

# Westminster Larger Catechism

## Question 77

Halifax, 12 April 2009

### **Q. 77 Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?**

- A. Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputes the righteousness of Christ, in sanctification His Spirit infuses grace, and enables to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued; the one does equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.**

### **Introduction:**

This afternoon we continue to look at the communion in grace we have with Jesus Christ in this life—

- So far we have looked at justification, adoption, and sanctification...
  - And this week, Question 77 brings us to consider the difference between two of these benefits: justification and sanctification.
- Perhaps it would be helpful to begin with a brief review of just what justification and sanctification are...
  - If you look back at Question 70, you are given the definition of justification.

### **Q. 70 What is justification?**

- A. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.**
- When we studied this question, I explained to you that justification is a legal declaration made by a judge that a person is righteous.
    - We looked at Romans 3 where it says that the whole world is guilty before God, but then goes on to tell us that God justifies the ungodly...
    - He has made a way by which He, as a righteous judge, is able to declare that we are righteous when we are not righteous...
      - That of course is by sending Jesus to be our surety—to take responsibility for our righteousness when had failed to attain it.
      - He attains it for us and then God credits it to us when we believe—that is, look to Christ for this righteousness.

TRANS> That is justification. So what is sanctification?

- Sanctification is explained in Question 75. It says...

Q. 75 What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God has, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of His Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

- We looked in particular at Romans 6 where Paul speaks about how those who come to Christ are changed by Christ.
  - You are joined to Christ in such a way that His death and resurrection is applied to you—that is, you die to sin and are made alive to righteousness...
    - Everyone who comes to Him is changed from within so that he puts off the old man who was a slave to sin and puts on the new man who is renewed in the image of God.
    - Being joined to Christ, sin is crucified and the sinner is raised to live a new life for God.
    - He is no longer a slave to sin, but now he becomes a servant or righteousness who lives for God in accordance with God's law.
      - There is a change in direction that brings about a change in life—a whole new life—radically different—a life deliberately lived for the glory of God.
      - God is the one, who, by His grace, brings about this transformation of the believer, working powerfully by His Spirit.
        - That is sanctification.

In the New Covenant, God promised that He would both justify and sanctify us.

- As we set out to look at the differences between justification and sanctification, I want to look at a passage where this two-fold promise of the New Covenant is stated.
  - The passage I have selected is Hebrews 10:11-18.
  - Although the words “justification” and “sanctification” are not used in this passage, you will see in the two-fold promise they are referred to in essence.
    - READ> Hebrews 10:11-18.
- Did you see where justification and sanctification are referred to in this passage?

- Sanctification is contained in the promise found in verse 16:
  - **Heb 10:16: “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.”**
  - That is the promise of a new life in which God’s law is central—it is the promise of obedience that begins in the heart.
    - Having God’s law in our heart means that we want to do God’s will.
    - It means that instead of looking at God’s law as something we try to avoid and circumvent, we look at as something we want to be guided by and controlled by!
      - His commandments are in our heart—they are not burdensome, but they are what we most desire.
      - God promising to write His law in our heart is His promise that He will sanctify us.
- Justification is presented in verse 17. It says:
  - **Heb 10:17: “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**
  - This is the promise of forgiveness of sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that is here being contrasted with the sacrifices made under the law...
    - Look back at verse 11—
      - It says that the priest stands ministering daily and offering the same sacrifices which can never take away sins...
    - But look in verse 12—
      - Here we are told that Christ has offered one sacrifice for sins forever—
        - and verse 14 adds that by that one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified—the ones who are being given a new life of holiness by the grace of God.
    - By the sacrifice of Christ, then, we are completely justified so that God does not hold our sins against us anymore...
      - Christ has already paid the full penalty for them all, so God does not remember them against us—
      - When it says He does not remember them, it does not mean He has amnesia—
        - It means He does not charge us with those sins.
        - They are dismissed so that there is no need for any more sacrificial offerings.
          - The offering of Christ is fully sufficient.

