

Rewards

Apology IV, 22-24 We for our part maintain that God requires the righteousness of reason. Because of God's command, honorable works commanded in the Decalogue should be performed, according to Gal. 3:24, "The law is a custodian," and 1 Tim. 1:9, "The law is laid down for the lawless." For God wants this **civil discipline** to restrain the unspiritual, and to preserve it he has given laws, learning, teaching, governments, and penalties.²³ To some extent, reason can produce this righteousness by its own strength, though it is often overwhelmed by its natural weakness and by the devil, who drives it to open crimes.²⁴ We freely give this righteousness of reason its due credit; for our corrupt nature has no greater good than this, as Aristotle correctly says, "Neither the evening star nor the morning star is more beautiful than righteousness."²⁴ **God even honors it with material rewards.** Nevertheless, it ought not be praised at the expense of Christ.

¹⁹³ To disparage works like the confession of doctrine, afflictions, works of charity, and the mortification of the flesh would be to disparage the outward administration of Christ's rule among men. Let us add a word here about **reward and merit.**¹⁹⁴ We teach that **rewards have been offered and promised to the works of the faithful.** We teach that good works are meritorious — not for the forgiveness of sins, grace, or justification (for we obtain these only by faith) but **for other physical and spiritual rewards in this life and in that which is to come**, as Paul says (1 Cor. 3:8), "Each shall receive his wages according to his labor." Therefore there will be different rewards for different labors.

¹⁹⁷ Paul extols the commandment to honor our parents by referring to the reward that is connected to that commandment (Eph. 6:2, 3). He does not mean to say that obedience to parents justifies us before God, but rather that when it takes place in the justified it merits other great rewards.¹⁹⁸ **Yet God exercises his saints in different ways and often puts off the rewards for the righteousness of works. Thus they learn not to trust in their own righteousness, but to seek the will of God rather than the rewards, as is evident in Job, in Christ, and in other saints.**

³⁶³ Here Paul's words apply, "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me," etc. (2 Tim. 4:8). The crown is owed to the justified because of the promise. **This promise the saints must know.**³⁶⁴ It is not an incentive to work for their own advantage, since **they should work for the glory of God.** But to escape despair amid afflictions, they should know that it is the will of God to help, rescue, and save them. **The strong hear the mention of punishments and rewards in one way, and the weak in another; for the weak work for their own advantage.**

³⁶⁵ Yet **the proclamation of rewards and punishments is necessary.** In the proclamation of punishments the wrath of God is displayed, and hence this belongs to the preaching of penitence. In the proclamation of rewards grace is displayed. When they talk about good works, the Scriptures often include faith, since they wish to include the righteousness of the heart with other fruits. Just so they sometimes offer grace with other rewards, as in Isa. 58:8, 9 and often in other places in the prophets.³⁶⁶ **We also concede, and have often declared, that though justification and eternal life belong to faith, still good works merit other rewards, both bodily and spiritual, in various degrees,** according to 1 Cor. 3:8, "Each shall receive his wages according to his labor." The righteousness of the Gospel, which deals with the promise of grace, receives

justification and new life gratis. **The keeping of the law that follows faith deals with the law, in which a reward is offered and owed, not gratis but for our works. Those who merit this are justified before they keep the law.** First they have been “transferred into the kingdom of God’s Son,” as Paul says (Col. 1:13), and made fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

³⁶⁷ Whenever merit is discussed, our opponents immediately apply it not to the other rewards but to justification, though the Gospel offers justification freely because of Christ’s merits, not ours, and Christ’s merits are communicated to us by faith. **Works and afflictions merit not justification but other rewards, as in these passages a reward is offered for works.** “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6); here the degree of the reward is evidently commensurate with the degree of the work. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land” (Ex. 20:12); here, too, the law offers a reward for a certain work. ³⁶⁸ Although keeping the law thus merits a reward, since **a reward properly belongs to the law**, still we must remember that the Gospel offers justification freely for Christ’s sake. We neither do nor can keep the law before we have been reconciled to God, justified, and reborn. This keeping of the law would not please God unless we had been accepted because of faith. Since men are accepted because of faith, this incipient keeping of the law pleases God and has its reward, both here and hereafter. ³⁶⁹ We might say more on the term “reward,” based on the nature of the law, but since it would take too long we shall expound it in another connection.

Formula of Concord, **Rule and Norm**, 1,7

¹ **1.** We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only **rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged**, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8, “Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

⁶ All doctrines should conform to the standards set forth above. Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.

⁷ In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and **Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong.**

Large Catechism, Martin Luther’s Preface

¹⁴ If this were not enough to admonish us to read the Catechism daily, there is God’s command. That alone should be incentive enough. **Deut. 6:7, 8 solemnly enjoins that we should always meditate upon his precepts whether sitting, walking, standing, lying down, or rising, and keep them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant token and sign.** Certainly God did not require and command this so solemnly without good reason. He knows our danger and need. He knows the constant and furious attacks and assaults of the devil. So he wishes to warn, equip, and protect us against them with good “armor” against their “flaming darts,”⁹ and with a good antidote against their evil infection and poison. ¹⁵ O what mad, senseless fools we are! We must ever live and dwell in the midst of such mighty enemies as the devils, and yet we despise our weapons and armor, too lazy to give them a thought! ...

