

## The Apology to the Augsburg Confession: Article IV: Of Justification.

*That Faith in Christ Justifies.*

**61]** In the first place, lest anyone may think that we speak concerning an idle knowledge of the history, we must declare

- A. how faith is obtained [how the heart begins to believe].
- Afterward we will show both
- B. that it justifies, and how this ought to be understood,
- C. and we will explain the objections of the adversaries.

**62]** Christ, in the last chapter of Luke 24, 47, commands *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.*

### For the Gospel

- A. convicts all men that they are under sin, that they all are subject to eternal wrath and death, and
- B. offers, for Christ's sake, remission of sin and justification, which is received by faith.

A. The preaching of repentance, which accuses us, terrifies consciences with true and grave terrors. [For the preaching of repentance, or this declaration of the Gospel: Amend your lives! Repent! **when it truly penetrates the heart, terrifies the conscience, and is no jest, but a great terror, in which the conscience feels its misery and sin, and the wrath of God.**]

Faith is not idle, but an active thing
---

B. In these, hearts ought again to receive consolation. This happens if they believe the promise of Christ, that for His sake we have remission of sins. *This faith, encouraging and consoling in these fears, receives remission of sins, justifies and quickens.* For this consolation is a new and spiritual **63]** life [**1. a new birth and 2. a new life**].

These things are plain and clear, and can be understood by the pious, and have testimonies of the Church [as is to be seen in the conversion of Paul and Augustine]. The adversaries nowhere can say how the Holy Ghost is given. They imagine that the Sacraments confer the Holy Ghost *ex opere operato*, **without a good emotion in the recipient**, as though indeed, the gift of the Holy Ghost were an idle matter.

**64]** But since we speak of such **faith** as is **not an idle thought, but of that which**

- 1. liberates from death and
- 2. produces a new life in hearts, [which is such a new light, life, and force in the heart as to renew our heart, mind, and spirit, makes new men of us and new creatures,] and is the work of the Holy Ghost;

**this does not coexist with mortal sin** [for how can light and darkness coexist?], **but as long as it is present, produces good 65] fruits**, as we will say after a while.

For concerning the conversion of the wicked, or concerning the **mode of regeneration**, what can be said that is more simple and more clear? Let them, from so great an array of writers, adduce a single commentary upon the *Sententiae* that speaks **66]** of the mode of regeneration. When they speak of the habit of love, they imagine that men merit it through

Word of God is the mode of regeneration.
---

works, and they do not teach that it is received through the Word, precisely as also the Anabaptists teach at this time. **67]** But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, **except through the Word**. Accordingly, justification occurs through the Word, just as Paul says, Rom. 1, 16: *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*. Likewise 10, 17: *Faith cometh by hearing*. And proof can be derived even from this that faith justifies, because, if justification occurs only through the Word, and the Word is apprehended only by faith, it follows that faith justifies. **68]** But there are other and more important reasons. We have said these things thus far in order that we might show **the mode of regeneration**, and that **the nature of faith [what is, or is not, faith], concerning which we speak**, might be understood.

**69]** Now we will show *that faith* [and nothing else] *justifies*. Here, in the first place, readers must be admonished of this, that just as it is necessary to maintain this sentence: **Christ is Mediator**, so is it necessary to defend that faith justifies, [without works]. For how will Christ be Mediator if in justification we do not use Him as Mediator; if we do not hold that for His sake we are accounted righteous? But to believe is to trust in the merits of Christ, that for His sake God certainly wishes to be reconciled with us. **70]** Likewise, just as we ought to maintain that, apart from the Law, the promise of Christ is necessary, so also is it needful to maintain that faith justifies. [For the Law does not preach the forgiveness of sin by grace.] For the Law cannot be performed unless the Holy Ghost be first received. It is, therefore, needful to maintain that the promise of Christ is necessary. But this cannot be received except by faith. Therefore, those who deny that faith justifies, teach nothing but the Law, both Christ and the Gospel being set aside.

If Christ is Mediator then faith justifies.
---

**71]** But when it is said that faith justifies, some perhaps understand it of the beginning, namely, **that faith is the beginning of justification** or preparation for justification, so that not faith itself is that through which we are accepted by God, but the works which follow; and they dream, accordingly, that faith is highly praised, because it is the beginning. For great is the importance of the beginning, as they commonly say, Ἄρχὴ ἥμισυ παντός, The beginning is half of everything; just as if one would say that grammar makes the teachers of all arts, because it prepares for other arts, although in fact it is his own art that renders every one an artist. **We do not believe thus concerning faith**, but we maintain this, that properly and truly, by faith itself, we are for Christ's sake accounted righteous, or are acceptable to God.

