

Welcome to a Reformed Church

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Review

- Last week, we saw that the unifying concept in Scripture was the idea of *covenant*:
 - A covenant is “a relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by his Word.”¹
 - All of Scripture reveals an unfolding sequence of God-established relationships with men.
- We saw that the unfolding of God’s covenants can be traced using both *historical* and *theological* motifs:

Theological		Historical	Scripture	Shorter Catechism
Covenant of Redemption (Eph 1.4)	Covenant of Works (Lev 18.5)	Creation	Genesis 1.1-2.25	1-12
		Rebellion	Genesis 3.1-13	13-19
	Covenant of Grace (Rom 8.3)	Rescue	Genesis 3.14 – Revelation 20.15	20-36, 39-107
		Consummation	Revelation 21-22	37-38

- We saw that the covenant of grace – God’s rescue plan – itself has several distinct stages in Scripture:

Name	Emphases ²	Theatre Element	Description	Key Scriptures
Adamic	Commencement	Plot	God-imposed enmity, delivery by supernaturally provided Seed, substitutionary sacrifice	Gen 3.15, 21; 4.4
Noahic	Preservation	Stage	Stable environment for subsequent unfolding; Japheth in Shem’s tents	Gen 9.8-17, 20-27
Abrahamic	Promise	Dynamic	The “quad promise,” emphasis on federal principle, circumcision rite; promise of Judah’s scepter	Gen 12.1-3, Gen 15, 17.1-14, Gen 49.10
Mosaic	Law	Structure	Kingdom of priests & holy nation, Legal system under which Christ obeyed and was cursed	Ex 19.1-6, Ex 20, Dt 27
Davidic	Kingdom	Hero	Mediator king from Davidic line, Davidic city a figure of the church, Messiah’s deity & suffering foretold	2Sam 7.9-17, Ps 2,22,48,72,110 Is 9.6-7, Is 53
New	Consummation	Denouement	Full accomplishment at cross, Outpouring of Holy Spirit, Church fulfills Jerusalem & Israel, Final consummation at return	Jer 25.5-6; 31.31-34, Joel 2.28-32, Heb 12.22, 1Pet 2.9

Chapter 5 – “Justification: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone”

- In the wake of all this, a question remains: *how can sinners enter a covenant relationship with a holy God?*
 - Both God’s holiness (Is 6.3) and human sinfulness (Eccl 7.20) are clearly taught in Scripture.
 - God holiness requires that he deal with sin (Hab 1.13, Gal 3.10).
 - Both our hereditary guilt and actual corruption makes it impossible to earn forgiveness (Rom 3.19-20).
 - Therefore, we have only one hope: God, from sheer love, must do everything to rescue us (Eph 2.4-5).
 - “What we learn through the concept of covenant is that the central teaching of Scripture is how this offended and holy God Himself provides a means of redemption and reconciliation so that fallen and sinful human beings can have a relationship with Him. This central teaching of how sinners can stand before a holy God is called ‘justification’ in Scripture (Rom 4.25; 5.16, 18).”

- 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

¹ *First Catechism* (Great Commissions Publication, 2003-2004), Question #24.

² The terms under this column come from O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980).

- Justification comes to us *by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone*:
 - By grace alone:
 - Grace means that God gives us the opposite of what we deserve (*demerited favor*).
 - That we are justified by grace alone is clearly taught in Scripture (Rom 9.16-18, Eph 2.8-9).
 - Even faith, through which we are justified, is a gift (Phil 1.29).
 - Through faith alone:
 - “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 them as righteous. It is not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone that they are justified. **It is not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other act of Christian obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to them who receive and rest on him and his righteousness by faith.** Men do not have this faith of themselves; it is the gift of God.” (WCF 11.1, *Modern English Study Version*)
 - The sentence in **bold** above is very important, for it reminds us that our act of believing, while necessary for salvation, *contributes nothing*. Faith is not a special work that earns salvation. Faith is simply the conduit through which we receive Christ’s obedience and satisfaction.
 - In Christ alone (2Cor 5.17-21):
 - Jesus rescues us through an act of double substitution (2Cor 5.21) – *active* and *passive* obedience.
 - *Active obedience* – Jesus obeyed God perfectly in thought, word, and deed. He is perfect for us.
 - *Passive obedience* – Jesus suffered God’s curse in full, from the manger to the tree. He died for us.
 - In justification, Jesus’ work is credited to us *legally*:
 - “In contrast with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching that justification occurs when God's grace is infused into sinners, who then cooperate operate with this grace to make themselves holy, the Reformers taught that God imputes Christ's righteousness to sinners. To impute is to credit. God credits Christ's righteousness to us, and it becomes ours.” (85)

Chapter 6 – “Sanctification: the Christian Life”

- The Reformed confessions place a high emphasis on the need for gospel-driven holiness (*sanctification*):
 - “The Heidelberg Catechism devotes forty-four of its 129 questions and answers, more than one-third of its material, to sanctification, while the Westminster Larger Catechism devotes an impressive eighty-two of 196 questions and answers (42 percent) to this subject. By this emphasis, the Reformed churches declared that Calvinism is no mere religion of ‘head knowledge,’ and we cannot live as if it makes us the ‘frozen chosen,’ as we are sometimes derisively known. It is a religion of head *and* heart.” (88)
- *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.
- The basic principle of Christian living is *love for God and others*:
 - To show us how to implement love, God gave us the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments. (Regarding the law, always remember: when God says ‘No,’ it is because he intends a better ‘Yes!’)
 - A life of love requires ongoing communion with and help from God, which we receive through prayer.
 - The Shorter Catechism provides excellent explanations of both the law (39-84) and prayer (98-107).

Justification & Sanctification – Unity & Distinction

- 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