

**“Christian Being”
John 14:23-29
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In our second in a series on Wesley and grace, we come to one of the more troubling parts of Wesley’s understanding of grace, justification. What does it mean to be justified in faith. What does that mean? Well simply put in means that acknowledge what Christ has done for us and we accept it. By that acceptance we also promise to lead a Christian Life. There in is where we have the problem. Again we can ask the question “well what does this mean?”

C.S. Lewis wrote about the problem of being a “Christian and” Syndrome. Gregory Reither writes that “C.S. Lewis once said that the same thing happens in Christianity; it's what you add to it that ruins it. Where we link our faith to some other cause to which we are partial and say "this is the center of our faith." And so we hear from our pulpits that the

main focus for us must be Christianity and Marxism, or Christianity and Capitalism, or Christianity and Social Action, or Christianity and Gun Control, or Christianity and the Republican Platform, or Christianity and the Pro-life Movement or Christianity and the Twelve Step program or Christianity and Homosexual Rights movement or anything else you might want to insert there. And the fact is, that as soon as you add an "And" to Christianity you have lost your focus. A Christian worldview speaks to all of those important issues; but every one of them is peripheral to who we are. We are not Christians AND something else; we are Christians, and we let our faith guide us in all other decisions of life.

Now on the surface this sounds good, and this would be the ultimate goal for all of us. But Wesley understood that these things do get in the way. That is what the beauty of United Methodism is that we are a practical divinity. We are

working it out as we go. We hope each day to be more like Christ, and also relying on Christ for guiding us through the things that may distract us and to give us clarification on these important issues.

Some might assume that being Justified means the day when you were saved. Well as we have explored earlier this may not always be the case. It could be, but not always. Dr. Brent McCumons shared his own experience in breaking horses at his farm growing up. One horse he took from the time she was Philly and began walking her around with a rope, then he put a bridle on, then after a while was able to put a bit in her mouth, then he started with a blanket on her back, then a bag of flour, to start adding weight then eventually a saddle then eventually, he was able to mount the saddle and rode the horse for the first time. Another horse as he tried the same thing would resist and run away, would buck things off would rear up and kick and would

refuse to wear the bit. Finally when it seemed like things were getting way out of control he disciplined the horse and punched him between the eyes. After that the horse knew he was in charge.

Now in the latter scenario he can name the date place and hour of when that horse was broken. But now what about the first horse? When did that happen? It was a process that ultimately lead to the overall goal, but everything happened in a nice smooth progression all the while the horse trusting and learning from him as they went along.

That is how it is for many Christians as well. Sometimes we have those moments of justification that are so sudden, we will never forget, and other times we look back and see how much we have grown in faith. What we must remember is that God works with each of us as is needed and all of us have experienced both kinds and sometimes a mix of each.

And it is all okay with God. The important thing to also

remember is that God will never stop trying to help us learn and grow in Christ.

Ultimately what it means to be justified is that we answer the call to “be a Christian” and that being a Christian means we are earnestly striving after the peace of Christ. This is now as the scripture says, the peace that the world gives, but the peace instead that surpasses. One of the problems in the church is we believe that faith and peace means unanimity and agreement. Unfortunately what this does is sets up winners and losers. Wesley, was always conscious of this fact and made that the cornerstone of Methodism. We hold to no confession, but in the essentials unity, in peripherals harmony, and in all things charity. There need not be agreement on the whole, but if your heart be with my heart, then let us join hands and journey in this faith together. This is what it means to be a Christian, to walk together and learn together in faith.