

“The Place of Good Works”

Devoted to God

Westminster Confession of Faith

Bishop John Rodgers

July 14, 2017

John: The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

John: Lord, we ask Your grace for Bruce. We miss him, and we ask You to take away the pain and heal the body. Also give us hearts to hear Your word and me the grace to speak it. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

John: Don, do you want to bring us to the throne of grace with your music? (*Music*)

Blessed Lord, You’ve caused the holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we might in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, so that by the patience and comfort of Your holy word we may ever move fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life which You give us in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. In His name we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

John: Well, gentlemen, Sig was very kind to take my outline and put it into your format. And in so doing, it’s a little different than what I have. (*Laughter*) And so if you pay attention to 1, 2, 3 and 4, the big lines, that will be all right.

Now the basic question I began to wrestle with—and I trust that the Lord put this on my heart—was what is the place of good works in the Christian faith? I think that partly I raise this because, in my background, we’ve put so much emphasis on justification that we’ve lost almost everything else. And in a way, that’s right. If you’re going to emphasize one thing to the exclusion and out of proportion to anything else, you pretty well have to start there because there isn’t any other place to start as Christians. But it’s also wrong to put such emphasis on it that it gobbles up everything else that God wants us to hear.

So I began to raise the question, putting it in a rather popular way. Why should we do good works when our works do not in any way merit or earn our justification before God? And if we are to do them, what are they and how do we go about doing them? So that’s the picture.

Now as I worked on this outline, it grew and grew. And it’s clear to me that we can’t possibly do everything effectively on the outline. So we’ll do as much as we can, and then the next time they ask me to come up we’ll finish it. (*Laughter*) Don’t throw the outline away. (*Laughter*)

Now the whole question arises only in the Christian faith. So the broadest background for the Christian approach to life is that we are created by God in His image, in a relationship to Him and for Him. And hence we are accountable to Him who is our Creator, who is holy, righteous and loving. That’s just absolutely fundamental.

Next to it and equally fundamental is the truth that we are all fallen people, flawed, imbued by an inordinate love of self. Luther called it the *core incurvatos en se*, the heart turned in on itself, which is meant to be focused on God and on the neighbor, then only

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third on the self. It ends up with self first, and then where everybody else fits into the self second and third. The *core incurvatos en se*.

So before God we are guilty, both in our heart condition as well as in our actual desires, thoughts, decisions and actions, and therefore under God’s condemnation and wrath unless God does something. Unless we are justified by God in Christ, rescued by Him, we are totally beyond self-help.

Now that’s the context for raising the question about good works. And unless we get justification and all of its Biblical radicalness clear, the question doesn’t really arise and it isn’t properly understood.

So we’re briefly going to look—well, not so briefly but I hope fairly quickly!—at getting justification right in all of its radicality. And it is profoundly radical because we need it to be. Then after that we’re going to take a look at sanctification as it’s normally presented, the Christian doctrine of sanctification. And then thirdly we’ll see how the two relate. And then finally we’ll eventually get to the practical question of the what, why and how of good works. That’s the pattern that we’re going to try to work our way through.

Okay, first *getting justification right*. And I looked at the classic confessions and they all agree—The Westminster Confession, the Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles all agree on all of the points that I’m going to cover today. It’s basic Biblical theology that people, no matter when they are starting from, whatever their tradition, come up with. And I’m going to cite the Westminster Confession for two reasons. It’s the most complete and ample. Secondly, it seems to me that it’s the most pastoral. If you don’t know it, it’s a wonderful document.

Now I’m going to read just a little bit of each of these before we get to each point. Don’t worry about getting it all because I’ll come back and I’m going to highlight the main points. I just want you briefly to hear this beautiful statement that kind of puts it all together. I’m not even going to read all of the points that they cover, just kind of the lead thoughts.

