

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 26 (HCLD 23)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Vocabulary: Justification, adoption, and sanctification

Question: What are the benefits, which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

Answer: The benefits which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is in this life,[a] immediately after death,[b] and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.[c] The members of the invisible church have communicated to them in this life the first fruits of glory with Christ, as they are members of him their head, and so in him are interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of;[d] and, as an earnest thereof, enjoy the sense of God's love,[e] peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory;[f] as, on the contrary,

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 23

Q59: But what does it help you now, that you believe all this?

A59: That I am righteous in Christ before God, and an heir of eternal life.[a]

a. Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; 5:1; 8:16; John 3:36; Titus 3:7

Q60: How are you righteous before God?

A60: Only by true faith in Jesus Christ:[a] that is, although my conscience accuses me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them,[b] and am still prone always to all evil;[c] yet God, without any merit of mine,[d] of mere grace,[e] grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction,[f] righteousness and holiness of Christ,[g] as if I had never committed nor had any sins, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me;[h] if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart.[i]

a. Rom. 3:21-25; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9

b. Rom. 3:9-10

c. Rom. 7:23

d. Titus 3:5

e. Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

f. I John 2:2

g. I John 2:1; Rom. 4:4-5; II Cor. 5:19

h. II Cor. 5:21

i. John 3:18; Rom. 3:28; 10:10

Q61: Why do you say that you are righteous by faith only?

A61: Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God;[a] and I can receive the same and make it my own in no other way than by faith only.[b]

a. I Cor. 1:30; 2:2

b. I John 5:10; Isa. 53:5; Gal. 3:22; Rom. 4:16

sense of God's revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment, are to the wicked the beginning of their torments which they shall endure after death.[g]²

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks this question "What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?" The answer given is "The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end" (SC Q/A 36).³ I find the answer in the Shorter to be right in line with the Scripture and much better worded than the Larger Catechism in this area. As I have continually pointed out, the Larger Catechism was the first document and I think we see the growth and maturity of theological thought within the body of the Westminster Divines as they worked their way through all these areas of our beloved faith. We see the same thing as we read the works of most theologians who have published both their earlier and latter works. With Calvin we see a growth between the Institutes and the individual commentaries on the books of the Bible. For example there were four major revisions of the Institutes

Once more I deny that glory is given as such as a first fruit or in any other words this side of the return of our Lord. As I say this let us remember however, that God has spoken and in that sense, all of this is past history, and in that sense I can speak of having or knowing the glory of Christ. But as even a partial manifestation in this life, I don't agree it can be and be consistent with the Scripture.

Again the Westminster Assembly identifies the invisible church as the one to whom these benefits belong. None can debate this, however almost as an aside I see here a statement concerning the visible church we all need to grasp. The visible church must contain all of the invisible church, along with whatever tares the devil is able to sow. Christ is the head of the church, which is also identified as the body of Christ. This would lead to the conclusion that all true believers are members of a visible church. Having taken the vows of membership in a local church we should then find all believers actively involved in a visible church and promoting the works of the church. How then do we reconcile this with the apathy that accompanies the membership (and for some non-membership) in a visible church? Answer, we cannot! Perhaps we should consider this as we watch the para-church grow and the visible church and her ministries decline. Or are we seeing the difference between the visible and invisible church made more manifest in the latter days? Speculation? Absolutely. Nonetheless a pragmatic truth that I feel fits somewhere in the fact that Christ is the head of the church, and the Bible was not given for the private interpretation of any, but the good of all. As the body of Christ, the visible church should be vibrant and alive. While the visible church will contain all of those who are members of the invisible church it is also a truth that all who are part of the visible church are not members of the invisible church. Note also that the invisible church has a sense wherein it refers to all saints (believers) past, present, and future. The doctrine of the remnant and that the remnant is small at any given time in history comes to mind as I consider how impotent the church as a whole is today. For example there are 300,000 churches of various stripes according to the US Center for World Missions. There are only a few thousand unreached people groups in the world. If the visible church were all believers (members of the invisible church) the task of reaching all these people would be a very small task indeed.