<b>Roman:</b> Faith is the beginning, but the works which follow justify
--

**72]** And because “to be justified” means

- A. that out of unjust men just men are made, or born again,**
- B. it means also that they are pronounced or accounted just.**

**For Scripture speaks in both ways.**

[The term “to be justified” is used in two ways:

- A. to denote, being converted or regenerated;**
- B. again, being accounted righteous.]**

**A. Accordingly we wish first to show this, that *faith alone makes of an unjust, a just man, i.e., receives remission of sins.***

**73]** **The particle alone offends some**, although even Paul says, Rom. 3, 28: *We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law*. Again, Eph. 2, 8: *It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast*. Again, Rom. 3, 24: *Being justified freely*. If the exclusive *alone* displeases, let them remove from Paul also the exclusives *freely, not of works, it*

*is the gift*, etc. For these also are [very strong] exclusives. *It is, however, the opinion of merit that we exclude.* **We do not exclude the Word or Sacraments**, as the adversaries falsely charge us. For we have said above that faith is conceived from the Word, and we honor the ministry of the Word in the highest degree. **74] Love also and works must follow faith.** Wherefore, they are not excluded so as not to follow, but *confidence in the merit of love or of works is excluded in justification.* And this we will clearly show.

*That We Obtain Remission of Sins by Faith Alone in Christ.*

**75]** We think that even the adversaries acknowledge that, in justification, the remission of sins is necessary first. For we all are under sin. Wherefore we reason thus:—

**76] To attain the remission of sins is to be justified**, according to Ps. 32, 1: *Blessed 77] is he whose transgression is forgiven. By faith alone in Christ,*  
not through love,  
not because of love or works, do we acquire the remission of sins,  
although love follows faith.

**78] Therefore by faith alone we are justified**, understanding **justification** as **the making of a righteous man out of an unrighteous, or that he be regenerated.**

Minor Premise: We obtain forgiveness of sin by faith not by love
--

**79]** It will thus become easy to declare **the minor premise** [that we obtain forgiveness of sin by faith, not by love] if we know how the remission of sins occurs. The adversaries with great indifference dispute whether the remission of sins and the infusion of grace are the same change [whether they are one change or two]. Being idle men, they did not know what to answer [cannot speak at all on this subject]. **In the remission of sins, the terrors of sin and of eternal death, in the heart, must be overcome**, as Paul testifies, 1 Cor. 15, 56 sq.: *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* That is, sin terrifies consciences, this occurs through the Law, which shows the wrath of God against sin; but we gain the victory through Christ. **How? By faith, when we comfort ourselves by confidence in the mercy promised for 80] Christ's sake.** Thus, therefore, we prove the minor proposition.

The wrath of God cannot be appeased if we set against it our own works, because Christ has been set forth as a Propitiator, so that for His sake, the Father may become reconciled to us. But Christ is not apprehended as a Mediator except by faith. Therefore, *by faith alone we obtain remission of sins*, when we comfort our hearts with confidence in the mercy promised for **81] Christ's sake.** Likewise Paul, Rom. 5, 2, says: *By whom also we have access*, and adds, *by faith.* Thus, therefore, we are reconciled to the Father, and receive remission of sins when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake. The adversaries regard Christ as Mediator and Propitiator for this reason, namely, that He has merited the habit of love; they do not urge us to use Him now as Mediator, but, as though Christ were altogether buried, they imagine that we have access through our own works, and, through these, merit this habit, and afterwards, by this love, come to God. Is not this to bury Christ altogether, and to take away the entire doctrine of faith? Paul on the contrary, teaches that we have access, *i.e.*, reconciliation, through Christ. And to show how this occurs, he adds that we have access *by faith.* *By faith, therefore, for Christ's sake, we receive remission of sins.* We cannot set our own love and our own works over against God's wrath.

**82]** *Secondly.* It is certain that sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ, as Propitiator, Rom. 3, 25: *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.* Moreover, Paul adds: *through faith.* Therefore this Propitiator thus **benefits us, when by faith we apprehend the mercy promised in Him, and set it against the wrath and judgment of God.** And to the same effect it is written, Heb. 4, 14. 16: *Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, etc., let us therefore come with confidence.* For the Apostle bids us come to God, not with confidence in our own merits, but with confidence in Christ as a High Priest; therefore he requires faith.

