

*The
Concordia Lutheran*



"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path." Psalm 119:105.

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**"By the righteousness
of one the free gift
came upon all men un-
to justification of life."**

— Romans 5:18b

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, on the basis of Scripture, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our Concordia Lutheran Conference is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

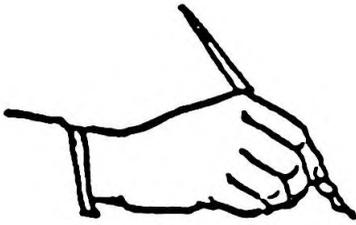
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



The President's Column

Another year of grace reminds us how everything is moving at such a rapid pace. The advancements in the various fields of endeavor are simply amazing. Technology is moving at such a tremendous speed that it is difficult to keep up with it. The medical field continues to provide astounding progress with the various diseases which plague people of all ages and stations in life. As we Christians observe these various advancements we recognize that we are surely living in the last evil days of the world, since the Prophet Daniel foretells that in the last days *"many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased"* (12:4). With the unfolding of all these things, more and more people will continue to elevate man's knowledge and wisdom, man's abilities and skills, to positions of idolatry. The cry is heard from such pride-filled hearts, "we can do anything we set our minds to!" Remember the example of the people at the time after the Flood when the earth was of one language and of one speech? There in the land of Shinar they declared, *"Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven and let us make us a name"* Sinful pride was their motivation and consequently we read that the *"Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city"* (Gen. 11:1-9). The unbelieving children of the world give no thought to the fact that the end is drawing near, because they are so immersed in the things of this world and act as though there will be no end.

Our sinful flesh is not one whit better than the flesh of the unbelievers. Consequently we Christians are not exempt from all manner of temptations. We must confess with the Apostle Paul, *"I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"* (Rom. 7:18). Therefore as we Christians enter into a new year and observe the fulfillment of all the Scriptural prophecies concerning the last days and realize that *"the end of all things is at hand"* (I Pet. 4:7), our hearts are prone to anxiety and fear. And where is the cure to be found? In the Word of God! It is of

this Word that the Savior declares in His high-priestly prayer, *"Thy Word is Truth"* (John 17:17). And through the pen of the Apostle Paul the Holy Spirit assures us that *"all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" ...* (II Tim. 3:15). Likewise the Apostle Peter impresses upon us that *"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (II Pet. 1:21). Not only the thoughts expressed were inspired, but even the very words which they wrote. The writers themselves acknowledged, *"we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth"* (I Cor. 2:13).

What a comfort for us! In the midst of all the changes we observe and the temptations which assail us, this abiding truth stands out, that *"the Word of the Lord endureth forever!"* (I Pet. 1:25). It is the almighty Son of God who assures us that *"heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away"* (Mark 13:31). This Word of God, first of all, shows us clearly and unmistakably that we have sinned as the Apostle Paul exclaims, *"I had not known sin, but by the Law"* (Rom. 7:7). And the Law also shows us the wages of our sin — temporal and eternal death.

But thanks be to God that in His Word He has mercifully revealed unto us the good news that Christ Jesus has delivered us from eternal death by suffering and dying in our stead. We dare not forget that the Holy Spirit has converted us through this abiding truth. *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"* (I Pet. 1:23). *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1), since *"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 5:1).

What a treasure we Christians have in this Word of the Creator of heaven and earth! When we become tired and weary, then He for whom it is impossible to lie (Heb. 6:18) assures us, *"they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* (Is. 40:31). When, like the Psalmist, our hearts become sad, then we can take ourselves to task and declare with him, *"why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God"* (Ps. 42:11). When fear seeks to engulf our hearts because

of the dangers on every side, then we can confidently declare with David, "*the Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the Strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" (Ps. 27:1). When our sins give us alarm and our conscience accuses us, what sweet relief to our sin-burdened hearts to know that "*the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin*" (I John 1:7). And finally, when we lie upon our deathbed that Word comforts our hearts with the blessed assurance that, clothed in the blood and righteousness of Jesus, a joyous welcome awaits us as He invites us, "*Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matt. 25:34).

What a privilege God has granted us! Have we always recognized this fact? Did we often grow careless and think that we did not need to hear the Word of God every time it was preached, but that once in a while was more than sufficient? God's Word will remain with our congregations as long as it is appreciated, that is, as long as we gladly hear and learn and live according to it. Should we ever, may God graciously forbid, despise it by substituting for it the sinful ideas of men, then the full truth of God's Holy Word will become a thing of the past! Rejecting God's Word only brings destruction. Let us resolve that again this year God's abiding and eternal Word will be our anchor upon which our faith is based, and that we make daily use of it, and thus draw from it the necessary food for the welfare of our souls, the necessary strength to cope with the evil days in which we live.