Are the elect interested in the glory of Christ? Truthfully I had never considered this as such. That I would do nothing that would diminish or impede the manifestation of the glory of Christ to all, yes I am interested. I have found it hard to put a handle on what the Westminster Divines are trying to say in these words. I think that perhaps it is in the sense I just spoke of and perhaps could be better worded in that we will not bring shame to the body of Christ, nor take part in anything which would diminish the glory of the Lord in the sight of others.

²

- a. II Cor. 3:18
- b. Luke 23:43
- c. I Thess. 4:17
- d. Eph. 2:5
- e. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22
- f. Rom. 5:1-2; 14:17
- g. Gen. 4:13; Matt. 27:4; Heb. 10:27; Rom. 2:9; Mark 9:44

³ Compare Westminster Larger Catechism questions 82-83. Note the difference in wording and the use of sharing the communion of glory in this life. There will be a time when we are glorified in Christ, yet we must use care here because God is a jealous God and will not share His glory with any. The believers are the glory of God and believers may glory only in Christ, not as if they presently own any portion of that glory.

I don't agree that the benefits of justification, adoption, and sanctification are part of the earnest of our engrafting into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our redemption. Though much of these benefits may be but seed, they are complete and will come to maturity in God's time, some only with the return of the Lord, but are not the mere earnest of these things, but these things in their fullness, that will grow and be made perfect. The term earnest is used of a first payment, with additional payments to come later in further completion of the agreement under which the earnest was put forward. A guarantee the purchaser will complete the deal. To this end we receive the earnest of the Spirit, and the manifestation of the fullness of God's grace is the completion of the entry into the agreement (covenant). In that this is an asymmetrical agreement and God is in a sense paying His own price to Himself can seem somewhat confusing with the limitation of the human language. In truth we don't have a direct analogy of this type of agreement (covenant) in dealings between men. A sovereign could only put such a covenant into effect, and then an earthly sovereign would not be able to offer an earnest of sufficient warrant that any could be sure the covenant agreement would ever be consummated. We thus by faith accept that it is all of God through grace. This limits or diminishes the role of man in the unfolding of history, and thus some people do not claim this position. This in no way negates the veracity of God. I fail to see any other explanation of the Scriptures that can explain what is happening spiritually in pragmatic terms that are of use on earth. I tend to be overly pragmatic and a theology that cannot walk in the streets so to speak, I have little time for. In my opinion it is in the application of all this we find the proof of the pudding. Thus as we study these things, may our efforts to do theology out weigh our efforts to study theology. Justification, sanctification, and adoption are not the earnest of the covenant, but the proof of God's grace working in our lives. These invisible things grasped by faith alone are the substance of the invisible and the evidence of the unseen.

As we begin to grasp these truths and this assurance becomes more real to us, we find that our position in the estate of grace brings us to an ever increasing level of spirituality, and we do begin to sense the presence of God, to feel the Spirit within. These experiences are not to be tossed aside. I believe the word must be a living organic part of us. Our hunger, thirst for knowledge of God and love of the Holy Writ will grow. I believe we could go so far as to say that we can measure the spiritual growth of an individual as being in direct proportion to their interest in, and study of the Bible. This is the result of the earnest of the Spirit, not of communion in glory with Christ or of Christ. By the Word of God, we have seen the glory of Christ made manifest, and thereby by the grace wherein we stand, by the work of Jesus Christ we hope for the glory of God, as in tribulation and experience of life, patience is made full and the hope within becomes manifest by the love of God sown in our heart by the holy Spirit, who is given to all of the elect (Rom 5:1-5). Thus, while we live not by experience but by every word that comes from the mouth of God, the experience as noted in Romans 5 is not insignificant to mere men, but is given of God to help man see His moving in their lives.

We could spend a lot of time on whether the conscience of the evil bothers them or not. In brief I would say very little if at all until the day of judgment. If they are not of Christ, God has given them over to a reprobate mind. Perhaps there is a time when they who are of the family of death, yet not totally given over to the lust of their own mind, would know such fears. I rather doubt they know this fear short of the grave when it is too late. Were such a fear a reality, then some would seek God. This cannot be, for to seek God is to have already been chosen by God, and none of the evil ones have been so chosen. That perhaps out of their own lust for life itself, some close to the grave cry out for mercy would not then be a seeking of God in the true sense of this term. Scripture says clearly none have sought God, that all have sinned and fallen short. Thus while once more I don't find myself casting out a statement of the Westminster Assembly, I find myself seeking safer words, lest we confound the grace of God shown the elect in their assurance that they might thereby persevere until the judgment.