**83]** *Thirdly.* Peter, in Acts 10, 43, says: *To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name, whosoever believeth on Him, shall receive remission of sins.* How could this be said more clearly? We receive remission of sins, he says,

**through His name, i.e., for His sake;** therefore,

not for the sake of our merits,

not for the sake of our contrition, attrition, love, worship, works.

And he adds: *When we believe in Him.* Therefore he requires faith. For we cannot apprehend the name of Christ except by faith. Besides he cites the agreement of all the prophets. This is truly to cite the authority of the Church. [For when all the holy prophets bear witness, that is certainly a glorious, great excellent, powerful decretal and testimony.] But of this topic we will speak again after a while, when treating of “Repentance.”

**84]** *Fourthly.* Remission of sins is something promised for Christ’s sake. Therefore it cannot be received except by faith alone. **For a promise cannot be received except by faith alone.** Rom. 4, 16: *Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure;* as though he were to say: “If the matter were to depend upon our merits, the promise would be uncertain and useless, because we never could determine when we would have sufficient merit.” And this, experienced consciences can easily understand [and would not, for a thousand worlds have our salvation depend upon ourselves]. Accordingly, Paul says, Gal. 3, 22: *But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* He takes merit away from us, because he says that all are guilty and concluded under sin; then he adds that the promise, namely, of the remission of sins and of justification, is given, and adds how the promise can be received, namely, by faith. **And this reasoning, derived from the nature of a promise, is the chief reasoning [a veritable rock] in Paul, and is often repeated.** Nor can anything be devised or imagined whereby this argument of Paul can be overthrown. Wherefore **85]** let not good minds suffer themselves to be forced from the conviction that we receive remission of sins for Christ’s sake, only through faith. In this they have sure and firm consolation against the terrors of sin, and against eternal death, and against all the gates of hell. [Everything else is a foundation of sand that sinks in trials.]

**86]** But since we receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost by faith alone, *faith alone justifies*, because those reconciled are accounted righteous and children of God, not on account of their own purity, but through mercy for Christ’s sake, provided only they by faith apprehend this mercy. Accordingly, Scripture testifies that *by faith we are accounted righteous*, Rom. 3, 26.

**We, therefore, will add testimonies which clearly declare that faith is that very righteousness by which we are accounted righteous before God, namely,**

**not because it is a work that is in itself worthy,**

**but because it receives the promise by which God has promised**

**that for Christ's sake He wishes to be propitious to those believing in Him, or because He knows that *Christ of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. 1, 30.***

**87]** In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul discusses this topic especially, and declares that, when we believe that God, for Christ's sake, is reconciled to us, we are justified freely by faith. And this proposition, which contains the statement of the entire discussion [the principal matter of all Epistles, yea, of the entire Scriptures], he maintains in the third chapter: *We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law, Rom. 3, 28.* Here the adversaries interpret that this refers to Levitical ceremonies [not to other virtuous works]. **But Paul speaks not only of the ceremonies, but of the whole Law.** For he quotes afterward (7, 7) from the Decalog: *Thou shalt not covet.* And if moral works [that are not Jewish ceremonies] would merit the remission of sins and justification, there would also be no need of Christ and the promise, and all that Paul speaks of the promise would be overthrown. He would also have been wrong in writing to the Ephesians, 2, 8: *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works.* Paul likewise refers to Abraham and David, Rom. 4, 1. 6. But they had the command of God concerning circumcision. Therefore, if any works justified, these works must also have justified at the time that they had a command. But Augustine teaches correctly that Paul speaks of the entire Law, as he discusses at length in his book, *Of the Spirit and Letter*, where he says finally: *These matters, therefore having been considered and treated, according to the ability that the Lord has thought worthy to give us, we infer that man is not justified by the precepts of a good life, but by faith in Jesus Christ.*

