

The Formula of Concord

Lesson Four

On The Righteousness of Faith before God

Introduction

1. What do the letters WWJD stand for? Why do you think people adopted that slogan for their lives?
2. Although the intentions behind this saying are good, where is its focus?

Digging In - **GRACE**

Grace = Love that is _____ and has its _____ in the one who _____,
not in the _____ loved.

Which is correct?

- A. God accepts the believer because of the moral excellence found in Jesus Christ**
- B. God makes the believer acceptable by infusing Christ's moral excellence into his life.**

Which is correct?

- A. Grace has made salvation possible**
- B. We are saved by grace alone**

False View of Grace

Grace as a power that God _____ into people to help them live for him...and thus get more of God's grace.

Biblical View of Grace

The _____ of God that declares the guilty sinner not guilty by virtue of the work of his Son, Jesus.

Grace is an attitude as well as an attribute of God, not a quantity that he doles out gradually.

Which is correct?

- A. We achieve right standing with God by following Christ's example, with the help of his enabling grace**
- B. We follow Christ's example, because his life has given us right standing with God**

Digging In - JUSTIFICATION

Which is most accurate?

- A. To justify means to make righteous**
- B. To justify means to account as righteous**

Justification = God's verdict of " _____ , " which he declares on the basis of what _____ has done for us.

_____ *Justification* = When Jesus died on the cross, God declared the whole world forgiven; he declared that every sin has been paid for and punished in Christ.

_____ *Justification* = That act by which the "not guilty" verdict earned for all is offered, given, and sealed to the individual by the proclamation and declaration of God in the gospel, which as the effective means of grace creates faith

Which is correct?

- A. Man is justified because of his faith in Christ's death on the cross**
- B. Man is justified because of Christ's death on the cross.**

For faith does not make people righteous because it is such a good work or such a fine virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel. For this merit must be applied to us and appropriated through faith if we are to become righteous through it. (SD III:13-14)

★ Evaluate this statement:

“Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life.”

In order that the troubled heart may have a reliable and certain comfort and that Christ's merit and God's grace may be given the honor due them, Scriptures teaches that the righteousness of faith before God consists only in the gracious reconciliation or forgiveness of sins [Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21]. This he bestowed upon us out of sheer grace solely because of the merits of Christ our mediator, and it is received only by faith in the promise of the gospel. Therefore, in the justification of the sinner before God, faith relies neither on contrition nor on love or other virtues, but only on Christ and on his perfect obedience, with which he fulfilled the law for us and which is reckoned to believers as righteousness. Thus...faith alone, is the sole means and instrument with which and through which we may receive and accept God's grace, the merit of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins, which are delivered to us in the promise of the gospel. (SD III: 30,31)

Search the Scriptures

★ How do these passages relate grace and justification to our salvation?

Romans 3:27,28 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Ephesians 2:8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 4:6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

Romans 11:6 And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Galatians 2:15,16 “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."

Historical Background

"I frequently shudder, because Luther in his commentaries on the Letter to the Galatians and on the first Book of Moses so often repeats the statement: "This doctrine [of justification] will be obscured again after my death."'" (Martin Chemnitz)

Andreas Osiander

Was guilty of...

- 1) downplaying the value of Christ's _____; insisting that Christ is righteous only according to his divine nature
- 2) opposing the Bible's emphasis that the sinner is justified by an act in which God _____ the sinner righteous on account of Christ's work
 - a. He said justification is an act by which God makes man righteous by _____ in him
- 3) viewing justification not as an act by which God declared the sinner righteous, but as a _____ by which God makes one righteous

His teaching could be summarized with the phrase "Christ in us." Osiander taught that a person is slowly transformed into a holy person because Christ lives in a person. According to Osiander, righteousness is the renewal of love and obedience that happens inside of a person.

Which is correct?