So first, it’s *justification*. And I want to do a reading of the Confession and attempt some comments. So I’ll read the Westminster Confession, “Of Justification,” which is chapter 11. You can find these easily on the Web. All you do is just google “Westminster Confession” or “The Thirty-nine Articles” or “The Augsburg Confession.”

Of Justification. “Those whom God effectually calleth,”—that is, actually converts,—He also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone.”

Participant: Amen.

John: “Nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing,”—the act of believing is not a meritorious ground,—“or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness, but by their receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.”

Wow! Now that’s just one section, and they go on to several more points. But that’s the first thing and I just wanted to read that to you.

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There are many, many texts about justification. But the one I want to read is from Romans 3:23-25. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* And that includes us, a part of the all. *“And are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption”*—that is, through the rescuing act—*“that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiatory sacrifice by His blood, to be received by faith.”* That’s a very succinct statement by Paul. Of course Paul talks about it many, many times; that’s just one text.

Now some comments. To be justified by God in the New Testament is to be declared righteous by God, righteous in His sight, fully and finally. Here are some things to keep in mind.

1. *God does the justifying.* It is His office, His work, His declaration. Now here’s the clue: what God says goes. (*Laughter*) If God says that you are righteous according to His full and final judgment, then you are. That’s a fact. You can take it to the bank. God defines reality; we do not, even if the Supreme Court judges got it wrong. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Amen.

John: He says it’s our civil right to define reality any way we want to. Boy, is he in for a surprise! Well I guess he’s been surprised by now. He died.

The declaration that God makes rests on God’s accounting Christ’s perfect righteousness to us. It’s Christ’s righteousness—both His perfect obedience and the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice. Both are accounted to us. His declaration does not rest on any changes in our character or in our behavior which, even when we are justified, is far from perfectly righteous. But more of that later.

God’s act of declaring us sinners as righteous gave rise to Luther’s famous comment that Christians are *“simil justus et peccator”*, at the same time righteous or just and sinners. And the point is that from God’s perspective, because of Christ, we are righteous. But in and of ourselves, apart from that, in our fallen nature, we are not righteous.

Saving faith. Saving faith is a means. It is not a ground or a basis or a cause of justification. We are saved by Christ and His word through the means of our receiving faith which unites us to Christ. This is evident for several reasons.

1. *Faith receives a totally undeserved gift.* It’s grace. Grace is to those who deserve the opposite but receive God’s mercy and salvation. It’s a totally undeserved gift.

In this sense saving faith is purely receptive. No one earns a gift. If you think in any way that you earn it or deserve it, it’s no longer a gift.

Participant: That’s right.

John: You deny the very nature of a gift. A gift is what you receive; it’s a sheer gift. Christ is a gift. You cannot deserve a gift.

Or, looking at it another way, saving faith does not look at itself. We do not look at ourselves in saving faith and say, “Ah, how smart I am! I’ve decided to choose Christ.” Faith looks at Christ and His work, knowing that we have nothing in ourselves to offer.

*“Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”*

Participant: Amen.

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John: That’s the perspective of faith. You don’t take credit for believing in Christ. You give thanks. Or a third way of putting it is that it is receptive and a means because God says so in His word. God calls it a gift. If He tells us that it’s the work of the Holy Spirit, then we need to take that to heart.

Ephesians 2:8, 9 and 10. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* That comes a bit later. But don’t forget to include verse 10. When you quote Ephesians 2:8 and 9, don’t drop verse 10. It’s all hooked together.

So in summary, our works play no role whatsoever in our justification. Here the work that counts is Christ’s work done for us and accounted to us who are in Christ by the gospel and the grace of the regenerating work and providence of God through faith. Justification is clearly by grace alone.

And one last comment: it is full and final.

Participant: Amen.

John: Full and final. It is full and final because we are justified on the basis of Christ, on the basis of His perfect righteousness and His sufficient atonement. If Christ’s righteousness, which is in every way sufficient and perfect on our behalf is accounted to us, then it is full and final. To think anything else is to say that Christ’s work was insufficient, which none of us wants to say, of course. So from the moment that we put our faith in Christ and not in ourselves, we are justified, declared righteous in God’s sight, fully and finally.

