Of Justification: Tensions & Distinctions

The Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 11.3–6

I. WCF 11.3: The Exact Justice and Rich Grace of God

A. Justification is a legal concept—God's _____ is especially in view.

i. But God's justice was exacted on Jesus so that he could justify us.

ii. Jesus _____ God's justice by obeying his law and dying under his wrath.

B. Christ satisfied God's justice, so that we might receive God's grace.

i. We are saved by grace alone, because Jesus received _____.

ii. In our justification, God's exact justice and rich grace meet, and are glorified.

II. WCF 11.4: God's Decree, Christ's Work, and the Spirit's Application

A. If God eternally decrees that we will be justified, when are we actually justified?

i. In eternity, God the Father _____ our salvation, and decreed to justify.

ii. In history, God the Son took on flesh and _____ our salvation.

iii. But we aren't actually justified until the Spirit _____ Christ to us.

B. And we truly receive God's declaration of forgiveness & righteousness in this life.

i. Justification isn't a lifelong process, and it doesn't have 2 _____.

ii. We are justified fully and finally in this life, when the Spirit applies Christ to us.

iii. Here, we also see the beautiful _____ nature of our justification.

III. WCF 11.5: Forgiveness, Falling Away, and Renewal

A. We are still sinners, even after being justified—does our sin affect our justification?

i. Isn't like we're saved by grace, & then must keep ourselves saved by works.

ii. No, God's declaration of justification is a true declaration, and it is _____

B. And yet, it isn't like our sin doesn't matter now that we're justified.

i. In one sense, God doesn't _____ our sin anymore, because it died with Christ.

ii. But in another sense, God still sees our sins and cares about our _____

iii. Before we were justified, we were enemies of God; but after, we are his _____

iv. God sees our sin, and he is displeased with it as a father with his beloved child.

v. Thomas Boston: "There is a _____ pardon: the one is the removal of the guilt of eternal wrath, and is called legal pardon; the other the removal of the guilt of fatherly anger, and is called gospel pardon."

IV. WCF 11.6: Justification in the Old and New Testaments

A. If Christ's work is foundational to justification, how were saints justified before Christ?

i. Roman catholicism teaches that OT saints didn't go to heaven, but to _____.

ii. Extreme dispensationalists teach that OT saints weren't saved by faith in Christ.

B. But everything we have said about justification was true of believers in the OT.

i. They were justified the same way that we are, by _____.

ii. They received the same _____ as us, Christ's obedience & death.

iii. And they received the same reward as us, immediate entry into _____.

V. Practical takeaways: This study of Justification…

A. Discovers the unity of our Triune God's work in our justification!

B. Directs believers in relating to God and pursuing lives of faith and repentance!

C. Displays the glory of God's justice and grace!

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3. Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those that are thus justified, and made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, because he was given by the Father for them; and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their place; and both, freely, not for anything in them; their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.

4. God, from all eternity, decreed to justify all the elect, and Christ, in the fullness of time, died for their sins, and rose again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit, in due time, actually applies Christ to them.

5. God continues to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored to them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.

6. The justification of believers under the old testament was, in all these respects, one and the same as the justification of believers under the new testament.