¹⁷ This much is certain: **anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures. In all affairs and circumstances he can counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. He is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, persons, laws, and everything else in the world.**

¹⁸ What is the whole Psalter but **meditations and exercises based on the First Commandment?** Now, I know beyond a doubt that such lazy-bellies and presumptuous fellows do not understand a single Psalm, much less the entire Scriptures, yet they pretend to know and despise the Catechism, which is a brief compend and summary of all the Holy Scriptures.

First Commandment

¹³ Thus you can easily understand **the nature and scope of this commandment. It requires that man's whole heart and confidence be placed in God alone, and in no one else.** To have God, you see, does not mean to lay hands upon him, or put him into a purse, or shut him up in a chest. ¹⁴ We lay hold of him when our heart embraces him and clings to him. ¹⁵ To cling to him with all our heart is nothing else than to entrust ourselves to him completely. He wishes to turn us away from everything else, and draw us to himself, because he is the one eternal good. It is as if he said: "What you formerly sought from the saints, or what you hoped to receive from mammon or anything else, turn to me for all this; look upon me as the one who wishes to help you and to lavish all good upon you richly."

An Unbelieving Dull Heart

Deuteronomy 29:2-4 Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land— 3 "the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. 4 "**Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.**

Deuteronomy 5:26 'For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

Deuteronomy 11:18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 29:18 "so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, **whose heart turns away** today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood;

Isaiah 6:9-11 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 "Make the heart of this people **dull**, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." 11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate....

Matthew 13:14 "And in them **the prophecy of Isaiah** is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;

Ezekiel 12:2-3 “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a **rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house.**

3“Therefore, son of man, prepare your belongings for captivity, and go into captivity by day in their sight. You shall go from your place into captivity to another place in their sight. It may be that they will consider, though they are a rebellious house.

Acts 28:24-28 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, **and some disbelieved.** 25So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26“saying, ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 27 **For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed,** Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” ’ 28“Therefore let it be known to you that **the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles,** and they will hear it!”

Romans 10:21 But to Israel he says: “All day long **I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.**” ...

Rom 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.”

...

Rom 11:20 Well said. **Because of unbelief they were broken off,** and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

Ephesians 4:17-18 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, **because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;**

Bitter Root

Deuteronomy 29:18 “so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you **a root bearing bitterness or wormwood;**

Deuteronomy 13:6-8 “If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, ⁷of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, ⁸you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him;

Hebrews 12:14-17 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; **lest any root of bitterness** springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17For you know that

afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Acts 8:22-24 “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that **you are poisoned by bitterness** and bound by iniquity.” ²⁴Then Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.”

Ephesians 4:31 Let all **bitterness**, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Verses to remove wickedness from the Christian congregation

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! 2And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that **he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.** 3For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5**deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.** 6Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** 7Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9I wrote to you in my **epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.** 10Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11But now I have written to you **not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.** 12For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Renewal

FC SD III. Righteousness

¹⁷ Accordingly the word “**justify**” here means to declare righteous and free from sins and from the eternal punishment of these sins on account of the righteousness of Christ which God reckons to faith (Phil. 3:9)....

¹⁸ Since the word “regeneration” is sometimes used in place of “justification,” it is necessary to explain the term strictly so that **the renewal which follows justification by faith will not be confused with justification and so that in their strict senses the two will be differentiated from one another....**

The Christian Life

1. Justification, Forgiveness of sins
2. The Renewal (which follows justification) that is the Christian life of good works.

²² When we teach that through the Holy Spirit’s work we are reborn and justified, we do not mean that after regeneration no unrighteousness in essence and life adheres to those who have been justified and regenerated, but we hold that Christ with his perfect obedience covers all our sins which throughout this life still inhere in our nature. Nevertheless, they are regarded as holy and righteous through faith and for the sake of Christ’s obedience, which Christ rendered to his Father from his birth until his ignominious death on the cross for us, even though, **on account of their corrupted nature, they are still sinners and remain sinners until they die.** Nor, on the other hand, does this mean that we may or should follow in the ways of sin, abide and continue therein without repentance, conversion, and improvement. For genuine contrition must precede.

²³ And to those who by sheer grace, for the sake of the only mediator, Christ, through faith alone, without any work or merit, are justified before God (that is, accepted into grace) there is given **the Holy Spirit, who renews and sanctifies them and creates within them love toward God and their fellowman.** But because of the **inchoate renewal remains imperfect in this life** and because **sin still dwells in the flesh** even in the case of the regenerated, the righteousness of faith before God consists solely in the gracious reckoning of Christ’s righteousness to us, without the addition of our works, so that our sins are forgiven and covered up and are not reckoned to our account (Rom. 4:6-8).

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.

²⁷ **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.