Just one comment. Justification is our entrance into salvation. But I say it’s an entrance into salvation and the foundation of our remaining salvation, because salvation is more than justification. Salvation includes *justification*, which is deliverance from God’s wrath, *sanctification*, which is deliverance from the domination of sin, and *glorification*, which is deliverance from the very presence of sin. So you’re saved not just by justification, though you cannot be saved except upon the basis of justification. But you’re saved into the whole work of God which includes sanctification and glorification for sure.

That leads us to topic #2: *getting sanctification right*. We are led to sanctification because the first reason why we do good works is very carefully set forth in the Christian doctrine of sanctification, in which our good works are necessarily involved. So I’ll read to you from and comment on “Of Sanctification” from the Westminster Confession.

“They who are once effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection”—that’s the foundation and the empowerment—“by His word and Spirit dwelling in them. The dominion of the whole body if sin is destroyed.” The dominion, that is the domination, the tyrannical hold or domination is destroyed. *“And the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified”—killed—“and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”*

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Texts. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. And we are all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image.” It’s the same for all of us, but the same in the sense that the image is Christ. “From one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

Comments on sanctification: a definition. I’ll give you the long form first and then the short form. Where did I get the long form? I made it up. (*Laughter*)

Sanctification is the continuing or progressive work of God the Holy Spirit within the hearts and lives of believers in Christ, enabling and involving their responses and efforts to conform their characters, desires, decisions and actions more and more into the likeness of Christ, thereby also setting them more and more free from the influence of sin that still indwells them.

Short form. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit conforming us to the character of Christ.

Participant: Amen.

John: The point is that it involves our participation and our works. You’re not saved apart from your works. You’re justified apart from your works. But you’re not just left there. God is working in you. So the foundation of salvation remains purely the grace of Christ’s righteousness. But God is also at work, putting us right personally.

Comments. The Spirit begins to work in us when the Spirit regenerates the heart to receive the gospel of Christ. And when we, in the providence of God, hear the gospel and put our faith in and surrender ourselves to the care and righteousness of Christ, the Spirit begins a transforming work in us. The fact is—and this is a Biblical fact now!—the fact is that you and I are no longer under the dominance of sin.

Participant: Amen.

John: Now that’s a fact, not based on experience. It’s based on the word of God. It is a fact that when you put your faith from the heart into Christ that God did a work in you. He began to indwell you in a way that you are no longer under the domination of sin. You cannot say, “The devil made me do it.” (*Laughter*) This is a Biblical fact.

However, we retain indwelling sin. Therefore this renewing work is inevitable. Since God indwells us in the Spirit, the renewing work is inevitable. It’s comparable to a healthy apple tree producing apples. It’s a necessity arising from the grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And the Scriptures tell us that we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we are all being renewed by the Holy Spirit. And the dominance of sin in our lives has been broken.

Participant: Amen.

John: That is our condition. Hence, repentance is necessarily related to faith in Christ. Renewal necessarily follows conversion and life in Christ. And Jesus is always both Savior and Lord for believers.

Thirdly, *the Holy Spirit is primary in our sanctification.* We as believers are active in sanctification. Our desires, our decisions, our actions matter. We work at being godly in our living. But our work is itself enabled by the Holy Spirit, using the means of grace including common life in the body of Christ and the challenges of life, all sorts of means.

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The dominant source and empowerment of sanctification is not ourselves, but is ever the grace of the Holy Spirit at work within us, through us and around us.

Next point. Unlike justification, which is full and final from the beginning, our sanctification is a process. And since it involves each of us personally, and our personal participation, the degree of sanctification differs from one person to another, from one local congregation to another. It also differs from earlier to later in the Christian life, hopefully leading to a degree of maturing as we abide in Christ and continue to take sanctification seriously.