WHAT IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION?

Shortly after the turn of the century (into the 1900's), a doctrinal controversy raged between the Missouri Synod and the old Norwegian Synod. It was called the *Intuitu Fidei* Controversy. The Latin phrase *intuitu fidei* means "in view of faith," and it involved the doctrine of Predestination. The Norwegian Synod (later ALC) theologians contended that a person's predestination to eternal salvation was determined *in view of his faith* through God's foreknowledge. In other words

they taught that, in eternity, God peered into the future and foresaw this person or that person coming to faith in Christ Jesus as his Savior and, in view of that faith which He foresaw in these individuals, God predestined them to eternal salvation. His act of predestination would then not be determined by that which the Bible plainly teaches (e.g. Eph. 1:4; Rom. 11:5), namely, by God's grace alone in and through Christ's work of Redemption, but by something which **man** would do, namely, **believe** in Jesus as his Savior. Thus, **faith** in Jesus, itself, was made a **work** because of which God elected or predestined a person to heaven and eternal life—which teaching is still held today in the ALC (which is now part of the ELCA). Of course we know that neither our believing (which is called a "*good work*" in Phil. 1:6) nor any other good works which we do—which God performs in us and through us, by means of the Gospel—help us get to heaven or, in any way, caused God, in eternity, to elect or predestine us to eternal salvation. Such a notion simply cannot stand in the light of such Scripture passages as II Tim. 1:9 and Eph. 2:8,9. Our faith does not save us because **we do** the believing, but rather because of that to which our God-given faith clings, namely, the **object** of our faith: Christ and His precious work of Redemption.

This very same error regarding faith, namely, as something which persuades God to act, is brought also into the doctrine of Justification or the Forgiveness of Sins. The old error of *intuitu fidei* finds its way, by many so-called Lutherans, also into the Chief Doctrine of the Christian religion when they teach, as it were, that people's sins are forgiven *in view of their faith!*—as though their act of faith has something to do with the fact that their sins are forgiven, or moves God to forgive their sins! They actually believe in something which is completely subjective. They believe in their faith (inside them) for the forgiveness of their sins, rather than in the forgiveness of sins which is set forth objectively in God's Word without faith—much like the sectarians who believe in the Christ (inside them) for their eternal salvation, instead of the Christ outside of them as He has plainly revealed Himself as the Savior of all people whether they believe in Him or not. Likewise God has, in Christ Jesus, because of Christ's work of redemption, forgiven the sins of the whole world, yes, of all people whether they believe it or not! When people make so much of their subjective faith as though it accomplishes in them Christ's work of redemption and the forgiveness of sins, they are in grave danger, barring a blessed inconsistency, of falling from grace and eternal salvation!

How wonderful it is for us **not** to be directed to **our faith** for the for-

giveness of our sins, which would forever leave us in uncertainty, but to the plain Word of God which gives our faith something absolutely solid to cling to, such as "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,*" (II Cor. 5:19), and "*There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*" (Rom. 3:22–24), and "*In whom [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace,*" (Eph. 1:7), and "[Christ] was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification," (Rom. 4:25). Nothing is more clear than the Word of God itself, and woe be unto those who wrest it to their own destruction (II Peter 3:2).

Look carefully at II Cor. 5:19 above and answer the following questions: Which words refer to Christ's work of redemption? ("*in Christ*") What did God do as the result of Christ's work of Redemption? (He "*reconciled the world unto Himself*".) What stood in the way of the world's reconciliation with God? (the world's sins) How then, in Christ, could God reconcile the world unto Himself? (by "*not imputing [charging] their trespasses unto them*") **This is what makes the forgiveness of your sins certain!**

Take the next passage quoted above (Rom. 3:22–24) and answer the following questions: How many people are sinners? ("*all*" people) How many people have come short of God's glory? ("*all*" people) How many people's sins are forgiven freely by God's grace? ("*all*" people's) With what is the justification of all people inseparably connected? ("*the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*"). Whom has Christ redeemed? (all people—II Cor. 5:15, even for those who deny Him—II Peter 2:1).

Read once again Eph. 1:7 above. What do we and all people have in Christ? ("*redemption through His blood*") What else do we and all people have through the redemptive work of Christ? ("*the forgiveness of sins*") Is faith mentioned as a determining factor for the forgiveness of sins? (no, "*according to the riches of His grace*")

Looking at the plain words of Rom. 4:25 (see above), answers are given to the following questions: For whose sins was Christ delivered up on the cross? ("*for our offenses*") According to the analogy of faith, to whom must the "our" refer? (it must refer not to Christians only but to all people) For what purpose was Christ raised again? ("*for our justification*") The Father placed His stamp of approval upon Christ's work

of redemption by raising the Lord Jesus from the dead; and through Christ's vicarious atonement (His satisfaction of God's justice by His active and passive obedience), He declared the whole world righteous, and pronounced the forgiveness of sins upon all mankind. This is called *objective justification*. You will notice, in the light of the Scriptures referred to above, that there can be no *subjective justification* without *objective justification*; no personal justification by faith without a general justification for Christ's sake outside of faith.