Here we see the fifth petal in the wrestling of evil versus the elect. That some are destined for hell makes the truth of the third petal a necessity. As submitted many times before in this work, where we find even one petal of this divine flower, the other four will flow of necessity. Petal two is easily seen in these passages. Therefore with five, three, and two in full view, it is no stretch to see the beauty and glory of the whole TULIP once more spring to life from the pages of Scripture in the creeds of Westminster. The marvel to me is that so often we find not one, but several petals so clearly proclaimed in a single statement, the whole does indeed take root and bloom before our eyes in ground so scant that on first glance we might expect to find no such beauty could live.

Justification, adoption, and sanctification are temporal and eternal benefits to the members of the invisible church. Those benefits indeed do have a very tangible and present value to the believer. Here is the peace with God that all mankind seeks, though without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit man cannot understand or know what he is seeking. From grace God sends the Holy Spirit of regeneration, then gives the gift of faith, from which all these other graces flow.

What Good Does It Do To Believe?

But how does it help you now that you believe all this?

That I am righteous in Christ before God, and an heir of eternal life.

How are you righteous before God?

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect expiation of Christ, imputing to me His righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.

Why do you say that you are righteous by faith alone?

Not because I please God by virtue of the worthiness of my faith, but because the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ alone are my righteousness before God, and because I can accept it and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.

I. The Ministry of Jesus Enables Believers To Expect Eternal Life

A. The great mystery of our holy religion is that faith can provide righteousness. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, ***The just shall live by faith.*** (Romans 1:17)

The doctrines of the Creed form the structure for grace.

B. Paul was quoting the great message of the Old Testament. Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but ***the just shall live by his faith.*** (Habakkuk 2:4)

C. Faith is the instrument of justification before God. Therefore ***being justified by faith, we have peace*** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1)

D. The importance of believing God's revealed and historical truth could not be more emphatically stated in Scripture. ***He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*** (John 3:36)

II. Righteousness Develops According to a Pattern

A. Righteousness anchors in true faith in Jesus Christ. But now ***the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,*** being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even ***the***

righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (Romans 3:21-22)

B. Believers know they are sinners and abandon denial and evasion. What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: **for we have before proved** both Jews and Gentiles, that they are **all under sin**; As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one:** (Romans 3:9-10)

C. Our best human effort cannot keep us from sinning. But **I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,** and **bringing me into captivity to the law of sin** which is in my members. (Romans 7:23)

D. We bring no personal merit to the throne of grace. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, **but according to his mercy he saved us,** by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (Titus 3:5)

E. Salvation is entirely a matter of grace. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the Gift of God: (Ephesians 2:8)

F. In Christ believers obtain all the benefits which would have been theirs if they had not sinned. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And **if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:** And **he is the propitiation for our sins:** and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.* (1 John 2:1-2)

G. The judicial record now accounts the believer as actually righteous with God. For what saith the scripture? **Abraham believed** God, and **it was counted unto him for righteousness.** Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But **to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.** (Romans 4:3-5)

H. Not only do believers avoid the hell they deserve, but they also gain the heaven Christ deserved. But for us also, **to whom it shall be Imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus** our Lord from the dead; (Romans 4:24)

I. All we bring to the gospel is a trusting heart. Being **justified freely by his grace** through the **redemption that is in Christ** Jesus: Whom God hath set forth **to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,** to declare his righteousness **for the remission of sins that are past,** through the forbearance of God; (Romans 3:24-25)

III. Faith Stands by Itself

A. All that believers need as Christians comes to them through the operation of faith. But of him are ye in **Christ Jesus,** who of **God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:** (1 Corinthians 1:30)

B. Nothing but faith brings the outcome we seek and therefore everything else must be expendable. For *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* (1 Corinthians 2:2)

Heidelberg Catechism

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Questions 59, 60, 61

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