Sanctification, the work of the Holy Spirit within us, is inevitable and a gracious gift. It is a gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit, a fact. Go ahead.

Participant: When you said it changes and can be different from one person to another or one congregation to another, in the eyes of God and Christ there is no difference of our position in His sight. But are you referring to our own growth, our own maturity?

John: No, it's not a difference in justification. It's a difference in the degree to which we've been transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Participant: And that is just for our own understanding and edification? Some become teachers and some become authors because of that?

John: No, those are gifts helping you to live out your faith. We're talking about the degree to which you are living a holy life, conformed to the image of Christ.

Participant: Okay.

John: Sharing His love, His grace, His mercy with others, loving God as well as your neighbor, that sort of thing.

Participant: So you're saying that it's not what you do, but how you do it?

John: I suppose. But how, of course, is fundamental. Yes?

Participant: Do you see anywhere in Scripture where it says that one person is more sanctified than another?

John: Sanctification is used in two ways in Scripture. One is called *positional sanctification*. That's where a book is holy, or you're a saint set apart as holy. That's one thing. The transformational stuff has got to do with your character. Yes, I think that opening text that I read indicates that we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another, conformed more and more to Christ.

Participant: Doesn't Paul say that "*as much as is within you, be at peace with all men?*" That would depend on how much you're been given.

John: Okay. Well, we'll get to more of this and the practicalities when we get to actually considering the good works themselves.

“The relation of justification to sanctification. That's the third point. Justification and sanctification are inseparable. One follows from the other. But they are different. They must neither be separated nor confused.

First, *they are distinguishable*. They differ. Here are some of the ways in which they differ.

1. Justification is our legal standing before God. Sanctification is our character in the eyes of God, our spiritual condition with regard to sin and renewal in us.

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2. Justification is once for all and complete. We are all equally justified. You are as justified as St. Augustine was justified, or St. Paul, or any other Christian person. We're all equally justified. You can't get more justified because you can't have anything greater than the righteousness of Christ accounted to you. So justification is once for all and complete. Sanctification is an ongoing process throughout our lives on earth, to be completed, of course, ultimately in glorification.

Thirdly, justification is entirely God's work in Christ. Sanctification involves God's work primarily, but also our participation and response.

Fourth, justification is the same in all Christian believers. Sanctification varies among believers and local congregations.

Fifth, justification is a great finished present gift. Sanctification is a present gift that looks forward to a future completion.

So they are different, and they must not be confused. For if good works enter into justification, you end up with *legalism*, having to merit your salvation. And that means that it either drives you to despair. If you're like me, you say, "Well, I'll never measure up." I don't know about you, but I know my wife would agree. (*Laughter*) Or you may think you do measure up. Then you get the Pharisee's self-deception.

Participant: Amen.

John: And legalism. So you mustn't confuse these two. One is perfect and complete. The other is a process, both for which we are thankful because they are due to the grace of God at work in us.

If you have justification without sanctification, then you deny the inner work of the Holy Spirit within you, and you're just taking an easy ride. And you probably don't have saving faith at all.

Participant: Amen.

John: If you have no desire awakening in you to love Christ better, to serve Christ, to do good works, even though you know you're not saved by that, then there's something profoundly missing.

And Whitfield would pound on this all the time. He'd say, "*You must be born again.*" And by that he meant that you must know that the Spirit is at work within you by our love of Christ caused supremely by the Word.

Participant: Amen.

John: And if you find yourself despairing about yourself, flee to Christ. You don't just go in the dumps. You say, "Lord, I need help."

Participant: Actually, an important aspect is that if there is no evidence of sanctification, then there's really no basis for justification.

John: That drives you back to justification.

Participant: Because it's all a work of God.

John: That's right.

Participant: If He has truly justified you, then you will see some evidence. However, you have to be careful of that, because they are always imperfect. Yes?