Some Lutheran church bodies, as well as individual Lutheran pastors and professors, reject objective justification and teach **only** subjective justification. They like to appeal to the Lutheran Confessions to substantiate their anti-Scriptural position. Patterning their corrupt use of the Lutheran Confessions after the consecrationists and distributionists, who endeavor to interpret the words of the confessions without taking into consideration the historical context, they let the *sola fide*, which is used throughout the confessions, be the norm for their rejection of objective justification. It is, however, clear that the authors of our confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, are using the term "*sola fide*" (by faith alone) in direct opposition to salvation by works taught in the Roman Catholic Church. It was the farthest thing from the minds of our confessors to think of faith without an object, namely, without the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ and pronounced upon all people by God Himself. When will self-styled theologians ever come to their senses and recognize that the Confessions are **not** the norm by which Scripture must be interpreted, but that the Confessions must be permitted only, in the light of their historical context, to reflect what is clearly taught in the Bible. Nothing that man writes can make the Bible more clear. The Scriptures alone "*are able to make [us] wise unto salvation,*" and are "*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,*" and "*for instruction in righteousness*" (II Tim. 3:15-16). With regard to every matter of Christian faith and life we must, therefore, confess in the words of Psalm 119:105, "*Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path.*"

— P.R.B.

WHAT IS *SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION*?

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the Law.” —Galatians 2:16 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” —Romans 5:1

It is indeed ironic, to say the least, that among many who regard themselves as “Lutherans” today —almost five hundred years after the Reformation— controversy is raging regarding, of all things, the doctrine of **justification**! If the controversy had its roots merely in theological *terminology*, we might dismiss it as an unfortunate “war of words” rather than a schism over substance. This is not in any way to minimize the seriousness of groundless bickering, for those who strive about words to no profit (II Timothy 2:14) and dote about questions and strifes of words (I Timothy 6:3-5) are condemned by the Lord’s Apostle Paul as being proud, perverted theological know-nothings, “*men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth.*” Sadly, however, the controversy regarding justification is much more than a verbal food fight. It is much more than dissatisfaction with terms. It is outward Lutheranism literally “coming apart at the seams” over the **central doctrine of the Christian religion**! It is a controversy in which the “*gainsayers*” deny God’s objective, forensic justification of the world for the sake of Christ’s vicarious atonement and, in effect, make forgiveness of sins *contingent* upon “faith” as a work of sinful man which is necessary to *complete* justification and to *finish* what God intended to accomplish. It is a controversy in which, quite strikingly, soul-destroying elements of Romanism, Calvinism, synergism and rationalistic modernism are championed in opposition to the Scripture doctrine of justification by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith!

One cannot properly address the concept of *subjective justification* or “justification *by faith*” until and unless he clearly understands the basic

principle *underlying it*, the principle on which it is *based*. This principle, appropriately called **objective justification**, is treated separately and more extensively in the preceding article of this present issue of our *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN*, but we briefly summarize it here as the necessary basis of our subsequent discussion. It is the clear teaching of Scripture in, among other places, II Corinthians 5:19, that for Christ's sake [*"in Christ"*], that is, because of Christ's *vicarious atonement*, which perfectly satisfied divine justice in the place of sinners, God freely, graciously, and unilaterally forgave the sins of the whole world [*"reconciling the world unto Himself"*] and declared all men righteous in His holy sight [*"not imputing their trespasses unto them"*]. This doctrine is descriptively termed **objective** (or **general**) **justification**, not only because "*the free gift came upon ALL MEN unto justification of life*" (Romans 5:18), but also because this unilateral act of God having forgiven **all**, of His having justified **all mankind**, was and is completely **independent** of man's attitude, mood, receptivity and even faith. Luther provides the following illustration: "A king gives you a castle; if you do not accept it, your refusal does not make the king a liar nor his gift void. You have cheated yourself; it is entirely your own fault; the king has certainly given you the castle" (St. Louis Ed., XIX, 946, 87). The historical, accomplished fact of God's **objective justification** is the doctrine upon which the entire Christian religion hinges. It is the basis of all soteriological teaching (i.e. all teaching regarding salvation). It both proves and exemplifies the universal grace of God and Christ's redemption of all to propitiate God's justice. It is the essence of the Gospel [*"the word of reconciliation"*], declaring God's "*good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14) and His earnest desire that all men be saved by coming unto the knowledge of this precious truth (I Timothy 2:4). **It is the doctrine to which saving faith must cling as its object** for the assurance of forgiveness and "*peace with God*" (Romans 5:1), lest a sinner despair and be destroyed by uncertainty.

