

GCC Foundations 2024

Westminster Confession of Faith 11, 13 & 18 (plus ordo salutis)

Chapter 11 – Of Justification

This was one of the key debates in the Protestant reformation.

Article 1: What does it mean to be justified?

- Legal declaration of righteousness
- Forgiveness of sins

Discuss why both are needed.

Articles 2 and 3: What is the basis of our justification? [discuss below as needed]

- Jesus' perfect life (active obedience – earns blessings), and
- Jesus' atoning death (passive obedience – pays for sin)
- Imputation (Christ as the representative of the elect, the federal head – Ro 5); we appropriate it by faith
- All of that is grounded in the Covenant of Redemption – among the persons of the Godhead. The Father elects. Jesus agrees to take on a human nature, and on behalf of the elect live a perfect life and die an atoning death. The Holy Spirit agrees to apply that redemption to the elect. Our justification is a trinitarian work. All of that is of grace.

Justification by faith alone – shorthand for justification by Christ alone.

Faith is as good as the object in which it is placed.

Solas of the reformation – justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone.

Beware of the “and”s. Faith is “receiving and resting upon”.

Rome – Faith + Works = Justification

Reformers – Faith = Justification + Works

Article 2: Role and place of works? Read Eph 2:8-9, James 2:20-24. How do you square those two?

Justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. (Eph 2:8-9 – “how are we saved?” - faith alone; James 2:20-24 – “what kind of a faith saves?” – the kind that produces works)

Applications – freedom; rest

Chapter 13 – Of Sanctification

Justification is an act – occurs in an instant of time

Sanctification is a process – it occurs OVER time (the life of a believer in this world)

Article 1: Sanctification is essentially the growth that follows new life (our being born again)

The confession tells us that we really do grow in holiness, and sin's dominion and power over us diminishes. However, we are never free of the sin nature in this life, and our sanctification is not complete. We will be perfect in glorification.

Articles 2 and 3: In this life, we fight a war. It is the internal war of the spirit and the flesh (Gal 5:17). Our progress will not always be steadily upward. But we will progress because of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in us.

What is the quickest and surest way to lose a battle in the war between the spirit and the flesh? .

What happens when we confuse justification and sanctification?

- We tend to lose assurance – chapter 18 (coming next)
- We can get passive in applying the means of grace for our growth
- We need to distinguish but not separate them

Justification, adoption and sanctification are all part of an overall process, and the order in which things occur matters.

Regeneration – monergistic (God's work alone) (Eph 2:4-5; Ezekiel 36:24-27 – “I will”, not us)

Sanctification – synergistic (we are working with God – Phil 2:12-13; 2Pet 1:5)

Ordo Salutis

- Effectual calling
 - External call
 - Regeneration (born again) – MONERGISTIC (Eph 2)
- Conversion
 - Repentance
 - Faith
- Justification
- Adoption (happen at same time – logical sequence)
 - COUNTED AND TREATED AS CHILDREN OF GOD (RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES)
- Sanctification – SYNERGISTIC (Phil 2)
- Glorification – MADE PERFECT IN HOLINESS

KEY – we are born again (regenerated) before we believe. If regeneration does not precede faith, no one will believe, because dead people don't do anything (Eph 2:1-5)

Chapter 18 - Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

Remember what happens when we confuse justification and sanctification? Lose assurance.

- People can and do make false professions of faith. We need to recognize that. (Article 1)
- True believers have reason for assurance – our salvation is based on God's word and His promises, and the merits of Jesus Christ. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit assures us (Romans 8:16)

Crucial point – Chapter 18, Article 3:

Assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith that true believers will never struggle with it, or wait long for it. However, even without extraordinary revelation, by using ordinary means, we can gain assurance (and we should strive to do so).

A true believer can struggle with assurance!

You are not justified by assurance; you are justified by grace through faith.

What are those ordinary means? Means of grace – the things God normally uses to bless and grow us.

Word, Sacraments, Prayer (WSC). Worship, fellowship, service.

Article 4: True believers can't lose their salvation. Why?

- John 10:28-29
- God doesn't take back his gifts (regeneration, faith, Holy Spirit) – Romans 11:29
