

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 33

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 33: *What is justification?*

ANSWER: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.



MONDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 143A

Scripture: Read Romans 3:19-28

Key Thought: *Justification is an act of God's free grace.*

Questions:

- ☞ The *Catechism* refers to justification as an "act" and to sanctification as a "work." What is the difference?
- ☞ What does it mean to be justified?
- ☞ Why do we need to be justified, according to Romans 3:23?
- ☞ How are we justified, according to Romans 3:24?
- ☞ Do we deserve to be declared innocent of our sins?

Prayer

Notes: The first benefit which comes to those who are effectually called is justification. This important doctrine will be the focus of our attention this week. Begin by explaining to your children the difference between an "act" or God and a "work" of God as these terms are used in the *Catechism*. The main idea is that an act (like justification) is something that is accomplished once-and-for-all, while a work (like sanctification) is gradually completed over time. When Christ finished His life of obedience on earth, He offered His perfect righteousness to the Father on behalf of His elect. When the wrath of God was poured on Him in their place, He paid for their sins in full. Therefore, when a person repents of his sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, God accomplishes—at that moment—the act of justifying him for Christ's sake. At the moment of effectual calling, the sinner is made and declared to be legally righteous before God for the sake of what Christ has done for him. That act of justification is as complete and irrevocable as the finished work of Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). This is an incredible act of grace on God's part, since we deserve to be condemned rather than justified. Praise God for His mercy!



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 143A

Scripture: Read Exodus 34:6-7; Micah 7:14-20

Key Thought: *In justification, God pardons all our sins.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does the word “pardon” mean?
- ☞ What does it mean to say that God is “just”?
- ☞ How can God be just and still pardon our sins?
- ☞ What does it mean that Christ was made to “be sin” for us?

Prayer

Notes: The theological term for the aspect of justification we will be discussing today is “imputation.” This term simply means that what rightfully belongs to one is laid to the account of another instead. In justification, there is a double imputation. First, our sin and guilt are laid to the account of Christ. Second, His perfect righteousness is laid to our account. Today’s lesson focuses on the first part. Be sure that your children understand what the term “pardon” means in a legal sense. Explain to them that God is perfectly just, and help them to understand that perfect justice means that no sin or guilt can go unpunished, for it would be unjust if anyone got away with sin. Discuss the apparent difficulty presented by God’s inclination to pardon sinners on the one hand, and His perfect justice on the other. Then show your children how God determined to satisfy His justice by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to bear the sin and guilt of His people as a substitute. He voluntarily took our sin and guilt upon Himself so that we could be pardoned. Help your children to see that this involved God the Father treating His only beloved Son Jesus as if He were personally guilty of all of the sins (whether by omission or commission, thought, word, or deed) of all of His elect people throughout all of history and pouring out the penalty that His perfect justice required upon Christ in our place.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 143A

Scripture: Read Philippians 3:1-9

Key Thought: *In justification, God accepts us as righteous in His sight.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does it mean to be “righteous”?
- ☞ On what grounds did Paul think he was righteous before he knew Christ?
- ☞ Does God consider anyone righteous because of what they do?
- ☞ What did Paul learn by God’s grace?
- ☞ How did his attitude change toward the things that he used to think

made him righteous?

- ☞ Do you ever think of yourself as “good” or “righteous” because of things that you do? What should you learn from Paul?

Prayer

Notes: Today’s lesson will center upon the theme of how it is that justified sinners are accepted as righteous before God. It is the nature of sinful man to seek to establish his own outward righteousness. Paul was a classic example of this tendency. Help your children to identify the kinds of things that Paul convinced himself were evidence of his personal righteousness. Show them that Paul learned, by God’s grace, that all of his boasted righteousness was not enough to cancel his sins and make him acceptable before God. All of his actions—even those that seemed righteous to him—were corrupted by his sin. He compares them with dung and garbage. Paul learned that he needed a righteousness that was not his own. God accepts us as righteous in His sight, not because we are righteous, but because Christ is righteous and His perfect righteousness is imputed to us by faith. This realization radically changed Paul’s attitude toward his own works, since he now understood that he had no righteousness of his own, but that he stood before God only on the ground of Christ’s righteousness. His life from that point forward was lived in humility and thanksgiving, rather than pride and self-satisfaction. Challenge your children to examine their own hearts in light of these things.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 143A

Scripture: Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:8-10

Key Thought: *In justification, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does the word “imputed” mean?
- ☞ What did we do that was imputed to Christ?
- ☞ What did Christ do that was imputed to us?
- ☞ Should the righteousness of Christ be visible in the lives of God’s people?
- ☞ How should it be seen?

Prayer

Notes: Earlier this week, we saw that in justification there is a double imputation. The first part of this transaction is that the sin and guilt of God’s elect is imputed to (or laid to the account of) Christ. The second part, which we will consider today, is that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to God’s elect. Our disobedience was attributed to Him; His obedience was attributed to us. God treated Jesus as worthy of punishment, curse, and death because of

our transgressions; and God treats us as worthy of blessing, glory, and honor because of His perfect righteousness. Be sure that your children understand that the basis for justification is to be found only in the work of Christ for us. He received from us only pain, anguish, and suffering for our sin and guilt. We receive from Him only blessed forgiveness, peace, and salvation. We contribute absolutely nothing to our own justification. Show them also that the righteousness of Christ should be seen in those to whom it has been imputed. It has been said, "Justification is by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone."



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 143A

Scripture: Read Romans 4:1-23; Galatians 2:16

Key Thought: *Christ's righteousness is received by faith alone.*

Questions:

- ☞ Who accomplishes and applies our justification?
- ☞ What role does faith play in justification?
- ☞ Does justification through faith mean that God justifies us because we have faith? How would this make faith a work?

Prayer

Notes: This lesson seeks to clarify the place of faith in our justification. In *The Westminster Shorter Catechism for Study Classes*, G.I. Williamson offers the following: "God is the author of justification. 'It is God that justifieth' (Rom. 8:33). It is God who makes us righteous. And it is God who declares that He has made us righteous. It is important to emphasize this, because many people misunderstand 'justification by faith.' Justification by faith does not mean that faith is something that makes us righteous. Faith is not a 'good work' that pleases God in such a way that He considers it 'just as good' as if we had obeyed His law perfectly. Faith is not the ground of our righteousness; the work of Jesus Christ alone is the ground of our righteousness. That is why faith, in order to save, must be a faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in any other will not save because there is no righteousness in any other. . . . Faith is, therefore, an instrument only. . . . It is by faith that we receive the righteousness of God, but faith is not the source of that righteousness."



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.