What role, then, does *faith* play in the sinner's justification? What indeed does St. Paul mean when he concludes emphatically "*that a man is justified BY FAITH, without the deeds of the Law*" (Romans 3:28)? How does that same expression in the title texts of our present article describe the function of faith in the sinner's **justification**? And, if God has already objectively justified all mankind and reconciled "*the world*" unto Himself, even the "*ungodly*" (Romans 4:5), what do we mean when we and our orthodox fathers speak, in full accord with

Scripture, of being justified and saved “**by faith**” and “**through faith**” and of justification “*sola fide*,” **by faith ALONE?**

These questions are completely legitimate, as long as they are “questions of information” whose answers are sought from Scripture alone to the exclusion of human reason, idle speculation, and vain argumentation. They become questions that “*gender strifes*” (II Timothy 2:23) if they are used to subvert the clear doctrines of Holy Scripture, and to “sleuth out” so-called “contradictions” and imagined “inconsistencies” between doctrines that are clearly spelled out in Holy Writ and have been taught down through the years by truly orthodox Lutheran theologians.

God’s **unilateral reconciliation** of the world unto Himself, His **objective justification** of sinful men as a forensic act, is “*the free GIFT*” which “*came upon all men*” according to His gracious disposition because of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction of His divine justice. In the place of all sinners, Christ perfectly fulfilled the demands of God’s Law upon men and thus rendered to God perfect obedience (*Active Obedience*). Christ’s perfect righteousness, imputed to all poor undeserving sinners, caused God to declare all men righteous in His sight (Romans 5:19). Moreover, in the stead of all sinners, Christ paid the penalty of their guilt by suffering sin’s wages (*Passive Obedience*) and rendered to God perfect payment for their transgressions (Isaiah 53:4ff.; Hebrews 10:14). Having accepted His Son’s sacrifice as payment-in-full for the sins of the world (Romans 3:25; I John 2:2), God no longer imputes men’s trespasses unto them (II Corinthians 5:19). Thus forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are “*the GIFT of God*” (Ephesians 2:8), earned by Christ, and offered by God to all men in the Gospel.

But for the intended recipient to have **possession** of a gift, including its benefits, the gift must be **ACCEPTED**. In order for the bearer of a bona-fide check to **receive** its face value in currency, the check must be **endorsed** and **cash**ed. The benefits of an inheritance come into the heir’s **possession** and **personal ownership** when a last will or testament has been probated and the heir has filed his **rightful claim**.

How is the **grace of God** merited by Christ, how is the **forgiveness of sins** graciously pronounced in God’s heart, how is the **righteousness of Christ** imputed to poor sinners as the “*garments of salvation*” (Isaiah

61:10; Matthew 22:11 ff.) —how are these blessings **PERSONALLY RECEIVED** by the sinner so that he comes into full **possession** of their **benefits**? Our orthodox fathers declare in the Formula of Concord on the basis of Scripture: “This remain[s] the office and property of **faith alone**, that it alone and nothing else whatever, is the means or instrument by and through which God’s grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel are received, apprehended, accepted, applied to us, and appropriated” (F. C., Thorough Declaration, III, 38; *Triglotta*, p. 929). Thus, according to Scripture, and echoed by the Confessions, **FAITH** is the **only means** of **APPROPRIATING** forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, and thereby of coming into **PERSONAL POSSESSION** of these blessings. Hence we have the descriptive term *subjective* (or *personal*) **justification** —NOT as another or a different justification, but as the forensic justification once pronounced *objectively* for ALL now received *subjectively* by the individual believer **HIMSELF** for his own comfort and assurance.

What is the *justifying* or *saving faith* which appropriates the gracious forgiveness merited by Christ, declared by God, and offered freely to all men in the Gospel? The Council of Trent correctly perceived the concept of *justifying faith* as taught by our fathers on the basis of Scripture alone, even though the Council cursed it, saying: “If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be anathema” (Session VI, Canon 12). To the papists, faith is a meritorious work of *obedience*, centered in the intellect but not in the will of man. It is rewarded by God by the bestowal of (or *infusion* of) grace, which then enables the sinner to earn subsequent favor with God by works. Scripture, however, teaches to the contrary that *justifying* or *saving faith* is **the reliance of the heart upon the promises of grace published in the Gospel**. Not to be confused with a mere historical knowledge of Christ or with a knowledge of Christian doctrine or with orthodoxy in doctrine and practice, faith is **the act of the *intellect* and *will*** which lays hold on and clings to God’s mercy in Christ Jesus. Even the weakest “spark” of desire to be saved by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, totally apart from one’s own merits, lays hold on the forgiveness of sins. Chemnitz writes in his *Examen*: “If faith is not mistaken in its object, but lays hold of it, be it ever so tremblingly, with ever so weak a confidence, with only the striving for and desiring of it, such faith is indeed small and weak, but nevertheless true

