

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—  
*Lesson 28—Christ’s Exaltation, Q. 33*

*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24)*

- I. *Justification.*
  - a. Grounded on the eternal, divine Law, which itself is grounded on the eternal, divine God.
  - b. Pertains to certain rewards and punishments for keeping or breaking the Law.
  - c. God accounts, pronounces, and so thereby treats a sinner as just. (Je. 23:6; Ro. 4:6-8; 2 Co. 5:19ff)
    - i. **Hooker:** “There is a glorifying righteousness... in the world to come, and there is a justifying and sanctifying righteousness here. The righteousness, wherewith we shall be clothed in the world to come, is both perfect and inherent; that wherewith we are justified is perfect, but not inherent; that by which we are sanctified, inherent, but not perfect.”
- II. *Is an act.*
  - a. As distinguished from a work.
  - b. Declared and done all at once.
- III. *Of God’s free grace.*
  - a. Christ the pure, full satisfaction of justice means *it cost him everything!* (Ro. 8:32)
  - b. Christ the pure, full satisfaction of justice means *it costs us nothing!* (Ro. 3:24, 25; Co. 2:13)
- IV. *Whereby he pardons all our sins.*
  - a. Thorough forgiveness of all sins: thoughts, words, and deeds; past, present, and future.
  - b. Upon the grounds of satisfaction being made.
  - c. Continually executed on the grounds of the aforesaid satisfaction. (Jn. 1:29)
- V. *And accepts us.*
  - a. Superior to mere pardon: Pardon is granted in the absence of satisfaction, but justification is possible only after satisfaction. If he does not accept us, what good is our pardon? (Mk. 2:7)
  - b. Out of abhorrence and into a state of favor. (Ep. 1:6)
- VI. *As righteous.*
  - a. Justification is for lawbreakers, the ungodly, for God’s enemies.
  - b. Justification is the only alternative to condemnation for the unrighteous; It is its antithesis.
  - c. It is perfect and permanent since Christ’s sacrifice is perfect and permanent. (Ro. 11:29; Is. 55:3)
- VII. *In his sight.*
  - a. At all times, each immortal soul stands before God as before a Judge. (Ps. 9:4)
  - b. Yet he is also the thrice-holy God who justifies in order that he might sanctify. (Ro. 8:33)
- VIII. *Only for the righteousness of Christ.*
  - a. Righteousness is first a divine attribute manifest in the supreme order of the Law.
  - b. Righteousness is second a condition of the created character.
  - c. Righteousness for sinners could only be accomplished by the God-Man, Christ.
- IX. *Imputed to us.*
  - a. Not in the sense of our just deserts; in Adam, we deserve imputation of sin! (Ro. 3:10; Ja. 3:2)

- b. In the sense of Christ's just deserts as our representative; his righteousness imputed to us! (Ro. 1:17; see also Ro. 8:1; cf. Jb. 33:22-24)

X. *And received by faith alone.*

- a. Faith *alone*. (Ro. 3:28)
- b. Not faith *only*. (Ac. 15:9)

### Reflections

1. If we would learn this doctrine, let us place our consciences before God's tribunal, and, upon due consideration of His greatness power, majesty, righteousness, holiness, inquire what the Scriptures and due consideration of our own condition directs us toward—what refuge and relief, what plea becomes us to make for ourselves... *what* but Christ?
2. What a pardon, what satisfaction, and what a reception we have in our justification! Could any plea be more complete? Could any self-made righteousness or paltry piety possibly compare to Christ's?
3. Sin is a heavy burden, heavy enough to drag the holiest of angels from their felicitous habitation, damning enough in the slightest measure to drag us body and soul to Hell—but that burden is *cast off* now *forever* because of this great doctrine, this sweet, consoling grace of justification! (Ps. 32:1; Hos. 14:2). The sinner is washed, their sin dismissed as the scapegoat into the wilderness, the thick cloud of God's wrath clears away to the noonday glory of his Son, whose face before was to us in darkness but a perplexing curse, but now a soft and tender blessing. Sin is cast behind God's back (Is. 38:17), thrown into the depths of the sea (Mi. 7:19), covered (Ps. 32:1), and never remembered again (Je. 31:34). "*Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!!*" (2 Co 9:15).
4. You are, O sinner justified by Christ's blood, accepted as *righteous*—not your person only, but your works also! (2 Co. 8:12; Ep. 1:6).
5. Therefore, love the Lord and strive to love him greatly, for you know, or ought to know, how much he has forgiven you. *How?*
  - a. By a forgiving disposition, forgiving as you have been forgiven;
  - b. By humility in gratitude to him daily, hourly, as often as you think of Him, of yourself, and of others with respect to Him;
  - c. By bearing your crosses and troubles patiently, the crosses from God, the troubles from our own folly, weakness, or worldly circumstances, but all under his fatherly care to you as one *fully* and *finally* accepted and favored in his sight; and
  - d. By walking tenderly, forgetting not that you are pardoned, knowing then your tendency to sin, toward inclining yourself to the temptations from which Christ has graciously freed you, so that you might be wary of those same sins, seeking his help and guidance in all your steps.