- A. We achieve right standing with God as Christ lives in us and he lives out his life of obedience in us.**
- B. We achieve right standing with God by trusting the fact that Christ obeyed the law perfectly for us.**

★ What do we do with these passages?

1 Corinthians 6:19,20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Galatians 2:20-21 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

The problem with Osiander’s teaching is it...

- Downplays Jesus’ righteous life lived in our behalf, as well as his atoning work on the cross
- Confuses the two natures of Christ
- “Justification” becomes the change in life through the habitation of Christ in the heart with a focus on what one does
 - No longer a declaration of forgiveness and “not guilty” verdict
 - Rather, righteousness/salvation/justification becomes something we produce by the power of God dwelling in us
 - Uncertainty – how could you be sure God was dwelling in you enough so your sins were not counted against you

Which is correct?

A. God considers works done by believers as good, because they are done in the righteousness of Christ.

B. God considers works done by believers as good, because they are done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Which is correct?

A. Only by faith in the doing and dying of Christ can we fully satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments.

B. By the power of the Holy Spirit living in us we can fully satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments.

Application

- ✪ Explain the importance of Christ's two natures in the doctrine of justification.

Human nature -

Divine nature -

_____ Our salvation depends as much on Christ's human nature as on his deity.

_____ At no time did Jesus' human nature exist apart from the divine nature.

_____ Jesus' human nature was swallowed up by his divine, losing its identity.

_____ Christ's divine nature was the assuming nature and his human nature, the assumed. In other words – God became man, not man God.

_____ The teaching that Jesus Christ is both God and man in one person is one of Christianity's most vital and fundamental truths.

- ✪ A Roman Catholic friend says that she also believes that we are saved by faith, but then she goes on to explain that she believes true faith includes love – love toward God and toward our neighbor. She says that it is on account of this love that faith saves us. Evaluate.
- ✪ How does this article preserve and protect the gospel and the teaching of God's grace?
- ✪ A close relative is in the hospital. As you visit with him, he tells you that he is worried about his faith. He thinks God has forgiven his sins, but he admits that he sins every day. He hopes that if he dies soon, God will take him to heaven. But then he asks you, "How can I be absolutely certain?" What would you tell him?

Summary

A. Highlights the importance of Jesus' _____ obedience

Which is correct?

- A. The believer is pronounced righteous, because the Spirit of Grace has made him righteous.**
- B. The believer is pronounced righteous because Christ, his substitute, is found righteous before God.**

B. Emphasizes that justification is the forgiveness of sins: a _____ that take place
_____ of us

Which is correct?

- A. Justification eradicates sin; only concupiscence (a tendency toward sin) and weakness remain.**
- B. Sin still remains in man's nature after justification, but it is not taken into account by God.**

We unanimously believe, teach, and confess on the basis of the general summary of our Christian faith and confession expressed above that poor sinful people are justified before God, that is, absolved—pronounced free of all sins and of the judgment of the damnation that they deserved and accepted as children and heirs of eternal life—without the least bit of our own “merit or worthiness,” apart from all preceding, present, or subsequent works. We are justified on the basis of sheer grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death, and the resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness.

The Holy Spirit conveys these benefits to us in the promise of the holy gospel. Faith is the only means through which we lay hold of them, accept them, apply them to ourselves, and appropriate them. Faith itself is a gift of God, through which we acknowledge Christ our redeemer in the Word of the gospel and trust in him. Only because of his obedience does God the Father forgive our sins by grace, regard us as upright and righteous, and give us eternal salvation. (SD III:9-10)

During the Week

Read Article IV of the Formula of Concord, Epitome.

IV. OF GOOD WORKS.

STATUS CONTROVERSIAE.

The Principal Question in the Controversy concerning Good Works.