TRANS> Seeing then that both justification and sanctification are promised in the New Covenant,

**I. I want you to consider first of all that they cannot be separated.**

A. By putting them both together in the same covenant, it is clear that you cannot have one without the other.

1. Where God gives one, He gives the other...

- As it says in verse 14,
  - “by one offering” Christ has “perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”
- He has not perfected forever those who are not being sanctified.
  - only those who are!
  - That means that you can tell who has been perfected by His sacrifice by looking at who is being sanctified.
    - Of course I don’t mean you can always tell...
  - But you should know that as soon as a sinner believes and so is perfected forever by the blood of Jesus Christ, he is among those who are being sanctified—
    - who have God’s law written in their heart and are beginning to conform to that law and become more like Christ.
- If a person does not have God’s law written in his heart, then he is not among those who have been perfected by Christ’s offering...
  - If he is not being sanctified, you can be sure that he has not been justified.
- God is not in the business of dividing up His covenant.
  - Sanctification and justification are both promised, and where one is, the other always is also.

2. This is brought out in other parts of Scripture as well...

a. For example, in 1 Cor 1:30, it says:

- **1Co 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—**
- You see here that Jesus is righteousness and sanctification.

b. Then there are all those many passages that insist that if we are still living in sin, we are not saved...

- James says that faith without works is dead, and that such faith cannot save us.
- And Jesus says that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him or we cannot be His disciple—
  - He says, “Why do you call me ‘LORD, LORD’ and do not do what I say?”

TRANS> So you see that justification and sanctification are always found together.

B. There are those who teach otherwise...

1. It seems that in every generation there are those who are offended by the doctrine of justification...
  - These persons teach that God is not angry with sinners and would never punish sin...
    - and that even if He did, He would not punish His Son in the place of sinners...some of them even blasphemously call that child abuse!
    - These persons, blinded by their sin, teach that true religion consists only in sanctification.
2. As I say, they are found in almost every age...
  - a. There were those found in the time of Jesus who thought they were righteous by the works of the Law and did not need Christ to justify them.
  - b. In the early church, it was not long before the Gnostic sect arose—they could not accept that God’s Son would die to justify sinners...
  - c. About a century ago, there were the modernists who came out in full force against this doctrine and taught that Christ was only a man and only an example—that God is love and does not need to be propitiated....
  - d. And today there are those among the emergent church movement who act as though they have just now invented this heresy and promote it with breathless enthusiasm...
    - On the day of judgement, they will discover that God does indeed pour out His wrath on all who are not justified by Christ.

TRANS> In every age, there are those who reject justification...

3. Then there are also those who teach that there can be justification without sanctification. They are the antinomians.
  - a. Some who teach this are in the Pentecostal camp and some are in the Dispensationalist camp.
    - 1) With the Pentecostals, there are those who teach that a person can be justified and then receive the Spirit at a later time.

- Also, they teach that those who have gifts of the Spirit but do not have the sanctification of the Spirit are converted even though they are not sanctified—to live a new life.
    - This is a false assurance, for the Bible clearly teaches that if we are in Christ, we will have God’s law written in our hearts, and out of the new heart will come a new life.
    - And there are examples of those such as Saul and Judas who had spiritual gifts, but did not have sanctification and were not saved.
- 2) Among the dispensationalists, there are those who are so zealous to distance themselves from the Old Testament that they teach that a person may trust in Christ and yet live a wicked life.
- There is sometimes a ritualistic view of salvation—that if one prays the sinner’s prayer in which he asks Jesus to save him, he is surely saved even when there is no repentance and no sanctification.
  - This also gives a false assurance.
- b. Then, oddly enough, there is the doctrine of Roman Catholicism.
- This is an odd thing because Roman Catholics erroneously mingle the distinction between justification and sanctification and teach that we must attain a certain level of perfection (in sanctification) in order to be justified.
  - However, they also teach that those who do not attain this level in this life can complete the work in purgatory.
    - Therefore, there are many Roman Catholics—almost the typical Roman Catholic—who have a kind of false security that they will end up in heaven at last even though they are neither justified nor sanctified in this life.
    - Instead of seeking to be sanctified in this life, they decide to wait and be sanctified in purgatory...

