Solid Declaration, Article III. Righteousness

²⁴ Here, too, if the article of justification is to remain pure, we must give especially diligent heed that we do not mingle or insert that which precedes faith or follows faith into the article of justification, as if it were a necessary or component part of this article, since we cannot talk in one and the same way about conversion and about justification. ²⁵ For not everything that belongs to conversion is simultaneously also a part of justification. The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and faith which accepts these in the promise of the Gospel, whereby the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to us and by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, adoption, and the inheritance of eternal life. ²⁶ Thus there cannot be genuine saving faith in those who live without contrition and sorrow and have a wicked intention to remain and abide in sin, for **true contrition precedes** and genuine faith exists only in or with true repentance.

Love is a fruit which certainly and necessarily follows true faith. For if a person does not love, this indicates certainly that he is not justified but is still in death, or that he has again lost the righteousness of faith, as St. John says (1 John 3:14). But when St. Paul says, "We are justified by faith apart from works (Rom. 3:28), he indicates thereby that neither the preceding contrition nor the subsequent works belong in the article or matter of justification by faith. For good works do not precede justification; rather they follow it, since a person must first be righteous before he can do good works. ²⁸ Similarly, although renewal and sanctification are a blessing of Christ, the mediator, and a work of the Holy Spirit, it does not belong to the article or matter of justification before God; it rather follows justification, because in this life sanctification is never wholly pure and perfect on account of our corrupted flesh. In his beautiful and exhaustive exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians Dr. Luther well states:

²⁹ "We certainly grant that we must teach about love and good works too. But it must be done at the time and place where it is necessary, namely, when we deal with good works apart from this matter of justification. At this point the main question with which we have to do is not whether a person should also do good works and love, but how a person may be justified before God and be saved. And then we answer with St. Paul that we are justified alone through faith in Christ, and not through the works of the law or through love — not in such a way as if we thereby utterly rejected works and love (as the adversaries falsely slander and accuse us) but so that we may not be diverted (as Satan would very much like) from the main issue with which we here have to do into another extraneous matter which does not belong in this article at all. Therefore, while and as long as we have to do with this article of justification, we reject and condemn works, since the very nature of this article cannot admit any treatment or discussion of works. For this reason we summarily cut off every reference to the law and the works of the law in this conjunction." So far Luther. 6 ...

³⁷ 1. That thereby there are **excluded completely** from the article of justification **all our own works, merit, worthiness, glory, and trust in any of our works**, so that we might or should not view our works as either the cause or the meritorious basis of our justification which God takes into consideration in this article or matter, or rely on them, or make or regard them as entirely or one-half or even only to the smallest degree factors in our justification.

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⁶ WA, 401:240.

- ³⁸ 2. That faith's sole office and property is to serve as the only and exclusive means and instrument with and through which we receive, grasp, accept, apply to ourselves, and appropriate the grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel. From this office and property of application and appropriation we must exclude love and every other virtue or work.
- ³⁹ 3. That neither renewal, sanctification, virtues, nor other good works are our righteousness before God, nor are they to be made and posited to be a part or a cause of our justification, nor under any kind of pretense, title, or name are they to be mingled with the article of justification as pertinent or necessary to it. The righteousness of faith consists solely in the forgiveness of sins by sheer grace, entirely for the sake of Christ's merit, which treasures are offered to us in the promise of the Gospel and received, accepted, applied to us, and made our own solely through faith.

to be maintained and preserved, as well as between justification and renewal or sanctification. ⁴¹ For good works do not precede faith, nor is sanctification prior to justification. First the Holy Spirit kindles faith in us in conversion through the hearing of the Gospel. Faith apprehends the grace of God in Christ whereby the person is justified. After the person is justified, the Holy Spirit next renews and sanctifies him, and from this renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works will follow. This is not to be understood, however, as though justification and sanctification are separated from each other in such a way as though on occasion true faith could coexist and survive for a while side by side with a wicked intention, but this merely shows the order in which one thing precedes or follows the other. For Dr. Luther's excellent statement remains true: "There is a beautiful agreement between faith and good works; nevertheless, it is faith alone which apprehends the blessing without works. And yet faith is at no time ever alone." This has been set forth above.

⁴² This correct distinction explains usefully and well the various disputed issues which the Apology discusses in connection with James 2:24.⁸ If we speak of the manner in which faith justifies, it is St. Paul's doctrine that faith alone justifies without works when, as we have said above, it applies to us and makes our own the merits of Christ. When, however, the question is asked, how a Christian can identify, either in his own case or in the case of others, a true living faith and distinguish it from a simulated and dead faith (since many lazy and secure Christians delude themselves into thinking that they have faith when they do not have true faith), the Apology gives the following answer: James calls that faith dead where all kinds of good works and the fruits of the Spirit do not follow," and the Latin text of the Apology states, "James teaches correctly when he denies that we are justified by such a faith as is without works, which is a dead faith." ^{9 43} But, as the Apology declares, James is speaking of the good works of those who are already justified through Christ, who are reconciled with God, and who

⁷ WA. 43:255.