**88]** And lest we may think that the sentence that faith justifies, fell from Paul inconsiderately, he fortifies and confirms this by a long discussion in the fourth chapter to the Romans, and afterwards repeats it in all his epistles. **89]** Thus he says, Rom. 4, 4. 5: *To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Here he clearly says that faith itself is imputed for righteousness.* Faith, therefore, is that thing which God declares to be righteousness, and he adds that it is imputed freely, and says that it could not be imputed freely, if it were due on account of works. **Wherefore he excludes also the merit of moral works [not only Jewish ceremonies, but all other good works].** For if justification before God were due to these, faith would not be imputed for righteousness **90]** without works. And afterwards, Rom. 4, 9: *For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.* **91]** Romans 5, 1 says: *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, i.e., we have consciences that are tranquil and joyful* **92]** before God. Rom. 10, 10: *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* Here he declares that faith is **93]** the righteousness of the heart. Gal. 2, 16: *We have believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law.* Eph. 2, 8: *For 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.*

**94]** John 1, 12: *To them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* **95]** John 3, 14. 15: *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.* **96]** Likewise, 3, 17: *For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned.*

**97]** Acts 13, 38. 39: *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all*

*things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.* How could the office of Christ and justification be declared more clearly? The Law, he says, did not justify. Therefore Christ was given, that we may believe that for His sake we are justified. He plainly denies justification to the Law. Hence, for Christ's sake we are accounted righteous when we believe that God, for His sake, has been reconciled to us. **98]** Acts 4, 11. 12: *This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* But the name of Christ is apprehended only by faith. [I cannot believe in the name of Christ in any other way than when I hear His merit preached, and lay hold of that.] Therefore, by confidence in the name of Christ, and not by confidence in our works, we are saved. For "the name" here signifies the cause which is mentioned, because of which salvation is attained. And to call upon the name of Christ is to trust in the name of Christ, as the cause or price because of which we are saved. **99]** Acts 15, 9: *Purifying their hearts by faith. Wherefore that faith of which the Apostles speak is not idle knowledge, but a reality, receiving the Holy Ghost and justifying us [not a mere knowledge of history, but a strong powerful work of the Holy Ghost, which changes hearts]*

**100]** Hab. 2, 4: *The just shall live by his faith.* Here he says, first, that men are just by faith, by which they believe that God is propitious, and he adds that the same faith quickens, because this faith produces in the heart peace and joy and eternal life [which begins in the present life].

**101]** Is. 53, 11: *By His knowledge shall He justify many.* But what is the knowledge of Christ unless to know the benefits of Christ, the promises which by the Gospel He has scattered broadcast in the world? And to know these benefits is properly and truly to believe in Christ, to believe that that which God has promised for Christ's sake He will certainly fulfill.

**102]** But Scripture is full of such testimonies since, in some places, it presents the Law and in others the promises concerning Christ, and the remission of sins, and the free acceptance of the sinner for Christ's sake.

**103]** Here and there among the Fathers similar testimonies are extant. For Ambrose says in his letter to a certain Irenaeus: *Moreover, the world was subject to Him by the Law for the reason that, according to the command of the Law, all are indicted, and yet, by the works of the Law, no one is justified, i.e., because, by the Law, sin is perceived, but guilt is not discharged. The Law, which made all sinners, seemed to have done injury, but when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He forgave to all sin which no one could avoid, and, by the shedding of His own blood, blotted out the handwriting which was against us. This is what he says in Rom. 5, 20: "The Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Because after the whole world became subject, He took away the sin of the whole world, as he [John] testified, saying John 1, 29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And on this account let no one boast of works, because no one is justified by his deeds. But he who is righteous has it given him because he was justified after the laver [of Baptism]. Faith, therefore, is that which frees through the blood of Christ, because he is blessed "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Ps. 32, 1.* **104]** These are the words of Ambrose, which clearly favor our doctrine; he denies justification to works, and ascribes to faith that it sets us free **105]** through the blood of Christ. Let all the Sententiarists, who are adorned with magnificent titles, be collected into one heap. For some are called angelic; others, subtile, and others irrefragable [that is, doctors who cannot err.] When all these have been read and reread, they will not be of as much aid for understanding Paul as is this one passage of Ambrose.

