the vicarious” [performed by one person as a substitute for another] “satisfaction of His justice by Christ. The confession teaches that moral indebtedness has been fully discharged, so that at the heart of the doctrine of justification is the concept of remission”.

“This happens in justification. Because of the application of the work of Christ to the believer, the believer’s sins are remitted. They go into remission and are sent away.”

“The whole point of justification by faith alone is that justification is by Christ alone—not Christ assisting us, nor working in us, but Christ working for us in terms of His perfect, active obedience. He actively satisfied every demand of the law of God, and He passively received the punishment for our sin on the cross.”

“If all Jesus did was to take away our sin, then we, like Adam and Eve, might fall as they did. It is not simply that Jesus took our demerit; there was a double transfer. Our sins were transferred to Christ, and His righteousness or merit was transferred to us. The ground of our justification is not our faith but the merit or righteousness of Christ imputed” (credited) “to us. All that faith does is trust, lay hold of, receive, and appropriate that righteousness. Faith is our subjective response to the objective grounds of our salvation, and it rests upon a double transfer of our guilt to Him and His

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perfect righteousness to us. That occurs the second we believe—not a moment before, not a moment later. The moment we put our trust in Christ, all that Christ is and all that He has becomes ours, and all that we are becomes His.

This happens that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. This way of salvation demonstrates that God is both just and the justifier (Rom. 3:26). In this whole process, God's justice is displayed, because sin must be punished. He does not negotiate His justice, nor does He stop being just. He demands that the price be paid. He does not simply waive debt. But He also demonstrates His graciousness by accepting Christ's payment of that debt for us."

**Section 4** – "Section 4 affirms that the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto the elect. And when does He do that? As soon as we believe. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who creates that faith in us."

**Section 5** – "The Roman Catholic view is that we are justified by faith and works, and the antinomian view is that we are justified by faith without works. In the Reformed view, we are justified by faith alone, which inevitably produces good works. But the antinomian view says we are justified even if we never produce good works. Paul addressed that when he said: 'Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!' (Rom. 6:1-2). When we experience God's free, gracious forgiveness of our sins, how can we possibly say, 'I might as well keep sinning because I'm free from the law now'? Such an attitude is not the fruit of genuine repentance or of authentic faith.

This section of the confession says that God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified. God does not wipe the slate clean and say, 'We are going to start over again.' He wipes the slate clean and keeps it clean. From that day forward, the only way we can possibly be justified is by the righteousness of Christ. We will continue to sin, and the remedy for that sin will continue to be the gospel. Because of our ongoing sins, we incur the displeasure of God and grieve the Holy Spirit. Our sins are all forgiven the moment we are justified, but that moment is just the beginning of a life long process of being molded and shaped into the image of Christ, the process that we call sanctification. God not only declares us holy in His sight, but He also begins to make us holy—a process that is not completed until we reach heaven. That is why we have an ongoing struggle."

**Section 6** – "This last section in chapter 11 informs us that O.T. believers were justified in the same way that N.T. believers are justified. Abraham was justified through faith in the promise, and the ground of his justification was the finished work of Christ. Abraham believed God's promise to perform this work in the future. We are living on the other side of the atonement, and we trust in the fulfillment of that promise. That is the only difference. The objective ground for Abraham's salvation, as well as for our salvation, is Christ and His work.

There are those who believe that the way of salvation in the O.T. is different from the way of salvation in the N.T. But that goes against the clear teaching in the N.T., which teaches that Abraham was justified by faith alone, just as we are."