



## Formula of Concord Session Three: Righteousness of Faith

- What is the one central teaching of Christianity – without this one, we aren't believing/teaching/confessing Christianity?
- What is our role in justification?
- How to understand relationship between repentance and justification? Good works and justification?

### Righteousness of Faith: Status

*One side has held that Christ, according to his divinity alone, is our Righteousness, if He dwells in us through faith. Contrasted with this divinity, dwelling in us through faith, the sins of all people must be regarded as a drop of water compared to a great ocean. Others, on the contrary, have held that Christ is our Righteousness before God according to His human nature alone. (Ep. III. 2, p.480)*

- At first glance, is this a very important distinction/argument? Why or why not?

### Righteousness of Faith: Affirmative and Negative Statements

*This article about justification by faith is the chief article in all Christian doctrine. Without this teaching no poor conscience can have any firm consolation or truly know the riches of Christ's grace. (SD III.6, p.536)*

- **Biblical Proof? Romans, I Corinthians, Galatians ALL concerned *primarily* with this topic**

*It is the entire Christ who is our Righteousness according to both natures. In His obedience alone, which as God and man He offered to the Father even to His death, He merited for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (SD I.7, p.512)*

*[Christ's] human nature alone, without the divine, could not by obedience or suffering make satisfaction to eternal, almighty God for the sins of all the world. However, the divinity alone, without the humanity, could not mediate between God and us. (SD II.56, p.545)*

- **Why is it essential that Christ remain one person, two natures?**
- **Consider the implications for communion...**



*Faith is not a bare knowledge of Christ's history, but it is God's gift. By this gift we come to the right knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer in the Word of the Gospel. (Ep. III.6, p.480)*

*A poor, sinful person is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and is adopted into sonship and inheritance of eternal life, without any merit or worth of his own. This happens without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone. His obedience is credited to us as righteousness (SD III.9, p.538)*

*Faith justifies, not because it is such a good work or because it is so beautiful a virtue. It justifies because it lays hold of and accepts Christ's merit in the promise of the Holy Gospel. (SD III.13, p.538)*

*This righteousness is brought to us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and in the Sacraments. It is applied, taken, and received through faith. (SD III.16, p.538)*

- **What is the danger of this belief/teaching/confession? The comfort?**
- **Read and discuss:**
  - Romans 3:28, 4:5, 5:18-19; Galatians 3:10-14

*We believe, teach, and confess that the contrition that comes before justification, and the good works that follow it, do not belong to the article of justification before God. Yet one is not to imagine a kind of faith that can exist and abide with, and alongside of, a wicked intention to sin and to act against the conscience. But after man has been justified through faith, then a true living faith works by love. Good works always follow justifying faith and are surely found with it – if it is true and living faith. Faith is never alone, but always has love and hope with it. (Ep. III.11, p.481)*

- **So what is the proper order/understanding? Why does it matter?**
- **How do we explain/understand Romans 3:28 contrasted to James 2:26?**

*If the article of justification is to remain pure, the greatest attention must be given with special diligence. Otherwise, what comes before faith, and what follows after it, will be mixed together or inserted into the article of justification as necessary and belonging to it. (SD. III.24, p.540)*

*Troubled hearts should have a firm, sure consolation. Also, due honor should be given to Christ's merit and God's grace. (SD III.30, p.541)*

- **What benefits come with a right understanding of justification?**
- **All this is fine... if we were justified and died at the same moment. But what about life now for the regenerated believer?**



*Sanctification follows justification since, on account of our corrupt flesh, sanctification is not entirely perfect and complete in this life. (SD III.28, p.540)*

*Therefore, even though people who are converted and believe in Christ have the beginning of renewal, sanctification, love, virtue, and good works, these cannot and should not be drawn into, or mixed with, the article of justification before God. This is so the honor due to Christ may remain with Christ the Redeemer and tempted consciences may have a sure consolation, since our new obedience is incomplete and impure. (SD III.35, p.542)*

- **At first glance, is this a crucial argument or distinction? Why or why not?**