

Lesson 16: 2LCF Chapters 11-12: Of Justification & Adoption

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness
Romans 4:4-5

2LCF Chapter 11: Of Justification

In his opening comments on this chapter of the Confession, Sam Waldron points out that this chapter brings us to the central question of religion. Waldron frames our study with the following words:

Is God majestic in holiness and justice? Is he the one who will by no means clear the guilty? Is his spotless purity, his blazing holiness, his burning wrath a reality? On the other hand, are we vile, guilty sinners? Have we fully deserved the wages of sin, death? If we have seriously asked and answered such questions, then we shall really appreciate the question: 'How can we be right with God?' The Bible confronts us with this question in the most explicit way.¹⁵⁹

For all of the world religions, excluding biblical Christianity, the answer to this dilemma has been a rigorous system of human achievement. As part of this system, man labours painstakingly to accrue merit before his god(s) and earn a right standing before him/her/them. But, such a system makes little of his/her deity and much of man. All religions of human achievement may claim that their god is holy, but he/she is not so holy as to be out of reach from his/her depraved creatures. At the same time, these creatures—though they persist in fits of sin and rebellion—are so exalted that they may reach their deity merely through a period of inconsistent obedience or imperfect rule keeping. One must conclude that the gods of human achievement are far too small and ordinary to be the eternal creator(s) of all things.

On the other hand, biblical Christianity will have none of this. Instead, the faith of Scripture insists upon a system of divine accomplishment. Because God is 'spotless in purity and blazing in holiness' and because man is a 'vile, guilty sinner,' man simply cannot bridge the chasm between himself and God—even with the most elaborate patchwork of his filthy rags of righteousness (Isa. 64:6). According to biblical Christianity, man is hopeless apart from the gracious intervention of the all-powerful God. The one true God is "of purer eyes than to see evil and [he] cannot look at wrong" (Hab. 1:13). At the same time, no amount of blood from bulls and goats, no amount of monetary offerings, and no number of meritorious works can suffice to change this.

God's answer to the great dilemma of divine holiness and human sinfulness is Jesus Christ. More specifically, it is justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. Chapter 11 summarizes this wondrous work of God in explicit detail.

¹⁵⁹ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 184.

Waldron provides the following outline of chapter 11 of the Confession:

Outline of Chapter 11: “Of Justification”

Paragraph 1

I. The defined nature of justification

A. The essence of justification: pardon and acceptance

- i. Negatively: It is not a moral transformation.
- ii. Positively: It is a legal transaction.

B. The basis of justification:

- i. Negatively: not from us
- ii. Positively: but from Christ

C. The method of justification: imputation

- i. Negatively: not by imputing faith itself or evangelical obedience to us as our righteousness
- ii. Positively: but by imputing Christ's active and passive obedience

Paragraph 2

I. Instrumental Means of Justification

A. The uniqueness of faith

B. The accompaniment of faith

Paragraph 3

III. The regulating design of justification

Paragraph 4

IV. The specified occasion of justification

Paragraph 5

V. The balancing reality to justification

Paragraph 6

VI. The unchanging uniformity of justification¹⁶⁰

Paragraph 1.

Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole law, and passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God. Rom. 3:24, 8:30; Rom. 4:5-8; Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:30,31, Rom. 5:17-19; Phil. 3:8,9; Eph. 2:8-10; John 1:12, Rom. 5:17

Exposition

The framers of the Confession first deal with the nature of justification by dealing with the essence, basis, and method of justification.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 183-84.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

These are outlined in more detail below:

1) Essence

 *Infusion of Righteousness*

 *Pardoning of Sins and Accounting as Righteous*

This statement in the Confession is a direct response to the teachings of Rome that were formalized at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). At this council, Roman Catholicism asserted that justification occurs when the gifts of faith, hope, and charity are “infused” into the heart of men who cooperate with God’s grace.¹⁶²

But, this is not the position of Scripture. Mark Sarver summarizes:

One of the most common ways this doctrine has been and still is perverted is by redefining the term. Justification does not mean that one is to be, become or be made inherently good or upright. Justification does not involve a change of nature, but a change of the sinners legal standing before God’s law. God “justifies the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5). At that very moment—when he is declared just—the believer remains inherently sinful. This does not mean that at the moment of conversion God does nothing to make his people holy. But justification and sanctification are not the same... Justification changes the sinner’s legal status, not his inner nature.¹⁶³

Sarver points out that the word “justification” does not mean to “make holy” but to “pronounce upright.” In support of this, he presents four arguments:

- 1) The Scriptures repeatedly set forth justification as the opposite of condemnation (Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23).
- 2) In many places “justify” cannot mean anything other than to declare righteous. (Deut. 25:1)
- 3) The context in which we find “to justify” is always judicial. In Romans we find: a judge (2:2), a judgement (2:16; 3:19), a tribunal (14:10), an indictment (3:19-20), an Advocate (8:34), and a pardon (4:7-8).