faith.” (Cf. the “*bruised reed*” and the “*smoking flax*” of Isaiah 42:3.) The only function of faith is an *instrumental* one: Faith is merely the *instrument* or *receptive organ* for apprehending, that is, laying hold on, personally, for one’s own self, the forgiveness of sins merited by Christ and declared as God’s free gift to all mankind. And since faith itself is the gift of God, worked in man by the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16; 10:17, etc.), the existence of faith and the exercise of the will in apprehending forgiveness and salvation can in no way be attributed to man.

Thus **justification by faith** means justification *without works*. The so-called “good qualities” of faith (humility, patience, love, strength, etc.) have nothing whatsoever to do with justification. With regard to justification, the Bible places “*faith*” in OPPOSITION to all works of the Law, to all worthiness in man, to any cooperative effort on the part of man, and to all ethically “good” conduct in man. Faith and works are **mutually exclusive**, even as instruments in *subjective* (or *personal*) justification. The Bible states unequivocally: “*A man is justified by FAITH without the deeds of the Law*” (Romans 3:28). “*To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for righteousness*” (Romans 4:5). Thus we confess in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, as well as in similar other statements in our Lutheran Confessions: “Faith justifies and saves, not on the ground that it is a work in itself worthy, but only because it receives the promised mercy” (Apology, Art. IV [II], 56, *Triglotta*, p. 137). This is also the substance of other Lutheran statements, such as: “Faith justifies, not in the category of quality, but in the category of relation;” “Faith justifies not as an act by itself, but because of the object which it grasps;” “Faith justifies not as a work, but as an instrument.” (See also: F. C., Thorough Declaration, III, 13, *Triglotta*, p. 919.)

There is **no conflict** in the Doctrine of Justification, nor should there be any controversy concerning it, unless, of course, God’s unilateral **forensic justification of all mankind** in view of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction is DENIED (as it is by some in the preposterous battle still raging in the Missouri Synod and elsewhere) —in which case God did NOT in fact reconcile the world unto Himself in Christ Jesus, II Corinthians 5:19. There is **no conflict** in the Doctrine of Justification unless, of course, **justifying faith** is seen as a work of man which is necessary to “**COMPLETE**” justification and reconciliation between God and man.

For then God is not permitted to be God but is held captive to man's will and to man's faith. (And this is actually the result of much of the "loose talk" in this controversy!) There should be no difficulty in understanding the simple terms and concepts in the Doctrine of Justification *IF* the *Scriptural principles themselves* are clearly understood on the basis of the clear Word of God.

Objective justification and *subjective justification* are not TWO different justifications, as some suggest. Rather, they are merely descriptive terms which distinguish two aspects of one and the same occurrence. The terms distinguish between the *giving* and the *receiving* of a gift. The *gift of God* is *justification* —being made right with Him by the forgiveness of sins and by the imputation of perfect righteousness, so that "*the wages of sin*" (Romans 6:23) no longer looms over the sinner as the threat of God's just anger and His well-deserved punishment, and so that everlasting life and salvation is the gracious reward of His mercy to those who *were* His enemies but who now have been declared to be the righteous heirs of heaven. —This *justification* was GRANTED and declared unilaterally and *objectively* by God Himself for *all mankind* when, on the basis of Christ's perfect vicarious satisfaction for the sins of *all*, God reconciled *the world* unto Himself, not imputing *their* trespasses unto them, and published this gift in the good news of His Gospel (II Corinthians 5:19). —When by that same Gospel *saving faith* is worked in the heart of an individual sinner, so that, disavowing any merit or worthiness of his own, he confides solely in the grace and mercy of God to the undeserving on the basis of Jesus' merits alone, and trusts in the promise of forgiveness and reconciliation in the Gospel, then God's *justification* [the same justification which was declared *objectively* for all] is RECEIVED personally or *subjectively*; and the believer has for his very own the assurance of "*peace with God through [his] Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1).

— D.T.M.

WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS?

As Lutherans we often hear the doctrine of **Justification by Faith Alone** taught from our pulpits and we rejoice in this glorious truth. Many people, though, are surprised to learn that the Bible also teaches the necessity of **Justification by Works**. Our church's adult instruction class was recently studying the Epistle of James along side of the Epistle to the Romans when I informed the class that a local church has the right according to Scripture to require that its members justify themselves by Works. I took them to the Epistle of James where the doctrine of Justification by Works is clearly stated: "**Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Ye see then how that *by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.***" (James 2:21,22,24).