⁸ Apology, IV, 244.

⁹ Apology, IV, 249.

have obtained forgiveness of sins through Christ. But when we ask where faith gets the power to justify and save, and what belongs thereto, then it is false and incorrect to answer: Faith cannot justify without works; or, faith justifies or makes righteous in so far as it is associated with love, on account of which love the power to justify is ascribed to faith; or, the presence of good works along with faith is necessary if men are to be justified by it before God; or, the presence of good works is necessary in the article of justification, or for our justification, as a cause without which a person cannot be justified, and that the exclusive terms which St. Paul employs, such as "apart from works," do not exclude works from the article of justification. Faith justifies solely for this reason and on this account, that as a means and instrument it embraces God's grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel.

⁴⁴ Let this suffice as a summary exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith, since it meets the requirements of this document. The doctrine has been set forth in detail in the previously mentioned writings. From these, too, the false antitheses become clear, namely, that in addition to the errors already named we must criticize, expose, and reject the following and similar errors as contrary to the preceding explanation:³

- ⁴⁵ **1.** That our love or our good works are a meritorious basis or cause of our justification before God, either entirely or in part.⁴
- ⁴⁶ **2.** That by good works man must make himself worthy and fit to have the merit of Christ applied to him.⁵
- ⁴⁷ **3.** That our real righteousness before God is our love or the renewal which the Holy Spirit works and is within us.⁶
- ⁴⁸ **4.** That righteousness by faith before God consists of two pieces or parts, namely, the gracious forgiveness of sins and, as a second element, renewal or sanctification.
- ⁴⁹ **5.** That faith justifies only because righteousness is begun in us by faith, or that faith has priority in justification but that renewal and love likewise belong to our righteousness before God, in such a way, however, that they are not the principal cause but that our justification before God is incomplete or imperfect without such love and renewal.
- ⁵⁰ **6.** Likewise that the believers are justified before God and are righteous both through the reckoned righteousness of Christ and through their own inchoate new obedience, or in part by the reckoning of Christ's righteousness and in part by the inchoate new obedience.
- ⁵¹ **7.** Likewise that the promise of grace is made our own through faith in the heart, through the confession which we make with our mouth, and through other virtues.
- ⁵² <u>It is also an error</u> when it is taught that man is saved in a different way or by a different thing from the one by which he is justified before God, as though we are indeed justified solely through faith without works but that we cannot be saved without works or that salvation cannot be obtained without works. ⁵³ This is wrong because it is diametrically opposed to Paul's statement that salvation belongs to that man to whom God reckons righteousness without works (Rom. 4:6). Paul's reason is that we receive both our righteousness and our salvation in one and

¹Apology, IV, 252.

² Rom. 3:28.

³ The antitheses are allegedly directed against "Romanist errors," though Andrew Osiander was also the target.

⁴Cf. Martin Chemnitz, Examen Concilii Tridentini, I, 9 (ed. Preuss, 178ff.).

⁵ Council of Trent, Session VI, chap. 6, 9, 16; canons 7 and 9.

⁶ Osiander had defined *formalis justitia* thus: "Righteousness is precisely that which prompts the righteous to act rightly." Cf. Council of Trent, Session VI, chap. 7; canons 10 and 11.

the same way; in fact, that when we are justified through faith we simultaneously receive adoption and the inheritance of eternal life and salvation. For this reason Paul uses and urges exclusive terms (that is, terms that wholly exclude works and our own merit, such as "by grace" and "without works") just as emphatically in the article of salvation as he does in the article of justification.

⁵⁴ We must also explain correctly the discussion concerning **the indwelling of God's essential righteousness in us.**⁷ On the one hand, it is true indeed that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells by faith in the elect who have been justified through Christ and reconciled with God, since all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who impels them to do rightly. But, on the other hand, this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith of which St. Paul speaks⁸ and which he calls the righteousness of God, on account of which we are declared just before God. This indwelling follows the preceding righteousness of faith, which is precisely the forgiveness of sins and the gracious acceptance of poor sinners on account of the obedience and merit of Christ.¹

⁷This involved the basic metaphor of Osiander's doctrine of justification, which he affirmed against an exclusive "reckoning" (*imputatio*) doctrine.

⁸ Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 22, 25; 2 Cor. 5:21, etc.

¹Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (546). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.