Participant: I remember as a new Christian that I was so confused by that, because I would hear that we're saved by grace without works. But then you would go and you'd

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hear messages stating that if you’d do this and so, then you probably weren’t saved. And I wasn’t able to make the connection that it was being saved by grace, that this would do something in you and the evidence would then show up in good works. It was just evidence that was supposed to be part of what you would do to earn it.

John: You do have to approach that, though, with a clear understanding of your justification. Yes. Go ahead, Bill.

Bill: Well if you take a look at John Piper’s ministry, with a total emphasis on desiring God to the full emotional extent every day, doesn’t that then cause Christians, or at least people who are introspective, to despair like this all the time?

John: Yes. You have to be careful.

Bill: You sit there saying, “Well, I don’t desire God to the total extent.” And what does that say about me, then? If you get caught there, you can drain yourself fairly easily to total exhaustion over this. Do you know what I mean?

John: It drove Luther to confide in his confessor—Staupitz I believe it was—who said, “*Seek your election in the wounds of Christ.*” You go with that for your justification. That’s where you rest. You’ve got to rest in your justification.

Bill: I’m just saying that if we look at this, I think that’s a good thing to keep in mind.

John: Absolutely.

Bill: Each time I elect to sin, I have therefore in my mental aspect said that I choose to love sin more than I love Christ.

John: That’s right; that’s correct.

Bill: That’s a terrible way to live.

John: It is.

Bill: It’s incorrect. It forces a Christian to repent.

John: Correct. It’s finding their security and their joy in Christ’s righteousness counted to them, and being thankful for whatever indications of that, however dimly reflected in our lives.

Participant: May I read a verse?

John: Sure.

Participant: It’s from Titus 2. “*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desire, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.*”

John: A friend of mine has printed out a collection of every reference to good works in the Bible. It’s obviously a pretty big doctrine. And he said that good works appear in every book of the Bible except Jude, I think he said. So obviously it’s an important part of our being set free in Christ. But we have to keep in mind the indwelling sin that remains. And as Bill points out, we must always address this in the light of a clear spiritual understanding of our justification.

And they must not be separated because one follows the other. It’s a Biblical fact that if you are justified, you are being sanctified, positionally as well as personally. Go ahead.

Participant: I’m having a hard time understanding this. When I look at 1 Corinthians chapter 6, starting at verse 9, it says, “*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters,*

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nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” And Paul says, *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified,”*—past tense; or made holy—*“you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* He uses that term in the past tense for people who had been born again and don’t follow this lifestyle any longer. And it says that they’re sanctified. I think that *maturity* is a better term to use when we’re talking about a growth process, which I think you are.

John: I’m happy with maturity.

Participant: I’ve done a big study on the word *sanctification*. And I have *Strong’s Concordance*, which is based on the King James Bible. Every time I look at my Bible I look up a reference from *Strong’s Concordance*. For the word *sanctified* it has changed the word.

John: Yes.

Participant: It’s changed from *sanctified* in many cases in the Old Testament to *devoted* or *consecrated*.

John: Yes. It’s called *positional sanctification*.

Participant: Yes. The translations have changed that word.

John: An aorist also, that is the past tense, which also refers to an act in the past with a continuing present effects. So it doesn’t exclude the maturing work of the Spirit within us.

Participant: That’s why I asked if you had any reference that says that one person is more sanctified than another. I don’t see it.

John: I’ll be happy to say “more mature than the other. How’s that?”

Participant: Exactly because, you know, Paul cracks on the Corinthians. They should be eating meat, and they’re drinking milk.

John: There you go.

Participant: You’re not becoming mature; you’re a baby. You don’t want to grow up. That’s what he’s saying.

John: You’re resisting, actually.

Participant: Not that you need to be more sanctified. We need to grow up.

John: Well we can agree to disagree a little bit, because I think that the word *sanctification* has a double meaning. But we’re not really differing on the point we want to make. And that is that the Spirit of God is at work within us so that we might grow up. Otherwise, we wouldn’t. Don’t?

