

The 71st General Assembly Statement on Justification.

The 71st (2004) General Assembly of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church *i*) declares its continued commitment to the teaching of the Word of God, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms with regard to the doctrine of justification by faith alone; *ii*) reaffirms that faith, which is a gift of God, is the sole instrument of justification; and *iii*) reaffirms the following beliefs:

a. "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" (WSC 33).

b. "Those whom God effectually calls, 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 any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God" (WCF XI:1).

c. "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love" (WCF XI:2).

d. "Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, in as much as He was given by the Father for them; and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead; and both, freely, not for any thing 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" (WCF XI:3).

e. "At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment" (WLC 90).

f. "Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness" (WLC 73).

g. "Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doeth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection." (WLC 77).

The Assembly erected a study committee of seven "to critique the teachings of the New Perspective on Paul, Federal Vision, and other like teachings concerning the doctrine of justification and other related doctrines, as they are related to the Word of God and our subordinate standards, with a view to giving a clear statement to the presbyteries, sessions and seminaries, and report back to the 72nd GA." Dr. William B. Barclay, Dr. L. Anthony Curto, Dr. Sydney D. Dyer, Dr. John V. Fesko, Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., The Rev. Alan D. Strange, and Dr. David M. VanDrunen (Convener) were elected to this committee.