TRANS> We must understand that justification and sanctification always go together.

- Now let us turn to consider the three differences outlined in our catechism between justification and sanctification.

## **II. The First Difference:**

- In justification, God imputes to us the righteousness of Christ.
- In sanctification, God infuses grace or we might even say, infuses righteousness into us.

A. In both cases, the LORD is giving us righteousness where there was sin.

1. But with justification, it is a righteous standing that is given to us...
  - The gift of righteousness has to do with Christ standing in our place so that His righteousness is imputed or credited to us.
  - a. To understand this, you must understand the unity and solidarity of the human race.
    - 1) In the beginning we were all represented by our father Adam.
      - To him and to the whole human race in solidarity with him, the promise of life (eternal life) was given.
      - If Adam had fulfilled all that God required of man, he and all his posterity would have been declared righteous.
        - Righteousness would have been imputed to us all.
        - It was a testing period for the whole human family represented in our first father Adam.
    - 2) As you know, Adam did not continue in the obedience and therefore God's judgement fell upon the entire human race.
      - This is why the Scriptures declare that "in Adam, all die."
        - As one human family, represented by Adam, we were all charged with sin, condemned, and sentenced to die.
        - The sin of Adam was imputed to all his posterity that were born to him by ordinary generation.
          - That includes everyone except Christ.
          - That means that we were all born in sin.
            - And of course, we show ourselves to be born in sin by our conduct.
            - We were brought forth in iniquity and we live in iniquity.
            - Our condemnation is just.
              - Even as a serpent begets serpents, so Adam the sinner begets sinners after his own likeness.
  - b. But Jesus Christ came as the second Adam—
    - 1) The Father graciously appointed Him to be the head of a new human race of righteousness...
      - a seed made up of all those He had chosen for salvation from before the foundation of the world.
      - That means that all the members of the invisible church are His seed.

- They have Christ as their representative.
  - Christ was promised life for Himself and for all His seed if He would fulfill all that God requires of a human being.
    - He would do what the first Adam failed to do.
    - And so He did with the result that all whom the Father has given Him will be justified.
- 2) As the Scripture tells us that in Adam all die, it also tells us that in Christ all will be made alive.
- He fulfilled everything that was required of a human being before God,
    - and so that righteousness that He attained is credited or imputed to all His seed who come to trust in Him.
  - He is the representative of all the elect, and His righteousness is imputed to them or credited to them as soon as they believe.
    - In Him, through faith in Him, we have a righteous standing before God that we did not obtain, but that He obtained.
      - And we have that standing forever.
      - His righteousness is imputed to us, a righteousness apart from any works that we have done.
        - It is not based on what we have done, but what He has done.

2. Sanctification is altogether different.

- a. It is still has to do with God giving me righteousness where there was sin, but now it is the gift of grace—transforming grace—that renews me.
  - Instead of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to me,
    - sanctification is about the formation of righteousness within me.
  - The *imputation* of righteousness has to do with what Christ did *for* me—fulfilling what God requires
    - but the *impartation* of righteousness is what He does *to* me.
    - He infuses new life into me so that my character is transformed into something new, so that I am completely changed from the inside out.
  - By the working of His grace, He is actually turning me into a godly person—a holy person—one who is like Jesus Christ Himself—
    - one who delights in God’s law and who obeys God’s law...