**106]** To the same effect, Augustine writes many things against the Pelagians. In *Of the Spirit and Letter* he says: *The righteousness of the Law, namely, that he who has fulfilled it shall live in it, is set forth for this reason that when any one has recognized his infirmity he may attain and work the same and live in it, conciliating the Justifier not by his own strength nor by the letter of the Law itself (which cannot be done), but by faith. Except in a justified man, there is no right work wherein he who does it may live. But justification is obtained by faith.* Here he clearly says that the Justifier is conciliated by faith, and that justification is obtained by faith. And a little after: *By the Law we fear God; by faith we hope in God. But to those fearing punishment grace is hidden; and the soul laboring, etc., under this fear betakes itself by faith to God's mercy, in order that He may give what He commands.* Here he teaches that by the Law hearts are terrified, but by faith they receive consolation. He also teaches us to apprehend, by faith, mercy, before we attempt to fulfil the Law. We will shortly cite certain other passages.

**107]** Truly, it is amazing that the adversaries are in no way moved by so many passages of Scripture, which clearly ascribe justification to faith, and, indeed, **108]** deny it to works. Do they think that the same is repeated so often for no purpose? Do they think that these words fell inconsiderately from the Holy Ghost? **109]** But they have also devised sophistry whereby they elude them. They say that these passages of Scripture, (which speak of faith,) ought to be received as referring to a *fides formata, i.e., they do not ascribe justification to faith except on account of love.* Yea, they do not, in any way, ascribe justification to faith, but only to love, because they dream that faith can **110]** coexist with mortal sin. Whither does this tend, unless that they again abolish the promise and return to the Law? If faith receive the remission of sins on account of love, **the remission of sins will always be uncertain,** because we never love as much as we ought, yea, we do not love unless our hearts are firmly convinced that the remission of sins has been granted us.

**Thus the adversaries,**

**A. while they require in the remission of sins and justification confidence in one's own love, altogether abolish the Gospel concerning the free remission of sins;**

**B. although, at the same time, they neither render this love nor understand it, unless they believe that the remission of sins is freely received.**

**111]** We also say that love ought to follow faith, as Paul also says, Gal. 5, 6: *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.* **112]** And yet we must not think on that account that by confidence in this love or on account of this love we receive the remission of sins and reconciliation, just as we do not receive the remission of sins because of other works that follow. But the remission of sins is received by faith alone, and, indeed, by faith properly so called, because the promise cannot be received except by faith. **113]** But faith, properly so called, is that which assents to the promise [is when my heart, and the Holy Ghost in the heart, says: The promise of God is true and certain]. Of **114]** this faith Scripture speaks. And because it receives the remission of sins, and reconciles us to God, by this faith we are [like Abraham] accounted righteous for Christ's sake before we love and do the works of the Law, **although love necessarily follows.** **115]** Nor, indeed, is this faith an idle knowledge, neither can it coexist with mortal sin, but it is a work of the Holy Ghost, whereby we are freed from death, and terrified minds are encouraged and quickened. **116]** And because this faith alone receives the remission of sins, and renders us acceptable to God, and brings the Holy Ghost, it could be more correctly called *gratia gratum faciens*, grace rendering one pleasing to God, than an effect following, namely, love.

**117]** Thus far, in order that the subject might be made quite clear, we have shown with sufficient fulness, both from testimonies of Scripture, and arguments derived from Scripture,

**A.** that by faith alone we obtain the remission of sins for Christ's sake, and

**B.** that by faith alone we are justified, *i.e.*, of unrighteous men made righteous, or regenerated.

**118]** But how necessary the knowledge of this faith is, can be easily judged, because in this alone the office of Christ is recognized, by this alone we receive the benefits of Christ; this alone brings sure and firm **119]** consolation to pious minds. And in the Church [if there is to be a church, if there is to be a Christian Creed] it is necessary that there should be the [preaching and] doctrine [by which consciences are not made to rely on a dream or to build on a foundation of sand, but] from which the pious may receive the sure hope of salvation. For the adversaries give men bad advice [therefore the adversaries are truly unfaithful bishops, unfaithful preachers and doctors; they have hitherto given evil counsel to consciences, and still do so by introducing such doctrine] when they bid them doubt whether they obtain remission of sins. For how will such persons sustain themselves in death who have heard nothing of this faith, and think that they ought to doubt whether they obtain the remission of sins? **120]** Besides, it is necessary that in the Church of Christ **the Gospel be retained, i.e., the promise that for Christ's sake sins are freely remitted.** Those who teach nothing of this faith, **121]** concerning which we speak, altogether abolish the Gospel. But the scholastics mention not even a word concerning this faith. Our adversaries follow them, and reject this faith. Nor do they see that, by rejecting this faith they abolish the entire promise concerning the free remission of sins and the righteousness of Christ.