- 1] Concerning the doctrine of good works two divisions have arisen in some churches:
- 2] 1. First, some theologians have become divided because of the following expressions, where the one side wrote: *Good works are necessary for salvation. It is impossible to be saved without good works.* Also: *No one has ever been saved without good works.* But the other side, on the contrary, wrote: *Good works are injurious to salvation.*
- 3] 2. Afterwards a schism arose also between some theologians with respect to the two words *necessary* and *free*, since the one side contended that the word *necessary* should not be employed concerning the new obedience, which, they say, does not flow from necessity and coercion, but from a voluntary spirit. The other side insisted on the word *necessary*, because, they say, this obedience is not at our option, but regenerate men are obliged to render this obedience.
- 4] From this disputation concerning the terms a controversy afterwards occurred concerning the subject itself; for the one side contended that among Christians the Law should not be urged at all, but men should be exhorted to good works from the Holy Gospel alone; the other side contradicted this.

AFFIRMATIVA.

Pure Doctrine of the Christian Churches concerning This Controversy.

- 5] For the thorough statement and decision of this controversy our doctrine, faith, and confession is:
- 6] 1. That good works certainly and without doubt follow true faith, if it is not a dead, but a living faith, as fruits of a good tree.
- 7] 2. We believe, teach, and confess also that good works should be entirely excluded, just as well in the question concerning salvation as in the article of justification before God, as the apostle

testifies with clear words, when he writes as follows: *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*, Rom. 4, 6ff And again: *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast*, Eph. 2, 8. 9.

8] 3. We believe, teach, and confess also that all men, but those especially who are born again and renewed by the Holy Ghost, are bound to do good works.

9] 4. In this sense the words *necessary*, *shall*, and *must* are employed correctly and in a Christian manner also with respect to the regenerate, and in no way are contrary to the form of sound words and speech.

10] 5. Nevertheless, by the words mentioned, *necessitas*, *necessarium*, *necessity* and *necessary*, if they be employed concerning the regenerate, not coercion, but only due obedience is to be understood, which the truly believing, so far as they are regenerate, render not from coercion or the driving of the Law, but from a voluntary spirit; because they are no more under the Law, but under grace, Rom. 6, 14; 7, 6; 8, 14.

11] 6. Accordingly, we also believe, teach, and confess that when it is said: The regenerate do good works from a free spirit, this is not to be understood as though it is at the option of the regenerate man to do or to forbear doing good when he wishes, and that he can nevertheless retain faith if he intentionally perseveres in sins.

12] 7. Yet this is not to be understood otherwise than as the Lord Christ and His apostles themselves declare, namely, regarding the liberated spirit, that it does not do this from fear of punishment, like a servant, but from love of righteousness, like children, Rom. 8, 15.

13] 8. Although this voluntariness [liberty of spirit] in the elect children of God is not perfect, but burdened with great weakness, as St. Paul complains concerning himself, Rom. 7, 14–25; Gal. 5, 17;

14] 9. Nevertheless, for the sake of the Lord Christ, the Lord does not impute this weakness to His elect, as it is written: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. 8, 1.

15] 10. We believe, teach, and confess also that not works maintain faith and salvation in us, but the Spirit of God alone, through faith, of whose presence and indwelling good works are evidences.

NEGATIVA.

False Contrary Doctrine.

16] 1. Accordingly, we reject and condemn the following modes of speaking: when it is taught and written that good works are necessary to salvation; also, that no one ever has been saved without good works; also, that it is impossible to be saved without good works.

17] 2. We reject and condemn as offensive and detrimental to Christian discipline the bare expression, when it is said: Good works are injurious to salvation.

18] For especially in these last times it is no less needful to admonish men to Christian discipline [to the way of living aright and godly] and good works, and remind them how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith and gratitude to God, than that the works be not mingled in the article of justification; because men may be damned by an Epicurean delusion concerning faith, as well as by papistic and Pharisaic confidence in their own works and merits.

19] 3. We also reject and condemn the dogma that faith and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are not lost by willful sin, but that the saints and elect retain the Holy Ghost even though they fall into adultery and other sins and persist therein.