

Welcome to a Reformed Church

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Review

- *What is justification? (Larger Catechism #70)*

Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners,¹ in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight;² not for anything wrought in them, or done by them,³ but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them,⁴ and received by faith alone.⁵

¹ Rom 3.22, 24-25; 4.5

² Jer 23.6; Rom 4.6-8; 2Cor 5.19, 21; Rom 3.22, 24-25, 27-28

³ Titus 3.5, 7; Eph 1.7

⁴ Rom 4.6-8, 11; 5.17-19

⁵ Acts 10.43; Gal 2.16; Phil 3.9

- Justification comes to us by *grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.*

- *What is sanctification? (Shorter Catechism #35)*

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace,¹ whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,² and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.³

¹ Ezk 36.27; Phil 2.13; 2Th 2.13

² 2Cor 5.17; Eph 4.23-34; 1Th 5.23

³ Ezk 36.25-27; Rom 6.4, 6, 12-14; 2Cor 7.1; 1Pet 2.24

- What is the difference between *gospel-driven sanctification* and *legalistic self-salvation*?

- **Basis:** Sanctification is rooted in *love*. Legalistic self-salvation is rooted in *fear*.

- **Motive:** Fear serves *in order to be* accepted. Love serves because *we have been* accepted.

- Justification and sanctification are double benefits flowing from our union with Jesus by faith (1Cor 1.30).

- Yet they are distinct in a few important ways (WLC 77):

	Justification	Sanctification
What God Does	Righteousness imputed	Grace infused
What We Experience	Sin pardoned	Sin subdued
Level of Completion	Perfect now	Imperfect in this life
Relative Progress	Equal for all Christians	Unequal among Christians

Chapter 7 - "Church: Distinguishing Marks"

- What point is Hyde making when he writes, "we live in an age in which the church is viewed more or less as a smorgasbord." (103)
- From where ought Protestants to derive their criteria for selecting a church?

- Before going any further, those committed to living by the Bible must make *three important points*:

- First, pride is a real temptation in exploring this question:

We should not be "motivated to talk about 'true' churches and 'false' churches by ego or arrogance, but by a sincere desire to see all God's sons and daughters in churches that feed their souls." (105)

- Second, there is no perfect church on earth:

"The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth, to worship God according to His will." (WCF 25.5)

- Third, despite #1 and #2, the question matters because the visible church is important:

"The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." (WCF 25.2)

"Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life to the end of the world: and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto." (WCF 25.3)

- Studying the Bible, the Protestant Reformer identified *three distinguishing 'marks' of real churches*:

<i>Belgic Confession, Article 29</i>	<i>Westminster Confession, 25.4</i>
"The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing sin."	"This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them."
= Word, Sacrament, Discipline	= Gospel, ordinances, worship

- Though the wording is different, there seems to be no essential difference in these lists.
- Each of these defining marks is *taught in Scripture*:
 - Word**: The church is to proclaim all the teaching of Jesus to every disciple (Mt 28.19), recognizing that gospel proclamation is essential to seeing people saved (Rom 10.14-17), and taking special care to guard the gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Gal 1.6-9, 2.16).
 - Sacrament**: Our Lord himself placed baptism at the heart of the Christian mission (Mt 28.19), and further commanded us to regularly practice the Lord's Supper, breaking bread and drinking wine "in remembrance of me" in order to "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," (Lk 22.19; 1Cor 11.24-25).
Further, we are assured that in the Lord's Supper we feed on Christ spiritually: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1Cor 10.16)
 - Discipline**: The elders of Christ's church are commanded to "pay careful attention" (Acts 20.28), to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2Tim 4.2), and when necessary to excommunicate (Mt 18.15-18; 1Cor 5.1-5; Ti 3.10-11). Corollary to this, all the members of Christ's church "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you," (Heb 13.17). We are also called to pray for our leaders (Heb 13.18).

Chapter 9 – "Preaching & Sacraments: Means of Grace"

- The question naturally arises: how do we actually experience, existentially a relationship with God?
"Sinners gather together week by week in the belief that God meets with them. We meet with Him because His authoritative Word calls us to do so. He commands us to meet with Him in worship on His terms and promises to be among His people when they assemble as a congregation that displays the three marks of a church. Yet we cannot see, touch, or hear Him. How, then, do we have an experiential relationship with this God and receive His grace?" (132-133)
- The "means of grace" refer to *the ways God works in us*. Our catechism specially identifies three:
 - What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption? (WSC 88)
The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.
 - Word**: every time Scripture is read, God is speaking and working:
How is the Word made effectual to salvation? (WSC 89)
The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.
 - Sacraments**: the legal promises of God given to us, experienced as we taste and touch through faith:
 - In baptism, Christ (*re*)assures us that we are joined to him through faith.
"One additional practical way in which baptism serves as a means of grace all life long is in helping us overcome sin and doubt. As John Calvin said, "Therefore, as often as we fall away, we ought to recall the memory of our baptism and fortify our mind with it, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins" (139)
 - In the Lord's Supper, Christ *strengthens* and *nourishes* us with his own resurrection life to live by faith.
 - Prayer**: pouring out our hearts to God (Ps 62.8). In his book, *Prayer* (2014), Keller suggests 5 basic steps:
 - Evocation**: To evoke means "to bring to mind." Begin by considering who it is you are addressing, how this is possible, and the sheer wonder of knowing God. Ask God to help you know him by his Word and Spirit.
 - Bible Reading & Meditation**: Listen to God speaking in his Word, then think over what it reveals to you about God, man, Christ, and Christians - and how we can turn this into praise, confession, thanksgiving, petition, and desire. How could this truth, if activated, change me forever?
 - Word Prayer**: Based on your meditation, pray the text. Alternatively, you may pray through the Lord's Prayer - paraphrasing each petition with your own words and heart concerns.
 - Free Prayer**: Pour out your heart before God, making sure to balance praise and thanksgiving, confession and repentance, petition, intercession, and aspiration.
 - Contemplation**: Conclude with a time of simply enjoying God and his presence. Confess your faith in him. Taste and see that he is good.