- one who lives in the delicious ways that He has appointed...
  - He gives me a whole new life.
- b. This is why we say that righteousness is imparted or infused when we speak of sanctification...
- It is actually put into me so that I am not the same.
    - I actually am a new creation in Christ Jesus who is being renewed day by day into the glorious image of God.
- B. Sometimes, people are confused because of the way the Bible uses the word righteous or righteousness...
- It can be confusing because sometimes the Bible uses these words to speak about imparted righteousness,
    - and sometimes it uses these words to speak about imputed righteousness.
  - In both cases, this righteousness is the gift of God's grace,
    - but in sanctification it is righteousness infused and so growing up in us;
    - in justification it is righteousness imputed and so credited to us.
  - In Romans 3, the righteousness spoken of is the righteousness of justification which is apart from works or from what I am...
    - In Romans 3:21, it is actually called
      - **“the righteousness of God apart from the law.”**
    - But then in Romans 6,
      - For example, in Romans 6:13, you are told to
        - **“present your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”**
        - It is call to life in obedience...
- C. Can you see how important it is to have both righteousness imparted and righteousness imputed?
1. If you only had righteousness imputed,
- you would still be as sinful as ever.
  - There would be no change in your character—you would go on in your sin and be cold toward God.
    - He would accept you on the basis of Christ, but you would be just as rebellious and hateful as ever.
    - You would be like a criminal who was granted pardon but who was still just as hateful as ever.

- You would be pardoned, but you would have no interest in serving God.
2. On the other hand, if you only had righteousness imputed, you would be changed, but you would be just as guilty as ever before God.
- You would be brought to see your sin and turn from it, you would love God and you would glory in Him and want to serve Him,
    - but there would be no way for Him to accept you because there would no way for your past sins to be taken away...
  - And inasmuch as sanctification is imperfect (we still have sin in our life in this world), you would still be increasing your guilt all the more.
    - It would be awful!
      - You would want to come to God but you would know that you were cut off from Him because of your past sin as well as your remaining sin.
      - As sinners, we need both righteousness imputed and righteousness infused.
        - That is the first difference in the righteousness we obtain by justification and the righteousness we obtain by sanctification.

### **III. The second difference has to do with what is done with your sin...**

- In Justification—sin is pardoned;
  - In sanctification—sin is subdued.
- A. Of course this overlaps with what we just looked at, but it is important to highlight this aspect of Christ's work...
- The reason it is important to highlight it is because when Christ obtained righteousness for us, He had to do something Adam was never asked to do...
    - Something that was a very marvellous thing for Him to do!
    - When Adam represented us, we were not sinners...
      - All Adam had to do to attain the righteousness for his posterity that God required was continue in service to his creator in the Garden of Eden where he had all the comforts and benefits of happy communion with God.
        - He had to endure testing in the form of temptation, but he did not have to suffer or to bear a curse.
    - Christ, on the other hand, came to represent His people when they were under condemnation and under God's curse...

- He not only had to continue in obedience,
  - but He also had to deal with their sin!
    - He had to bear the ultimate penalty for them, bearing the eternal wrath of God.
- He had to become a curse for us as it says in Galatians 3.
  - Adam only had to continue in communion with God,
    - but Christ had to redeem a people who had fallen under God's wrath and displeasure.
  - The righteousness He procured was a righteousness for sinners,
    - and it is because He bore that penalty that we are so indebted to Him.

B. And there are these two ways that sin is dealt with by Christ...

1. In justification, it is pardoned on the basis of Christ's offering...

- The Bible, when speaking of this, says that Christ died *for* our sins.
  - All our iniquities were laid on Him so as to never be brought up against us again...
    - and so because of this one offering, sin is fully pardoned.
- On the basis of His offering,
  - God says concerning all who have interest in Him,
    - "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."
    - They are taken completely away so as never to be brought up against us again.
    - Christ has borne the penalty in full and we are completely pardoned.

2. In sanctification, it is different.

- Sanctification has to do with the subduing of sin...
  - Sin, which had once controlled us and been our master,
    - is now weakened and mortified (put to death) by the grace of God and working of the Holy Spirit.
- When the Bible speaks of this, instead of saying that Christ died **for** our sins, it rather says that we died **with** Christ...
  - In justification, He died for us, to take away our sins...

- But in sanctification, we die with Him so that the strength of sin as a controlling master is broken and we are ruled by God—by righteousness.
- This is why Romans 6, speaking of sanctification, speaks of us dying with Christ—rather than Christ dying for us...
  - His death for us secures our pardon,
    - our dying **with** Him puts sin to death and brings obedience to life.