Don: I have a question for Bill. (*Laughter*) When you read that vice list in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 9, that *sanctified* is said in the past tense, so if a person lapses back into a sin in that list, is he no longer sanctified?

Bill: I don’t think that if once God declares you as sanctified, and you understand that no one is sanctified outside of Christ being in you and you being in Christ.

John: If you’re using the word *sanctified* in the positional sense, we are called saints. But saints differ in terms of their “maturity,” where they are moving. So I think the point where we disagree on is in the use of the Biblical word *sanctified*.

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Participant: Something that always helped me was the explanation that justification is like you're in a race, and the gun goes off. When the gun goes off, that's justification. Now you're also in the race, so sanctification starts, and it can be used in the past tense. But you have this whole race that you're going through. And some run faster and longer. Others don't. But you have this process you're going through. When you cross the finish line, that's glorification.

Second Participant: We sin. I mean, all of us sin. You maintain that we have indwelling sin. Well if we have indwelling sin, and we struggle with sin all our life long, then sanctification has to have a progressive aspect to it.

John: It is continuing and progressive.

Participant: It's both positional and progressive.

John: That's right. And it progresses because of the power of the Spirit and God's unwillingness to leave us in our foul condition. We're talking about good news here.

(Laughter)

Participant: You have a question over here, Bishop Rodgers.

John: Yes?

Participant: I'm going to read from this verse of Scripture, 1 Thessalonians 4. *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality.”* There's a case right there where it is defined not in the positional sense—

John: But in the transformational sense. I think that if we spent enough time looking at it, we'll discover it. Well anyway, historically in all the confessions we see a double use of that word. So I'm going to attempt to stay with it.

Well I think it's too late now to start with the practical application of all this, and that's good works. *(Laughter)* But I hope you can see that it only matters if we understand that we are absolutely, finally and perfectly, fully justified in Christ. We rest in that. Otherwise, we're in real trouble. If you make my salvation conditional on anything I do, I will fail immediately. I will say that I do it imperfectly. And the hope of the religions of the world all focus this way. They do it on purpose. They're basically uncertain. And the Christian has a certainty because of the complete and perfect righteousness of Christ accounted to us by grace, received through faith. Yes?

Participant: There is a double aspect of sanctification which can be abused in a lot of instances. It's the positional act of sanctification where you can't lose your salvation. We can't lose our positional sanctification. But the rub is with the transformational aspect, if we lose that part we're not being cleansed. So part of it is being set apart, and the other part is being sinned apart.

John: That's right, and working at it. Next time they need me to get up here, I'll tackle that.

Participant: Bishop Rodgers, somebody asked me a question the other day and I'd like to see your answer. He said, “How do I know as a person, as an individual, how do I know for sure that I've been justified? What's the best answer to that?”

John: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior? That's it. Are you confident that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, that all of His righteousness is applied to you, undeserving as you are?

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Now you can also say, “Yes, and I’ve seen the things He has done in my life with others, but also in me, the changes that He has made. But they are secondary. I believe that He who found me put me on His shoulders and will never let me go.

Participant: Amen.

John: It’s all confidence in Him, not in me. I mean, if I have anything, even my faith, it’s something that I trust Him for. After all, it’s a gift of grace.

Let us pray. Lord, we give You heartfelt thanks and praise for our justification. It humbles us that not anything that we do counts in this, but only Your righteousness, perfect and full, accounted to us by grace, received simply because You wish to give us this gift, and we need desperately to receive it. So we thank You also, Lord, that You are not content to leave us as we are, that You are at work within us, inspiring and touching us, moving both around us and within us, to begin to look and desire to be more and more like Jesus, to give Him glory more and more. We’ll talk more about this later, Lord, but we thank You for Your sanctifying work within us, that we might indeed become more and more mature, more and more like our Lord and our Savior, to whom be all glory and honor. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)