Scripture clearly teaches this “pardoning of sins” and “accounting as righteous” in several places:

Romans 4:3-8

3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

¹⁶² Council of Trent, Chapter VII. Retrieved from: <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent/sixth-session.htm>.

¹⁶³ Mark Sarver, “Chapter Eleven: Of Justification,” in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 196.

Isaiah 53:11

Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Micah 7:11

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

2) Basis

Works Wrought In or Done by Man



Christ's Sake Alone

The Confession also points out that we do not attract God's justification by works wrought (lit. "worked" or "hammered") in us or done by us, but solely for the sake of Christ alone. It is God's undeserved mercy and grace in Christ that forms the basis for our salvation, not the filthy rags of our very imperfect righteousness.

Titus 3:5-6

5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior

3) Method

Imputed Faith, Believing, or Evangelical Obedience



Imputing Christ's Active & Passive Obedience as Our Sole Righteousness by Faith

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared in CANON IX that:

If any one saith, that by *faith alone* the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.¹⁶⁴

In sharp contrast to this anathema, our Puritan forefathers pointed out that the Christ offers us His righteousness freely through His:

- 1. Active Obedience:** Christ's perfect life of obedience, having fulfilled all righteousness and having done all things well (Matt. 3:15; Mark 7:37; Heb. 4:15).

¹⁶⁴ Council of Trent, Canon IX. Retrieved from: <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent/sixth-session.htm>.

2. Passive Obedience: Christ's vicarious suffering and atoning death on the cross (Is. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 2:2)

Here Martin Luther points out what Christ offers us in his active and passive obedience:

iustitia alien — an "alien righteousness"
extra nos — "outside of ourselves"¹⁶⁵

Sam Waldron summarizes this powerfully: "The First Adam had to obey in the garden of Eden, while the Second Adam had to obey in the wilderness of a wicked world. The first Adam had to refuse to eat of the tree, while the Second Adam had to die on a tree, the cross."¹⁶⁶

Here the Confession rightly acknowledges that this righteousness is imputed to the believer, as it is plainly declared in Scripture: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Paragraph 2.

Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.
Rom. 3:28; Gal.5:6, James 2:17,22,26

Exposition

Paragraph two points out the instrumental means of our justification: faith alone in Jesus Christ.

On this point, B.B. Warfield correctly notes: "It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith."¹⁶⁷

Waldron further elucidates: "Faith is the empty hand which grasps Christ. It is taking, receiving, looking. Faith justifies, therefore, because it concentrates all the attention on Christ and looks away from itself to Christ."¹⁶⁸

Romans 3:21-30

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

¹⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *Disputation Concerning Justification*, Thesis 27, in Luther's Works, eds., Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955-), 34:153 = WA 391:83.

¹⁶⁶ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 188.

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin B. Warfield, "Faith," in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 425.

¹⁶⁸ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 189.

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. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Galatians 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.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Yet, the Confession also points out that saving faith will include inseparable accompaniments. The Reformers were ardent defenders of *Sola Fide*, but they often repeated another important motto: "*Sola fides justification, sed fides non eat sola.*" Translated from Latin, this states: "Faith alone justifies, but not faith that is alone."

Sarver notes that "Faith is never given apart from its sister graces and is the handmaiden that strengthens each of them."¹⁶⁹ This evidenced by passages like James 2:17, 22, 26; Galatians 5:6, etc.

Paragraph 3.

Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those who are justified; and did, by the sacrifice of himself in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due to them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf; yet, in as much as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in 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.

Heb. 10:14; 1 Pet. 1:18,19; Isa. 53:5,6; Rom. 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:26; Eph. 1:6,7, 2:7

Exposition

While many religions—and many professing Christians—contend that God saves sinners by simple means of his forgiveness, apart from the satisfaction of his justice, this simple does not square with the teaching of Scripture.

Proverbs 17:15 spells out the dilemma plainly: "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD."

¹⁶⁹ Mark Sarver, "Chapter Eleven: Of Justification," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 213.

The forgiveness of sins required the full satisfaction of God's justice. A.A. Hodge once wrote: "God must either sacrifice his law, his elect, or his Son."¹⁷⁰ The Bible clearly teaches that God left His law and His elect untouched. This means that our forgiveness came at the cost of His Son.

Galatians 3:13-14

13 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"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

On this point James Buchanan writes:

What unspeakable peace may dawn upon the soul... when it is enabled to see that the same justice, which might have been glorified in the punishment of the sinner, may now be still more glorified in His pardon... that all the attributes of God, which were formerly arrayed against us, are now in Christ, the firmest grounds of our confidence and hope,— that the flaming sword of justice itself, which once menaced us, has been converted into a shield and buckler for our protection and defense!¹⁷¹

Paragraph 4.

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 personally, until the Holy Spirit in time does actually apply Christ to them.

Gal. 3:8, 1 Pet. 1:2, 1 Tim. 2:6; Rom. 4:25; Col. 1:21,22, Titus 3:4-7

Paragraph 5.

God continues 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 in that condition they usually do not have the light of his countenance restored to them, until they humble themselves, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.

