

Date: Mon Dec 24, 2001 12:32 pm

Subject: Justification

Dear Brothers:

In my e-mail of December 14, I sought to establish that the position most of us have subscribed to when we subscribed to the system of Doctrine taught in the Scriptures as contained in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms included as follows. All of mankind have three problems which absolutely, but for the grace of God, prevent entry into the Kingdom of God. They are 1., loss of inheritance rights, 2., sinfulness, and 3., actual sin. Further that God has provided for these needs, for his people, 1., Adoption, 2., Sanctification, and 3., Justification.

In my e-mail of December 18, we sought to establish from the same sources, Scripture and Confession, that the Elect of God come into possession of these three benefits by accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for 3., justification, 2., sanctification, and 1., eternal life. Further that the faith whereby one rests on Christ is never alone but is always accompanied by all other saving graces. We further found that we who had been under condemnation were, in justification, when we came to faith, declared to be righteous. We have, in an e-mail to Terry Gray, through this discussion group, on December 19, spoken of Justification as being a forensic act, not a process, whereby He declares a man to be righteous. For we who were once condemned, that act of God has the effect of forever irreversibly changing our legal status before Him from condemned to justified. We also found in Romans 8 an explanation of God's goal and purpose in all this, namely that we might be conformed to the image of Christ and thus He might be the Firstborn among many Brothers. And I lamented that here I was, a poor forgiven sinner, adopted into the household of God, but not yet able to enter into God's presence because I am still sinful.

Oh, the horrible things I yet do because of that sinful nature. The good I want to do is not what I do. The evil I don't want to do is what I do. Oh, who shall deliver me from this sinful body? I know - Christ Jesus my Lord - He has promised to send His Holy Spirit to reside within me and that the Holy Spirit will, without fail, sanctify even me. Read about it in Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:25-28, 37:25-28, Hebrews 8:7-10:39, II Corinthians 3, etc. Our Confession mirrors these passages of Scripture in it's choice of words in Chapter XIII, Of Sanctification. Further, it uses the words, really and personally, to describe this sanctification. Whereas in Justification we receive credit for the righteousness of Christ, here we receive, through the work of the Holy Spirit, a righteousness that is really and personally our very own – not just that of another credited to us, but our very personal own - Just like God promised in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. And it is not an infused righteousness either. WCF XI tells us that, quite contrary to the Roman Catholic view, justification is not based upon an infused

righteousness. That which I absolutely need, holiness in place of sinfulness, according to WCF XIII.1 and Hebrews 12:14, God supplies. And so the regenerate part does overcome the flesh re walking in holiness in the fear of God in this life. WCF XIII.3. Some of my faith-alone friends, who happen to also be somewhat pre-millennial and dispensational, tell me these blessings of the Holy Spirit unto a real and personal sanctification are not for me in this age but are rather reserved for a future people in a future millennial age. Sometimes, when opposed, they back down a little and say mostly reserved for the millennial age. But, in this teaching, perhaps unintentionally, they deprive God's people of one aspect of their hope of Glory, namely hope of sanctification unto a real and personal holiness in this life, in this age.

As I said earlier, Calvin and the reformed, as opposed to Luther, held to a two-fold blessing of the Grace of Justification and the Grace of Sanctification according to the Scripture. This two-fold blessing came to be incorporated into the confession of the Reformed Faith to which most of us have subscribed.

Now if the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, would it not follow that we would less and less sin and more and more walk in faithfulness to God's holy law? With the Holy Spirit causing us to both will to do and actually do the will of God, according to Philippians 2:13, would it not be true, as the Confession says, that we will be more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the actual practice in our lives of true holiness? WCF XIII.1. Does it not follow that God's elect will actually do those good works, in this life, for which we were created, and which God has predestined that we shall walk therein. We, we who are the Elect, and our good works, are the workmanship of God. Ephesians 2:10. Why then do some like to brag about those good works? Why do some say that they arise out of the thankfulness of their hearts? Why do some say that we do them to vindicate ourselves in the eyes of our fellow man? We do them because God causes us to do them for his Glory, not ours. Where then is boasting?

More on Good Works and the Day of Judgement in my next post, Lord willing. Until then, celebrate Christmas with great Joy and thanksgiving, for our God is a wonderful God. He has provided everything we need for eternal life AND godliness.

And now may grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

John O. Kinnaird
Ruling Elder
Bethany OPC
Oxford, PA