When this passage was read along with my comments there was an audible gasp among a few members for they had never heard anyone speak positively about Justification by Works and were unsure if they were hearing me correctly. I quickly put their worst fears to rest, (namely that their pastor had suddenly departed from the truth into error), and explained what James meant when he wrote about Justification by works. The understanding of faith and works that James gives us is vital to our doctrine of true saving faith and the Gospel of free Grace. Let us examine the Doctrine of Justification by Works under the following headings: **I. The Question Addressed by James; II. The Two Kinds of Justification; III. The Illustration of Abraham; IV. The Value of Justification by Works.**

I.

To understand what James meant by the necessity of Justification by Works in the life of the believer one must first realize the **question** the Apostle is addressing in his Epistle. James is not answering the question, "How is a man justified?", or the question such as posed by the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" We know this because the entire context of James 2:14-26 is concerned with the works of a believer that give evidence of a saving faith already present in the heart. Earlier in his Epistle James revealed that this saving faith is present in the heart of

a sinner not by works but as a gift from God (James 1:17). He taught that regeneration (the new birth) is wrought freely out of His good and gracious will through the Word of the Gospel, and not by the will of man (James 1:18). Finally James compares the Word of the Gospel to **seed** that is planted in the heart **“which is able to save your souls.”** (James 1:21).

James clearly teaches that man has nothing to do with his own salvation; therefore the doctrine of justification before God by grace through faith alone is firmly established by the Apostle James before he begins to speak of justification by works. Because the Apostle clearly teaches that man is justified by grace as a gift from God apart from works, the doctrine of Justification by Works mentioned in chapter two is not a contradiction of the rest of Scripture as some have suggested. The Doctrine of James and of Paul the Apostle are in perfect harmony with one another, each viewing Justification from a different perspective.

Thus, again, James is not addressing the question, “How are we justified before God?” Rather, the question he asks is: “How is saving faith manifested?” Saving faith will show itself or produce evidence of its existence. Even a confession of the mouth may not be evidence of true faith such as when a person pays lip-service to Christ, but lives an ungodly life which contradicts the lip-confession. Likewise, a person may be able to explain and confess accurately the pure doctrines of God’s Word, yet he proves that he believes these doctrines by living according to them. James clearly says, **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”** (1:22). Thus, James warns us against a mere historical faith of the head. We call this “Dead Orthodoxy” (2:19).

II.

It is plain therefore that James sets before us two kinds of justification, namely, justification before God, and justification before men. Faith in Christ which justifies us before God is internal and invisible. It is seen only by God. **“The Lord knoweth them that are His.”** The second justification is that which is before men and can therefore be seen. It is subsequent to and flows out of the first. It consists of the good works which flow from faith in Christ. These works of faith are visible for others to see and are the necessary fruits of justification before God that is by faith. For this reason the local church does have the right to expect

and require its members to justify themselves by works before the other members. Dr. Franz Pieper wrote: *"The Church must demand of its members that they prove the faith of the heart by good works. The Church insists on a justification by works. The further a Christian Congregation departs from this practice, the more will license abound in her midst, the less will she fulfill her calling of being a light to the world and a salt of the earth."* (Pieper; Volume II Page 542).

The Bible in many places calls for justification by works in the lives of God's children of faith. I John 2:3-4: **"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."** John 13:35: **"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."** John 14:15: **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."** Matthew 12:37: **"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."** Matthew 6:14: **"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."** Luke 7:47: **"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."** Thus, the Bible often connects the promise of forgiveness to good works in the sense that where there is justifying faith, good works will follow, and if they do not follow, the alleged repentance and faith are not genuine, but hypocritical. Of course, the Christian will never base his justification before God upon works, for all of his works are tainted with sin and are therefore in themselves defective. Hence, **"by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"** (Gal. 2:16d). However, the Christian's good works are pleasing to God because they flow from faith in Christ and their deficiencies are not taken into consideration on account of the perfect Active and Passive obedience of Christ imputed to the sinner by faith. In this way the Christian maintains the necessary distinction between the two justifications: by faith before God, by works before men.

III.