**IV. The third difference between justification and sanctification has to do with the degree to which the work is accomplished.**

A. Justification is an act, a declaration made by God concerning us that we are righteous in Christ.

- Therefore, it is complete.
1. It is not an ongoing thing in which God is gradually crediting the righteousness of Christ to us...
    - Because this is the righteousness of another credited to you, it is something you either have or don't have.
    - Because it has to do with the perfect work of Jesus Christ who represents you, it is full and complete because His work was full and complete.
  2. That means that the Christian with the weakest faith, when it comes to justification, is every bit as justified as the greatest of the apostles!
    - Justification is not about what you have done—it is about what Christ has done for you...
      - One who has great faith may have a greater assurance of his justification and he will have a lot more evidence of his justification in the eyes of others,
        - but he is, in fact, no more justified in the sight of God than he who is the weakest in his faith.
  3. This is a tremendous comfort for every believer.
    - If you are trusting in Jesus Christ, you are as righteous as you possibly can be because Jesus Christ is your righteousness.
    - It is all or nothing...
      - Either you are resting in His righteousness or you are not—either you have His righteousness imputed or you do not.
      - If you have it, you have it all...
      - You are fully accepted with God forever and ever.
        - What a blessing!

B. But sanctification is not all or nothing.

1. Sanctification is by degrees...

- In his epistles, Paul is always praying that we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ...
  - As believers, we are exhorted to put to death the deeds of the flesh and to walk in newness of life...
  - We are said to be renewed day by day...
    - We told that we are being purified and refined—renewed in the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

2. This means that one person is going to be further along than another...

- There are those who are mature in the faith and those who are weak...
  - There are those who have made much progress and those who are just getting started...
  - There are those who will have great reward in heaven and those who will not.
  - There are those in scripture who are rebuked for their immaturity and for being babes who can only handle milk when they should be able to handle meat by now...
  - There are those who are said to be yet carnal.
    - But this does not mean there are two classifications of believers—those who follow Christ and those who don't...
      - Anyone who does not follow Christ is not a Christian—he has not yet died with Him—he is not really justified...
      - But there are those who follow Him more fully than others and those who have made more progress than others.
        - Sanctification is a process and we are all at different places.
        - We are, therefore, to always be striving to be more holy, more sanctified, by the grace of God...
          - Paul says, “I press on for the mark!”
          - He says, “Fight the good fight of faith!”
          - He says, “Discipline yourself for godliness.”
- And we are instructed that as we do this, as we grow in grace and as we make progress, we will assure ourselves that we are truly in Christ.
  - I John 3:18 says:

- 18 **My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.** 19 **And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.**
  - We will have more on this when we study assurance.
    - But you see that it is for you to make progress...
3. And I tell you, if you have been given a new heart—if God’s law is written in your heart...
- You will want to make progress...
    - It will be your desire to love the way Jesus loved and to walk the way He walked and to know the Father as He knew the Father...
      - You will want His wonderful law to permeate everything...
    - You will not look at a commandment such as “Remember the Sabbath Day” as a burden...
      - Instead of looking at His call to commune with Him and saying, “Oh no, how can get out of this?”
        - You will look at and you say,
          - “Wonderful! How can I enter into the fullness of the joy of this way of focused attention on the Lord!”
      - Instead of looking at His command, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and saying, “what a terrible restraint this places on me,”
        - “How this cramps my freedom,”
          - You will look at it and say,
            - “This is great—how can I so love my spouse that I will be a blessing to him or her, and demonstrate the glorious love that Jesus has for His church?”
    - You will be excited about making progress!
      - You will be greatly encouraged at the very thought that you will one day be like Jesus...that when we see Him we will be like Him...
        - Just think what it will be like!
        - If this is your hope, you will be eager to purify yourself even as He is pure—and you will assure your heart before Him.

**Conclusion:**

So you see that both justification and sanctification are excellent blessings from God.

- You do not want to confuse them because then you will not realise the fullness of what you have in Christ!
  - You cannot have one without the other...
  - The LORD does not give one without the other...He promises both in His covenant:
    - **Heb 10:16-17: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**
  - Do not miss the fullness of what you have in Jesus Christ!
    - Receive it all with joy and gladness.