Matt. 6:12, 1 John 1:7,9; John 10:28; Ps. 89:31-33; Ps. 32:5, Ps. 51, Matt. 26:75

Paragraph 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.

Gal. 3:9; Rom. 4:22-24

Exposition

Paragraphs 4-6 deal with deal with the occasion, the balancing reality, and the unchanging uniformity of justification.

¹⁷⁰ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 186.

¹⁷¹ James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, 312-13.

Paragraph 4

In paragraph 4, the Confession articulates that the justification of the elect does not actually take place until the Holy Spirit applies Christ's justification to them. This is why Paul is able to state that at one time, believers were "children of wrath like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2). Here the framers of the confession keep justification in its proper place in the "ordo salutis" or "order of salvation."

The Ordo Salutis

The "ordo salutis," as it is understood by Reformed Christians, has been outlined as follows:

- 1) Election/Predestination
- 2) Atonement
- 3) Gospel call
- 4) Inward/Effectual Call
- 5) Regeneration
- 6) Conversion (Faith & Repentance)
- 7) Justification
- 8) Sanctification
- 9) Glorification

Paragraph 5

Paragraph 5 outlines the balancing reality. Though a believer is justified in Christ, this does not mean that they are free from real feelings of conviction as a result of their remaining sin. Sarver comments:

Luther once spoke of the need for repeated justification. On the other hand, Antinomians assert that because the sins of a believer are not chargeable to the new man, but only to the old, it is unnecessary for them to pray for forgiveness. God doesn't take account of their sins because he sees, not the sins, but the believer in Christ. But most Reformed theologians have charted a course between these two extremes by maintaining that in justification God removes the guilt, but not the culpability of sin. In the conscience sensitized by the Scriptures this remaining culpability produces feelings of self loathing and sorrow over sin. Hence, they are driven to confess their sins and seek the comfort and assurance of forgiveness. This remaining culpability is not merely a subjective matter. In the Bible, saints always view their transgressions as real. Because their sins are real, they provoke God to withdraw the sense of his favor, and sometimes to chasten them severely. When they truly confess their sins, the forgiveness they receive is real, as is the corresponding sense of it in their hearts.¹⁷²

Paragraph 6

Famed Dispensationalist Lewis Sperry Chafer taught that the men and women of the Old Testament were saved by virtue of their obedience to the law. He wrote: "According to the Old Testament men were just because they were true and faithful in keeping the Mosaic Law."¹⁷³

Could this possibly be so?

¹⁷² Mark Sarver, "Chapter Eleven: Of Justification," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 219.

¹⁷³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 7:219. cf. C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 20.

The Confession answers this contention with a resounding “No!” Rather, it holds to the clear teaching of Scripture on this point.

Galatians 3:21-14 21

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

Romans 3:22b-26

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.

Romans 4:2-3

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

2LCF Chapter 12: Of Adoption

Outline of Chapter 12: “Of Adoption”

Paragraph 1

- I. The foundation of adoption
 - A. Its recipients: 'all those that are justified'
 - B. Its source: 'God vouchsafed'
 - C. Its ground: 'in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ'
- II. The blessings of adoption
 - A. Incorporation into God's family
 - B. Reception of a filial disposition
 - C. Experience of paternal treatment by God
 - D. Reception of the promised inheritance

Paragraph 1.

All those that are justified, God conferred, in and for the sake of 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 on 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.

Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:4,5; John 1:12; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 3:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:18; Ps. 103:13; Prov. 14:26; 1 Pet. 5:7; Heb. 12:6; Isa. 54:8, 9; Lam. 3:31; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 1:14, 6:12

Exposition

The doctrine of adoption is not well understood by many Christians today. This is due, in part, to the fact that it only appears in Scripture by name five times, and only in the New Testament (Romans 8:15; 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5).¹⁷⁴

Waldron defines adoption with these words:

Adoption is a change in legal status from that of slave to that of son of God, which takes place by faith at the moment of union with Christ, but will be publicly revealed at the resurrection. It is an act of God's free grace flowing from the electing love of God and Father in eternity and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in time, and immediately confers the Spirit of adoption and the privilege of being one of God's heirs, as well as other privileges, obligations, and liabilities.¹⁷⁵

Joel Beeke adds:

Justification is the primary, fundamental blessing of the gospel, it meets our most basic spiritual need — forgiveness and reconciliation with God. We could not be adopted without it. But adoption is a richer blessing, because it brings us from the courtroom into the family. "Justification is conceived of in terms of law, adoption in terms of love. Justification sees God as judge, adoption as a father."¹⁷⁶

Rob Ventura lists some of the many blessings of adoption:

1. We are received into God's family.
2. We are privileged as the children of God.
3. We are cared for as the redeemed of God.
4. We are preserved by the power of God.
5. We are graced with the promises of God.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 195.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁷⁶ Joel R. Beeke, *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption*, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 28.

¹⁷⁷ Rob Ventura, "Chapter Twelve: Of Adoption," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 227-30.