When the Apostle Paul illustrates the doctrine of Justification by Faith in Romans 4, he does so by referring us back to Abraham. Paul shows us that no one is justified before God by works, hence, not even Abraham who was so exemplary in his life. In this regard, Paul takes us back to Genesis 15. In this chapter God established His covenant with Abraham by giving him a promise that out of his descendants would come the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the entire

world (Gal. 3:16). Upon hearing this promise, Abraham believed it. Genesis 15:6 says, **“And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he [God] counted it to him for righteousness.”**

In these words the fact is clearly revealed by Moses that Abraham’s works did not make him righteous; rather, God declared Abraham’s faith for righteousness in that his faith embraced the promise of the Savior. For this reason, Abraham is referred to as the **“father of us all”** (all the believers). He was justified before God the same way we are, that is, by faith in Christ. Paul further explains the righteousness of Abraham in Romans 4:5: **“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”** Thus, God’s verdict upon Abraham in Genesis 15 was that Abraham was righteous by faith in Christ.

It is interesting to note that when the Apostle James illustrates the doctrine of Justification by Works he also appeals to the life of Abraham. However, he does not take the reader back to Genesis 15 to the establishing of God’s Covenant of grace in Christ by faith; instead he refers to Genesis 22 and God’s testing of Abraham by His instructions to offer his only son Isaac upon the altar as a burnt offering unto God. Abraham obeyed God, and the Lord spared the life of Isaac by providing a sacrifice in his place. God’s subsequent verdict was, **“for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me”** (Gen. 22:12b). Abraham’s obedience proved his faith. It was upon this incident in Abraham’s life that James writes: **“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”**

The question that the James passage raises is: Before whom was Abraham justified when he offered up Isaac upon the altar in obedience to God? We have already shown from Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4 that this act of offering Isaac on the altar did **not** in itself bring Justification before God, for Abraham was already declared righteous by faith in God’s Covenant promise apart from his works before this incident. James is not describing **internal** justification before God by faith; instead he is writing about **external** justification before men. Abraham’s true faith was now evident for all to see and he was **justified** (i.e. proven to possess works in keeping with saving faith) before Isaac, his servants, and all the rest of history among all who would one day read

of this act of faith in Holy Scripture.

By works the faith of Abraham was **“made perfect”** (James 2:22) or **“brought to its goal”** (Lenski). The works of Abraham revealed that his faith had been brought to its intended goal just as the bearing of fruit is the goal of the planting of the seed in the ground. In Luke 8:14 Jesus described seed sown on the ground laced with thorns. **“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”** Works do not add to our faith nor somehow complete it as though it were incomplete apart from them. The fruit of faith, good works, is simply the evidence that the grace of God has converted the heart of the sinner to saving faith in Christ. Where saving faith exists, such faith will, by the continual use of the means of grace, ever continue to grow in its God-intended purpose of doing good works, for **“we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”** (Eph. 2:10).

IV.

In the life of Abraham we view the **Value of Justification by Works**. Works of faith attest to the genuineness of our faith. We not only publicly give evidence of the reality of the faith we profess to others but also we are assured in our own hearts of our personal justification and forgiveness before God. The Christian can use good works as proof of his justification to assure his heart, and the Bible exhorts us to do this very thing. External good works prove to men and to our own selves that internal justification is present. In II Peter 1:10 the Apostle instructs his readers to **“give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”** This exhortation is given in the context of the graces Peter instructs us to add to our faith. We are to add to our faith such things as virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, and the presence of these fruits of the Spirit bear witness that we are God’s children who in eternity were chosen to be His own, and who in time were thereby called by the Gospel.

The value of good works to the Christian is that they serve as external signs of the internal working of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit works within the Christian confidence in the objective justification earned by Christ through His redeeming work on the cross and offered to all sinners in

the Gospel. This is the internal testimony of the Spirit. The external witness of the Spirit is seen in the fruits of faith which the Holy Spirit produces such as love for God and His Word, love for our brethren in Christ, patience in trials, humility before men, etc. The Christian should value highly this external testimony of the Holy Spirit in his life, and thank God that He confirms our free justification by our good works.

By our works we prove that we have true faith in Christ; that we are a good tree that bears good fruit, and not a bad tree bearing bad fruit which Jesus promised will be **“hewn down, and cast into the fire”** (Matthew 7:15-20). The works of the believer in Christ flow from faith and are performed by people who have been justified by faith alone. In light of these things, let us as the people of God, continue to do good works, for our works are offerings of Thanksgiving to God for the forgiveness of sins so freely bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ by grace through faith.

— R.A.M.

PESSIMISM

The dictionary defines pessimism as “an inclination to emphasize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities or to expect the worst possible outcome.” A pessimist always looks on the dark side and can not rightly appreciate and be thankful for the unmerited blessings the Lord daily and richly bestows upon us. Pessimism sours a person’s disposition and makes the individual bitter and filled with self-pity. It certainly is not pleasant to be in the company of one who knows nothing but gloom and doom!

A Christian dare not allow himself to yield to the spirit of pessimism! The devil is the author of all sadness and seeks to bring us Christians

down into the pit of despair. The Lord, on the other hand, wants us to be happy and to rejoice (Philip. 4:4).

We Christians have no reason to be pessimistic! When we lay bound in the fetters of sin and had nothing more to look forward to than everlasting destruction, for the "*wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23), our heavenly Father gave us the gift of "*eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23). It was His mercy, and not any worthiness on our part, which prompted Him to send His only-begotten Son who offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins and to deliver us from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14,15). Through the Gospel the Holy Ghost has made us the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26), so that now we have been filled "*with all joy and peace in believing*" (Rom. 5:13), being assured from the Word of the almighty God that "*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 8:1). Heaven is now our Home (John 3:16). And no matter what takes place in our lives, we Christians have the assurance that God loves us and "*that all things work together for good to them that love God*" (Rom. 8:28). Our cries to the Throne of Grace are never in vain! For Jesus' sake our dear heavenly Father hears our petitions and grants them according to His good and gracious Will (John 16:23; I John 5:14).

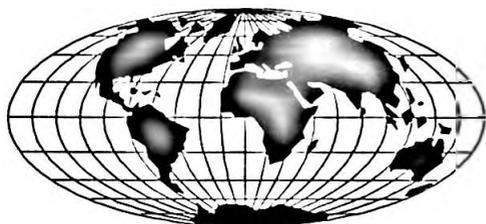
We have been translated into Christ's glorious Kingdom not to surrender to a spirit of self-pity and pessimism but to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9). And when we ponder the undeserved temporal and spiritual blessings which our heavenly Father has bestowed upon us for Jesus' sake, then every living breath should be a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. And when this brief life is over we shall then join the heavenly choirs to thank and praise Him through all eternity for His love and mercy in Christ!

— M.L.N.

Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer



VATICAN OFFICIAL EXPLAINS CONSECRATION TO MARY

The consecration of the world to the Virgin Mary, which will be formally pronounced by Pope John Paul II as the Jubilee for bishops concludes in Rome on Oct. 8th, is not a new step but the renewal of previous consecrations, according to a Vatican official. Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, the secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, pointed to the previous consecrations, including the rite performed by Pope Pius XII on Dec. 8, 1942, and the one led by Pope John Paul II on March 25, 1984. The archbishop also pointed out that Pope John Paul has used a different term for this ceremony. Rather than “consecrating” the world to Mary, the Holy Father has chosen to “place under Mary’s protection” the Church, her bishops, and the pastors of the world. The word “consecration,” Archbishop Bertone went on to say, is traditionally used – most notably by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort – to convey the desire of the faithful to “participate in the consecration that Christ Himself made to His Father before his death on the Cross.” The plea for Mary’s “protection,” he added, conveys the humble realization that we humans need help from God, and therefore ask Mary’s intercession. When asked why the Fatima statue is being used for this cere-

mony, Archbishop Bertone readily acknowledged that the cult of Our Lady of Fatima is a “private devotion,” which Catholics are not required to accept. Nevertheless, he said, the Fatima apparitions and devotions have won the explicit approval of the Church, and the message of Our Lady of Fatima “remains valuable for the Christians of the 21st century.” (Vatican, Oct. 5, 2000 CWNews.Com)

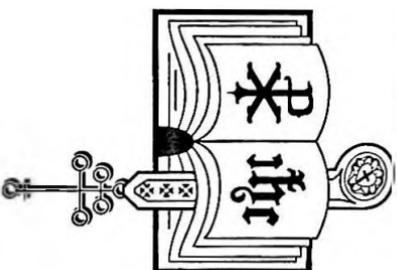
To invoke the intercession of the saints is a teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council of Trent which convened between 1545 and 1563 declared it to be incumbent upon the priests that “they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints” ... “that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help, for obtaining benefits from God” ... (Sess. XXV). After Mass the priest may say the following prayer, approved by Pope Pius IX: “Guardian of virgins, holy Father Joseph, to whose faithful care Innocence itself, Christ Jesus and Mary, virgin of virgins, has been committed: I beseech and implore you by both these dearest pledges, Jesus and Mary, that you will make me, preserved from all uncleanness, always serve Jesus and Mary most chastely, with an unspotted mind, a pure heart, and a chaste body. Amen.” No one, therefore, can justifiably deny that it is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that the intercession of the saints – they have about 5,000 – is to be invoked by the faithful. But such direct appeals to the saints, who cannot hear our prayers, is plain, undisguised idolatry! God’s Word contains not a single command, not a single promise, and not a single example on which such invocations can be founded, but demands, on the contrary, that prayer be addressed to God alone (Ps. 50:15; Matt. 4:10; John 14:6; 16:23; I John 2:1), and that “there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5).

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