Apology IV

¹⁷⁷ We must conclude, therefore, that being reconciled by faith we are accounted righteous because of Christ, not because of the law or our works. The incipient keeping of the law pleases God because of faith; because of faith our failure to keep it is not imputed to us, although the sight of our impurity thoroughly frightens us. ¹⁷⁸ If, then, we must seek justification elsewhere, our love and works do not justify. Far above our purity — yes, far above the law itself — should be placed the death and satisfaction of Christ, bestowed upon us to assure us that because of this satisfaction and not because of our keeping of the law we have a gracious God.

¹⁷⁹ Paul teaches this when he says in **Gal. 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."** That is, the law condemns all men, but by undergoing the punishment of sin and becoming a sacrifice for us, the sinless Christ took away **the right of the law to accuse and condemn those who believe in him**, because he himself is their propitiation, for whose sake they are now accounted righteous. But when they are accounted righteous, **the law cannot accuse or condemn them**, even though they have not really satisfied the law. He writes to the same effect in Col. 2:10, "You have come to fullness of life in him." It is as though he were saying, "Though you are still far away from the perfection of the law, still the remnants of your sin do not condemn you, because for Christ's sake we have a firm and sure reconciliation through faith, though sin still sticks to your flesh."

¹⁸⁰ Because of his promise, because of Christ, God wishes to be favorably disposed to us and to justify us, not because of the law or our works: **this promise we must always keep in view**. In this promise timid consciences should seek reconciliation and justification, sustaining themselves with this promise and being sure that because of Christ and his promise they have a gracious God. Thus works can never pacify the conscience; only the promise can do this.

Formula of Concord, Epitome

VI. THE THIRD FUNCTION OF THE LAW

- ² 1. We believe, teach, and confess that although people who genuinely believe and whom God has truly converted are freed through Christ from the curse and coercion of the law, they are not on that account without the law; on the contrary, they have been redeemed by the Son of God precisely that they should exercise themselves day and night in the law (Ps. 119:1). In the same way our first parents even before the Fall did not live without the law, for the law of God was written into their hearts when they were created in the image of God.
- ³ **2.** We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the law is to be diligently applied not only to unbelievers and the impenitent but also to people who are genuinely believing, truly converted, regenerated, and justified through faith.

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

VI. THE THIRD FUNCTION OF THE LAW

¹ The law of God serves (1) not only to maintain external discipline and decency against dissolute and disobedient people, (2) and to bring people to a knowledge of their sin through the law, (3) but those who have been born anew through the Holy Spirit, who have been converted to the Lord and from whom the veil of Moses has been taken away, learn from the law to live and walk in the law. A controversy has arisen among a few theologians concerning this third and last function of the law.

² This one party taught and held that the regenerated do not learn the new obedience (that is, in what good works they should walk) from the law; nor should this doctrine in any way be

urged on the basis of the law, since they have been liberated by the Son of God, have become his Spirit's temple, and hence are free, so that just as the sun spontaneously completes its regular course without any outside impulse, they, too, through the inspiration and impulse of the Holy Spirit spontaneously do what God requires of them. ³ The other party taught that although true believers are indeed motivated by the Holy Spirit and hence according to the inner man do the will of God from a free spirit, nevertheless the Holy Spirit uses the written law on them to instruct them, and thereby even true believers learn to serve God not according to their own notions but according to his written law and Word, which is a certain rule and norm for achieving a godly life and behavior in accord with God's external and immutable will.

⁴ In order to explain and definitively to settle this controversy, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that, although truly believing Christians, having been genuinely converted to God and justified, **have been freed and liberated from the curse of the law**, they should daily exercise themselves in the law of the Lord, as it is written, "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1, 2; 119:1, 35, 47, 70, 97). For the law is a mirror in which the will of God and what is pleasing to him is correctly portrayed. It is necessary to hold this constantly before believers' eyes and continually to urge it upon them with diligence.

⁵ It is true that the law is not laid down for the just, as St. Paul says (1 Tim. 1:9), but for the ungodly. But this dare not be understood without qualification, as though the righteous should live without the law. For the law of God is written on their hearts, just as the first man immediately after his creation received a law according to which he should conduct himself. On the contrary, it is St. Paul's intention that **the law cannot impose its curse upon those who through Christ have been reconciled with God**, nor may it torture the regenerated with its coercion, for according to the inner man they delight in the law of God.

Formula of Concord, V. Law and Gospel

¹⁰ The mere preaching of the law without Christ either produces presumptuous people, who believe that they can fulfill the law by external works, or drives man utterly to despair. Therefore Christ takes the law into his hands and explains it spiritually (Matt. 5:21ff.; Rom. 7:6, 14); thus he reveals his wrath from heaven over all sinners and shows how great this wrath is. This directs the sinner to the law, and there he really learns to know his sin, an insight that Moses could never have wrung out of him. For Paul testifies that although "Moses is read," the veil which "he put over his face" remains unremoved, so that they do not see the law spiritually, or how much it requires of us, or **how severely it curses and condemns us because we could not fulfill or keep it**. "When a man turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (2 Cor. 3:13-15)....

The Gospel, however, is that doctrine which teaches what a man should believe in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins from God, since man has failed to keep the law of God and has transgressed it, his corrupted nature, thoughts, words, and deeds war against the law, and he is therefore subject to the wrath of God, to death, to temporal miseries, and to the punishment of hell-fire. The content of the Gospel is this, that **the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins**, that through him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally.