

# Sanctification In The Lutheran Confessions

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(Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from the Tappert edition of the *Book of Concord*.)

How does one go about writing an essay on sanctification in the Lutheran Confessions? The first thought may be to grab a concordance to the Confessions and look up all the references that deal with sanctification. Then proceed to write the essay. There are two major problems, however, with that approach. One is, a person may tend to read passages in an atomistic way, apart from their context and the continuity of the Confessions. The other is, one may tend to deal with sanctification as an entity unto itself; something the Confessions do not do.

There is only one way to find out what the Confessions teach on sanctification, and that is to read them. A reading of the Confessions reveals they treat sanctification in a very close connection with justification. In fact, you will not find such a treatment in any other Christian denomination. Not only do the Confession's treat justification in a way that is unique among Christian denominations, their treatment of sanctification is unique as well. An other Christian denominations treat sanctification as an entity approached apart from justification, making the law the driving force in their teaching on sanctification. The Lutheran Confessions treat sanctification in the context of the life-giving power of justification by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ.

We owe a great deal to the writers of our Confessions. They have bequeathed to us an heritage concerning sanctification which is biblical, pastoral, and practical, an heritage based on the proper use of law and gospel, an heritage of sanctification flowing from justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It is an heritage we pray God preserves among us, for the purveyors of Reformed theology are vigorously hawking their brand of sanctification to us through print and media. We need to recognize their wares for what they are: spiritual junk food, at best, and poison for the soul, at worst. We may be tempted to listen to their siren call because we are disappointed by the lack of sanctification we see in our churches or our own lives. However, let us get our bearings again by a careful study of be heritage which has come down to us through the Lutheran Reformation. May our study of sanctification, as revealed in Scripture and reflected in the Lutheran Confessions, encourage us to go about our ministry with the confidence that God will produce a harvest of the fruits of faith, as he works through Word and Sacrament.

## Sanctification In The Lutheran Confessions

To begin with, we need to define terms. Sanctification is used in both a wide sense and a narrow sense in Scripture. Sanctification in the wide sense refers to everything God does for the sinner's salvation, including conversion, justification by grace through faith, and preservation in the faith (2 Th 2:13, Ac 26:18, 24:18, Eph 5:26). Luther also speaks of sanctification in the wide sense when he writes: "Just as the Son obtains dominion by purchasing us through his birth, death, and resurrection, etc., so the Holy Spirit effects our sanctification through the following: the communion of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Therefore to sanctify is nothing else than to bring us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, which we could not obtain by ourselves" (LC II, 37-39).

Sanctification in the narrow sense refers to the new life the believer lives through faith in Jesus Christ (Ro 12:1-2; 1 Th 4:7). This is the most common usage in Scripture, and this is the sense in which we will be using the term in the rest of this essay. The Lutheran Confessions also have much to say about sanctification in the narrow sense.

Before proceeding further, we need to define the role of the Lutheran Confessions in our approach to this paper, Scripture is the *norma nomans*, the Lutheran Confessions are the *norma normata*. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the Confessions reflect the teaching of Scripture The approach we take was

stated well by Harold Wicke as he commented on a statement of Adolph Hoenecke: “We take the position that Scripture alone establishes what we are to teach.” And that is true! Though we are Lutherans, Luther does not establish what we are or are not to teach nor do our Confessions establish doctrines or teachings where Scripture does not. Dr. Hoenecke in the first volume of the *Quartalschrift* states with reference to the Confessions: “When we bind ourselves to the Confessions of our church, we bind ourselves to all articles of faith contained therein, but not to all historical, archaeological, or literary remarks, not even to every exegesis, and just as little to a certain exegetical method employed, nor always to consider every passage as proof in the very way in which this is carried out in the Confessions” (Vol. I, p.113) (“What Is Doctrine According To Scripture and The Lutheran Confessions: *OGH I*, 73). The Confessions themselves state: “The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel” (SA II, II, 15).

### **God Is The Author Of Sanctification**

By nature, people are not disposed to obey God. We come into this world spiritually dead (Eph 2:1) and the enemies of God (Ro 8:7). The Confessions state, “It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers’ wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God” (AC 11, 1).

It is the work of God alone that we believe in Jesus as our Savior (Php 1:29; Jn 6:44). It is also the work of God alone that we lead sanctified lives. He gives us the will and the ability to carry out his will (Php 2:12-13). He gets the credit for the good works which we do (Eph 2 :10) The Confessions state, “ When through faith the Holy Spirit is given, the heart is moved to do good works. Before that, when it is without the Holy Spirit, the heart is too weak. Moreover, it is in the power of the devil, who drives poor human beings into many sins. We see this in the philosophers who undertook to lead honorable and blameless lives; they failed to accomplish this, and instead fell into many great and open sins. This is what happens when a man is without true faith and the Holy Spirit and governs him self by his own human strength alone”(AC XX, 29-34).

We cannot cooperate with God before or during conversion. We can, however, cooperate with him after our conversion. God gives us the will and the ability to follow his will. Paul urged the Corinthians, “As God’s fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain” (2 Co 6:1). We certainly do not cooperate with God on an equal basis. We cooperate with God because he has enabled us to cooperate with him.

The Formula of Concord states, “It follows that as soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in its through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though we still do so in great weakness. Such cooperation does not proceed from our carnal and natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit has begun in us in conversion...This is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good, as much and as long as God rules him through his Holy Spirit, guides and leads him, but if God should withdraw, his gracious hand man could not remain in obedience to God for one moment. But if this were to be understood as though the converted man cooperates alongside the Holy Spirit, the way two horses draw a wagon together, such a view could by no means be conceded without detriment to the divine truth” (SD II, 65-66).

### **The Contrasts Between Justification And Sanctification**

Before we consider the close connection between justification and sanctification, it will be useful to consider the contrasts Scripture and the Confessions draw between justification and sanctification.

1. Whereas justification involves a change in the sinner’s status before God, sanctification involves a change in the sinner’s heart and life in relation to God and his neighbor.

Justification is forensic or declarative in nature. The sinner’s native status before God is that he is an “object of wrath” (Eph 2:3). Spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God, he stands before a holy and just God, accused, guilty and condemned. He justly deserves God’s punishment. Amazingly, however, God loves sinners.

He sent his Son to atone for sin. On the basis of Christ's redemptive work, God acquitted the world because he condemned his Son in our place (Ro 3:9-26;4:5;5:6). The righteousness which he credited to our account is a *iustitia aliena*, a righteousness which comes to us from outside ourselves, from Christ (Ro 3:28).

Concerning this the Formula of Concord states, "Accordingly, the word 'justify' here means to declare righteous and free from sin and from the eternal punishment of these sins on account of the righteousness of Christ which God reckons to faith (Php 3:9). And this is the usual usage and meaning of the word in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments" (SD III, 17). The Apology to the Augsburg Confession also makes the same point, "To be justified" here does not mean that a wicked man is made righteous but that he is pronounced righteous in a forensic way" (Ap IV, 252). Here the Confessions uphold the forensic nature of justification against the Roman (Ap IV) and Osiandrian (FC III) teachings that justification is an ethical process involving the inner transformation of the believer.

Sanctification, however, does involve a change in the sinner's nature. God transforms us so we desire to do his will. He gives us the ability to live for Christ. As Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Co 5:17). Quoting from Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, the Formula states, "Faith is a divine work in its that transforms us and begets its anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it" (SD IV, 10).

2. Whereas justification excludes all human works, sanctification consists in the good works God enables the Christian to do.

St. Paul wrote, "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Ro 3:28). "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Ga 3:12). "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:10). "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be place!" (Ro 11:6). The message from Genesis to Revelation, from Habakkuk to Paul, is that grace and works are mutually exclusive. When we speak of God's justification of the sinner, good works are excluded; only Christ's redemptive work is included.

When Osiander attempted to introduce the "Christ in us" into justification, the Formula of Concord responded, "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 ...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...The point is that good works are excluded from the article of justification so that in the treatment of the justification of poor sinners before God they should not be drawn, woven, or mingled in" (SD III, 24-25, 36). "Although renewal and sanctification are a blessing of Christ, the mediator, and a work of the Holy Spirit, it does not belong in the article or matter of justification before God; it rather follows justification" (SD III, 28). "That thereby there are excluded completely from this article of justification all our own works, merit" (SD III, 37) "...love and a very other virtue or work" (38)... "That neither renewal, sanctification, virtues, nor other good works are our righteousness before God, nor are they to be made and posited to be a part or cause of our justification" (39).

George Major parroted statements of Melancthon from his *Loci* from 1535, and claimed, "Good works are necessary to salvation"(SD IV, 1). The writers of the Formula in Article IV were careful to note that while it may be said that good works are necessary because God wills them (4ff), that they are natural fruits of faith (10-12), good works do not preserve faith (30f), and they certainly do not belong in the article of justification (22ff.).

Sanctification, however, does consist in the good works the believer does by faith. As the Augsburg Confession states, "Such faith should produce good fruits and good works, and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded" (AC VI, 1). Luther's explanation of the Ten Commandments in the Small and

Large Catechisms, coupled with the Table of Duties, indicate the sanctified life consists in good works commanded by God.

3. Whereas justification is complete and perfect in Christ, the Christian's sanctified life in this world remains imperfect and incomplete.

Justification is objective in nature. It is complete in Christ. God forgave the world, whether anyone believes it or not (Ro 3:3-4). Faith receives the benefit of justification. Faith does not complete justification. Over against the on-going concept of justification taught by Osiander, the Formula states, "(Christ's) obedience consists not only in his suffering and dying, but also in his spontaneous subjection to the law in our stead and his keeping of the law in so perfect a fashion that, reckoning it to us as righteousness, God forgave us our sins, accounts us as holy and righteous, and saves us forever on account of this entire obedience which, by doing and suffering, in life and in death, Christ rendered for us to his heavenly Father" (SD III, 15).

On the other hand, sanctification remains incomplete in this life. Paul made that very clear in his treatment of the dual nature of the Christian in Romans 7. The Formula of Concord also states, "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" (SD III, 22).

4. Whereas justification is universal, sanctification takes place only in believers.

Christ died for the sins of all people (Jn 1:29;3:16; 2 Co 5:19-21; 1 Jn 2:2). God justified the world for Christ's sake (Ro 5:12-19). Even unbelievers had their sins forgiven (2 Pe 2:1). As the Apology states, "Therefore men cannot keep the law by their own strength, and they are all under sin and subject to eternal wrath and death. On this account the law cannot free us from sin or justify us, but the promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification was given because of Christ. He was given for us to make satisfaction for the sins of the world and has been appointed as the mediator and the propitiator" (Ap IV, 40). It was this universal aspect of justification that Calvin denied. Though he accepted the objective nature of justification, he rejected its universal nature.

Sanctification, however, takes place only in the believer. The unbeliever cannot live a sanctified life (Heb 11:6). The Apology again states, "Since faith brings the Holy Spirit and produces a new life in our hearts, it must also produce spiritual impulses in our hearts ...After we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him... This cannot happen until, being justified and regenerated, we receive the Holy Spirit" (Ap IV, 125-126).

5. Whereas justification assures us of salvation, the sanctified life produces evidence of faith but can never assure us of salvation.

Justification assures us of salvation. Christ did it all. He did it for all the world. He did it for me. Paul speaks of, "...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time" (Tit 1:2). Paul was able to declare with confidence, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tm 4:8). Good works are an evidence of faith. They indicate that we are God's children (1 Jn 3:14). They will indicate on judgment day that we have faith in Christ (Mt 25:34-36). They cannot, however, assure us of salvation. Only Christ can assure us of that. As the Apology observes, "The law always accuses us, even in good works .. If a conscience believes that it ought to be pleasing to God because of its own work and not because of Christ, how will it have peace without faith ? What work will it find that it will count worthy of eternal life, if indeed hope

ought to be sustained by merits? Against these doubts Paul says (Ro 5:1), ‘Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God;’ we ought to be utterly sure that righteousness and eternal life are given us freely for Christ’s sake” (Ap IV, 319-3 20).

### **The Relationship Between Justification And Sanctification: Faith Justifies**

When Scripture says faith justifies, it means faith is the instrument through which we receive the righteousness and forgiveness which Christ won for all by his substitutionary life and death. As Paul wrote, “But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Ro 3:21-22).

Apart from faith, the sinner loses the benefit of Christ’s redemptive work (Mk 16:16; 2 Pe 2:1). The unbeliever essentially tells God, “I don’t need what Jesus did for me. I don’t want what Jesus did for me. I want what I have coming to me.” Those who presume to stand before God on judgment day hoping that their works will save them, will hear the Savior say, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41).

Faith receives the benefit of what Christ has done. It is, as our dogmatists say, the *organon leptikon*, the God-given hand which receives the gift God gives through the gospel and sacraments (*organon dotikon*). Faith is not a work of man but the work of God in man. It is not an active decision of our own free will or a condition we must fulfill before the package of salvation is complete. As the Formula states, “For faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel. This merit has to be applied to us and to be made our own through faith if we are to be justified thereby” (SD III, I 3).

### **The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification: Faith Sanctifies**

Faith is the work of God in us. Through faith we receive the benefit of the forgiveness Jesus won for all. At the same time, faith is a power through which God produces sanctified lives. As Paul wrote, “We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 1:3). The Formula of Concord quotes Luther to this effect, “Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it” (SD IV, 10).

### **Justification Precedes Sanctification Ordine Causarum Et Effectuum**

There is a relationship of cause and effect between justification by grace through faith and the sanctified Christian life. Justification is the cause of sanctification; sanctification is not the cause of, nor does it contribute to justification. The Formula of Concord states, “Good works do not precede faith, nor is sanctification prior to justification. First the Holy Spirit kindles faith in us in conversion through the hearing of the gospel. Faith apprehends the grace of God in Christ whereby the person is justified. After the person is justified, the Holy Spirit next renews and sanctifies him, and from this renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works will follow” (SD III, 41). This order of cause and effect had to be maintained to refute the errors of Osiander and Major, who attempted to bring sanctification into the justification of the sinner.

### **There Is An Inseparable Connection (*Nexus Indivulsus*) Between Justification And Sanctification**

There is an inseparable connection between justification and sanctification in that, in every case, where there is justification by grace through faith, there is also sanctification. As James wrote, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (Jas 2:26). Even in the thief on the cross, there were works produced by faith (Lk 23:40-41). We continue the quote from Luther in Article IV of the Formula cited above: “Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty, thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good. Likewise, faith does not ask if good works are to be done, but before one can ask, faith has already done them and is constantly active. Whoever does not perform such good works is a faithless man, blindly tapping

around in search of faith and good works without knowing what either faith or good works are, and in the meantime he chatters and jabs a great deal about faith and good works. Faith is a vital, deliberate trust in God's grace, so certain that it would die a thousand times for it. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes us joyous, mettlesome, and merry toward God and all creatures. This the Holy Spirit works by faith, and therefore without any coercion a man is willing and desirous to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything for the love of God and to his glory, who has been so gracious to him. It is therefore impossible to separate works from faith as it is to separate heat and light from fire" (SD IV, 10-12).

The aforementioned truth had to be maintained in light of the so-called Second Antinomian Controversy, where it was maintained new obedience is not necessary in the regenerated (SD IV, S).

Article IV condemned "...a complacent Epicurean delusion, since many people dream up for themselves a dead faith or superstition without repentance and without good works, as if there could simultaneously be in a single heart both a right faith and a wicked intention to continue and abide in sin, which is impossible" (SD IV, 15 ). We could say that good works are the pulse, respiration, and blood pressure of faith. If these vital signs are weak, the patient is in trouble. If these signs are absent, the patient is dead. So faith without works is dead (Jas 2:26). The absence of works indicates a lack of faith. Obviously, we cannot look into a person's heart to see if faith exists. However, we certainly need to warn those whose lives do not reflect the fruits of faith that faith and works are as inseparable as "heat and light from fire."

There is also an inseparable connection between justification and sanctification with regard to the power for sanctified living. Franz Pieper calls this the "psychological connection" between justification and sanctification. He writes, "God loves man with a wondrously great love...Convince a man of this wondrously great love of God for him, and he cannot help loving God in return and avoiding sin for the sake of his love to God. And God knows how to convince and assure man of his great love. He does not appeal to the natural powers of man, for the natural man will not believe in this love, but regards it as foolishness (1 Co 2:14). Nor does he try to demonstrate his love by the persuasive words of man's wisdom (1 Co 2:4). But he simply presents this great love as a fact; and by this preaching of the gospel the Holy Ghost creates faith in the love of God. And when this faith in the gospel, faith in the love of God in Christ, has been kindled in man's heart, he will, as a matter of course, love God and hate sin. Thus these is a 'psychological' connection between justification and sanctification. They no longer form 'two heterogeneous strata of dogmatic construction'" (*Christian Dogmatics* III, 9-10).

Justification is the heart doctrine of the Bible. It is the heart for sanctification. Without the heart of justification pumping power into Christian lives, sanctification will not take place. A root draws its life and power from the soil. The root then produces the trunk, and from the trunk come the branches and the fruit. Now let us apply this to Christ, faith, love, and good works. The soil for faith is Christ—delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification (Ro 4:25). The root is faith, planted in Christ and created by God. The trunk is the love which flows from our faith. When God gives us faith in his love for us, faith then produces love for God which leads us to love our neighbor. As Paul wrote, "Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Ro 13:10). Flowing from love comes the fruit: good works. Luther's *Treatise on Good Works*, as well as his development of the Ten Commandments in both the Small and Large Catechisms, reflects this.

In his conclusion to the commandments, Luther states, "Thus you see how the First Commandment is the chief source and fountainhead from which all the others proceed; again, to it they all return and upon it they depend. so that end and beginning are all linked and bound together" (LC, Conclusion, 329). View the commandments apart from God's love in Christ and you have demands which condemn and crush us. View the commandments through God's love for us in Christ and you will find faith eager and ready to obey. When faith lays hold of God's love, it produces in us love for God (the first commandment) which in turn leads to love for our neighbor.

It is God's love for us, and not our love for God which supplies the power and the motivation for sanctified living. Our love for God is fueled and powered by his love for us. Appeals to Christians to grow in sanctification because of their own love for God will end in frustration and failure. In his treatment of justification in the Apology, Melancthon demonstrated why the Christian's love for God cannot be included in

his justification. He was reacting to Rome's teaching concerning *meritum de condigno* and *de congruo*, and also the teaching concerning *fides caritate formata*. At the same time, he shows how futile it is to point Christians to their own love for God as the power for sanctified living.

He writes, "It is clear why we ascribe justification to faith rather than to love, though love follows faith since love is the keeping of the law. Paul teaches that we are justified not by the law but by the promise, which is received by faith only. We cannot come to God without Christ, the mediator, nor do we receive forgiveness of sin because of our love but because of Christ. We cannot even love an angry God. Therefore we must first take hold of the promise by faith, that for Christ's sake the Father is reconciled and forgiving. Later we begin to keep the law. Far away from human reason, far away from Moses, we must turn our eyes to Christ, and believe that he was given for us, to be justified on his account. In the flesh we never satisfy the law. Thus we are not accounted righteous because of the law but because of Christ, whose merits are conferred on us if we believe in him" (Ap IV, 294-296).

As soon as we are directed to our love for God, we are confronted by God's law, which condemns us for our imperfect love. We cannot love God when we see him angry with us. Only when we are assured God has forgiven us, only when we believe God loves us, will we respond in love to God and also love our neighbor. Yes, there is an inseparable connection between justification and sanctification. Apart from the grace of justification there will be no fuel for faith to produce good works.

This vital connection between justification sanctification, found in Scripture, noted by our Confessions, must be maintained against those who would reject the need for works in the Christian's life, as well as against those who make the law the driving force in sanctification. Where there is justification, there will be sanctification. Where there is sanctification, it has been fueled by God's justification of the sinner.

### **The Object Of Sanctification: The Believer *Simul Justus Et Peccator***

God created Adam and Eve in his image (Ge 1:26-27). This image age, of God consisted in a blissful knowledge of God and his will, holiness and righteousness (Eph 4:22-23, Col 3:9-10). When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they lost the image of God. No longer did they view God as their loving Creator. No longer did they know his will. No longer did they desire to do his will. No longer were they able to carry out His will. So thoroughly was humankind corrupted that, left to ourselves, we never would come to God. Though thoroughly corrupted, however, people still can be converted and sanctified; Article I of the Formula of Concord steers the course between Pelagianism on the one hand, and the Flacian and Manichaean errors on the other. It describes original sin as an accident (SD I, 54), that is, "the deep corruption of our nature." (SD I, 52)

The Formula, in refuting the Flacian error that original sin is the essence of man, states, "In the article of sanctification we have the testimony of Scripture that God cleanses man from sin, purifies him and sanctifies him and that Christ has saved his people from their sins" (SD I, 45). Though we are born in the image of Adam, God can and does renew the believer. What, then, is the state of the believer after conversion?

### **The Christian Is A New Man**

Though we are by nature dead in sin, God makes us alive in Christ (Eph 2:1). Corrupted by sin through our physical birth, God gives us a new birth through baptism (Jn 3:5-6). Though we cannot believe the gospel on our own (1 Co 2:14), God enlightens us by his Spirit so we believe the gospel message (Eph 5:8). Born in rebellion against God, he changes our hearts and lives so we follow his ways (Luke 15:7—repentance, Mt. 18:3-conversion). The result: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Co 5:17). Christians view God as their dear Father (Gal 4:6). They delight in God's will and eagerly carry it out (Ro. 7:22), Christians abhor sin and desire to avoid it (1 Jn 3:9). Empowered by the Spirit, grafted into Christ, the Christian abounds in good works (Jn 15:5, Gal 5:22-23). Christ's love for sinners is the motivating power in the Christian's life (2 Co 5:14-15). The self-serving become self-effacing (Gal 2:20).

In speaking of good works that are in accord with the immutable will of God, the Formula states, "When a person is born anew by the Spirit of God and is liberated from the law (that is, when he is free from this driver and is driven by the Spirit of Christ), he lives according to the immutable will of God as it is comprehended in

the Law, and, in so far as he is born anew, he does everything from a free and merry spirit. These works are, strictly speaking, not works of the law but works and fruits of the Spirit” (SD VI, 17 ).

### **The Christian Has The Old Adam**

At the same time we assert that Christians are new people in Christ, we must also acknowledge that the Old Adam still clings to us as long as we live in this world. In the flesh there is nothing good (Ro 7:18). The flesh opposes God (Ro 8:7). The Christian is both new man and old man in one and the same person. On the one hand, the Christian has put off the Old Adam. On the other, the Old Adam is still with him. In Romans 7, Paul graphically details the power of the old man and its effect on our sanctified lives. This war between the new man and the old man will continue until the day we die (Gal 5:17). In many places the Confessions speak of this dichotomy, as does Luther throughout his writings. As the Formula states, “Since, however, believers are not fully renewed in this life but the Old Adam clings to them down to the grave, the conflict between spirit and flesh continues in them. According to the inmost self they delight in the law of God; but the law in their members is at war against the law of their mind” (SD VI, 18).

It is thus clear that sanctification in the Christian’s life is a process of becoming, rather than a state of being. The Christian’s sanctified life remains imperfect as long as he remains in this world. Over against the possibility of perfectionism, taught by Rome (works of supererogation), the Confessions teach that sanctification remains imperfect in this life. We still need to maintain this against Methodism, the Holiness Bodies, and others who teach that Christians can reach a state of perfection in this life.

Because of the Christian’s dual nature, God speaks to him in paradoxical statements. Because the Christian has a sinful nature, he needs the constant warning, “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Co 10:12). To the new man, however, Christ says, “My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand” (Jn 10:27-28). More of this later the next section where we address the need of the Christian for the law and the gospel in his life.

Because the Christian is old and new man in one person, we must be careful how we describe him. A faulty description of the Christian ignores one of his natures. Statements like “The Christian is always happy,” or, “The Christian is not afraid of death,” may cause a person to doubt he is a Christian when he finds he isn’t happy or is afraid of death. The object of sanctification is the Christian who is *simul justus et peccator*. Both natures are wrapped up in one person.

Recognizing the Old Adam is still operative in Christians will keep us from becoming judgmental about the church and its people when we see failures in the area of sanctified living. It will also help us to rejoice over the fruits of sanctified living God works in us and in other believers, even though these fruits of faith may not be as great in quantity as we would like to see. We need to remember what God has to work with. We will want to thank him for the fruits of faith he enables us and other believers to produce.

### **The Means God Uses To Effect Sanctification: The Gospel In The Word And The Sacraments God Effects Faith And Sanctification Through Means**

God preserves physical life through means: food, drink, clothing, shelter, all we need for body and life. He also preserves faith and effects sanctification through means: the gospel in Word and sacraments (Ro 1:16; 10:14; Tit 3:5; RO 6:3-4). As it states in the Smalcald Articles: “In these matters which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before...Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil” (SA III, VIII, 3, 10).

### **The Relationship Of The Law To The Christian: The Nature And The Purpose Of The Law**

The law is that divine doctrine of Scripture by which God tells us how we are to be (holy), what we are to do and are not to do (commandments), how we measure up to his demands (all have come short of the glory

of God), and what we deserve because of our sin (damnation). The Formula of Concord, in Article V on the law and gospel, defines the law in this way: "Strictly speaking, the law is a divine doctrine which reveals the righteousness and immutable will of God, shows how man ought to be disposed in his nature, thoughts, words, and deeds, in order to be pleasing and acceptable to God, and threatens the transgressors of the law with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishment" (SD V,17).

The original intent of the law was to give life (Ro 7:10). Because of sin, however, the law does not and cannot give life. It is not that God's law changed. Humans changed. The law now condemns us for disobedience. It brings death, not life (Ro 7:10). Since the fall into sin; the law now serves as a mirror, revealing the depth of sin's corruption (Ro 3:20). It exposes as sin, those thoughts of the heart which deviate from God's will (Mt 5:27-28, Ro 7:7) It reveals the depths of human depravity (Ro 7:18). It elicits from the flesh, anger toward God (Ro. 7:5). Just as putting a stick into a nest of hornets will stir up an angry reaction, so the law stirs up rebellion and anger toward God. The problem is not with the law. The problem is with human nature

The law also acts as a curb in a sinful world, checking the outbreak of sin. With its threats of punishment and judgment, it arouses consciences and curbs people from acting on their sinful impulses. The law acts like a chain on a vicious dog. The chain does not make the dog good. It does, however, protect society from the dog. In a similar way, the law does not make people good. It does, however, help to maintain order in a society corrupted by sin.

### **The Christian Is Free From The Law**

Christians are free from the law! In what way are Christians free from the law? They are free from the condemnation they deserve because they have broken God's law. Christ bore that condemnation for us (Gal 3:13, 2 Co 5:19-21). Christians are free to serve God without fear. Their motivation for keeping God's commandments is not, "I better do this or God will punish me." Nor does the Christian need to fear God will punish him because of the imperfection of his sanctification (1 Pe 2:5, Ro 8:1-2). Further, the Christian is free from the law of Moses. Christ fulfilled that Old Covenant. Its commandments, given to Israel of old, are not binding on us (Gal 3:15-25; Acts 15; Col 2:16-17). Finally, the Christian is free from human traditions and rules (Mt 12:1-14;15:8-9). No person can make rules to bind our consciences, as did the rabbis of Jesus' day. This freedom of the Christian is addressed by Article VI of the Formula of Concord. There we read "Truly believing Christians, having been genuinely converted to (god and justified, have been freed and liberated from the curse of the Lon ...It is tree shat the law is not laid down for the just, as St. Yard says (l 7'm l: y), but for the ungodly ... It It is St. S1. Paul's intention that the law cannot impose its curse upon those who through Christ have been reconciled with God, nor may it torture the regenerated with its coercion, for according to the inner man they delight in the law of God" (SD VI, 4, 5)

### **The Christian Still Needs The Law**

Yet, this does not mean that Christians do not need the law. Since Christians still have the Old Adam, they still need the law in their lives. As the Formula stated in connection with the previous quotation, "But this dare nod be understood without qualification, as though the righteous should live without the law" (SD V1, 5). In 1527 Melanchthon drew up articles to be used in Saxony for visitation of the Lutheran churches. In these "visitation" articles he stated that pastors should preach the law to produce repentance. This statement was criticized by John Agricola. He maintained that the gospel, not the law, leads to repentance. This idea was effectively opposed by Luther, but in 1556 this antinomianism was revived by some pastors in Erfurt and Nordhausen. There were two kinds of antinomians. The most extreme rejected the law completely, even as a means to bring about contrition in unbelievers. Their contention was that only the gospel is to be preached, even to the impenitent. The less extreme antinomians recognized the need for the law to bring about repentance in unbelievers. They did not, however, believe the law should be preached to Christians.

This antinomian controversy resulted in Articles V and VI of the Formula of Concord. Article V, "Of the Law and the Gospel," reacted particularly against the extreme form of antinomianism, which failed to recognize the law's function in bringing people to repentance. Article VI, "Of The Third Use Of The Law,"

addressed the less extreme form of antinomianism, concerning itself with the use of the law for the Christian. Concerning Article VI, Prof Armin Schuetze wrote, “ Although [Article VI] is entitled, ‘The Third Use of the Law,’ which we usually limit to the law serving as a guide to the Christian, it is more correct to say that it concerns itself with what we call the Christian and the law...It concerns itself with the purpose which the law serves for the Christian as he now is, in his still imperfect state” (A Christian And The Law: *OGH* III, 137).

Concerning the Christian’s continued need for the law, Article VI states, “If believers and the elect children of God were perfectly renewed in this life through the indwelling Spirit in such a way that in their nature and all its powers they would be totally free from sins, they would require no law, no driver. If themselves and altogether spontaneously, without any instruction, admonition, exhortation, or driving by the law they would do what they are obligated to do according to the will of God. But in this life Christians are not renewed perfectly and completely. For although their sins are covered up through the perfect obedience of Christ, so that they are not reckoned to believers for damnation, and although the Holy Spirit has begun the mortification of the Old Adam and their renewal in the spirit of their minds, nevertheless the Old Adam still clings to their nature and to all its internal and external powers...Hence, because of the desires of the flesh, the truly believing elect ...require in this life not only the daily teaching and admonition, warning and threatening of the law, but frequently the punishment of the law as well, to egg them on so that they follow the Spirit of God” (SDVI; 6,7,9).

The Christian still needs the law as a curb for his sinful flesh. The Formula calls the Old Adam “an intractable, refractory ass” (SD VI, 24--Triglotta). Concerning this stubborn mule, the Formula states, “As far as the Old Adam who still adheres to them is concerned, he must be coerced not only with the law but also with miseries, for he does everything against his will and by coercion, just as the unconverted are driven and coerced into obedience by the threats of the law (1 Co 9:27; Ro 7:18-19)” (SD VI, 19)

The Christian still needs the law as a mirror to reveal his sin and desperate need for the Savior. Article VI states, “Believers, furthermore, require the teaching of the law in connection with their good works, because otherwise they can easily imagine that their works and life are perfectly pure and holy. But the law of God prescribes good works for faith in such a way that, as in a mirror, it shows and indicates to them that in this life our good works are imperfect and impure” (SD VI, 21).

Finally, the Christian also needs the law as a guide. As Prof Schuetze stated in his essay, “In so far as he is new man, he knows God’s will and needs no instruction, but because of the flesh that still is present, his knowledge is still very imperfect, is often beclouded and becomes perverted and is misled. It is because of his flesh that he often does not fully know what God really wants of him” (*OGH* III, 140). He then quotes Article VI: “Believers, furthermore, require the reaching of the law so that they will not be thrown back on their own holiness and piety and under the pretext of the Holy Spirit’s guidance set up a self-elected service of God without his Word and command” (SD VI, 20). These words of the Confessions were aimed at the self-chosen piety of the Roman Church. More of this when we reach the section on good works

We can logically divide these various functions of the law and recognize how each addresses itself to the Christian. Yet, because the Christian cannot be divided between flesh and spirit but constitutes one person, we cannot in practice continually divide between the various functions of the law. While we may teach a commandment to guide people, the commandment at the same time will be revealing how we have fallen far short of what God demands, as well as how the Old Adam still needs to be curbed because it hinders us in our sanctified lives. As the Formula states, “ When Paul admonishes those who have been born anew to do good works, he holds up before them precisely the Ten Commandments (Ro 13: 9), and he himself learns from the law, that his works are still imperfect and impure” (SD VI, 21).

What, then, is the relationship of the law to the Christian? We will let Prof Schuetze’s summary conclude this section: “In so far as the Christian is a new man, reborn, he is completely free from the law. The law has nothing to say to him. Its coercion and threats cannot reach him. Its instruction is not needed, for the new man has the mind of Christ. But since the Christian still has flesh, an Old Adam, and so is not as yet perfectly renewed, does not know the will of God perfectly, he needs to be instructed from the law what kind of works will be pleasing to God as a fruit of his faith, his flesh will need the law as a curb to keep it in check;

above all, he will ever need to have the law continue to reveal to him that all his righteousness are still filthy rags because of his flesh, that he needs in daily contrition and repentance to cast himself completely upon the mercy and grace of his bpd in Christ Jesus” (*OGH III*, 147).

**While The Law Is Useful In Sanctification, It Cannot Produce Sanctification. Only The Gospel In The Word And The Sacraments Can Produce Sanctification.**

The law is useful in sanctification. Revealing sin, curbing the Old Adam, it also shows us the life God would have us lead. Though the law guides us, however, it does not have the ability to take us where it points us. The law is like a road map. The map shows me how to get from New Ulm to Mankato. The way is clearly marked out. However, unless there is gasoline in my car, I will not go anywhere. The law, like the road map, shows me the way to go. The gospel, like the gasoline, gets me there. As Article VI states, “It is also necessary to set forth distinctly what the gospel does, creates, and works in connection with the new obedience of believers and what function the law performs in this matter, as far as the good works of believers are concerned the law indeed tells us that it is God’s will and command that we should walk in the new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin it or to do it. It is the Holy Spirit, who is not given and received through the law but through the preaching of the gospel (Gal 3:2, 14), who renews the heart. Then he employs the law to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable will of God is (Ro 12:2) and in what good works, which God has prepared beforehand, they should walk (Eph 2:10)”(SD VI, 10-12).

The law demands, but gives no power to obey. The command does not imply the ability to comply. Luther criticized Erasmus, who was recognized as the most distinguished linguist of the day, because he did not see that there is a real difference between the indicative and the imperative mood. Erasmus had argued that from a command of God (Be holy, because I am holy!), it was possible to conclude man’s ability to fulfill that command. Luther responded, “My dear Erasmus, as often as you quote the words of the law against me, I shall quote Paul’s statement against you, that through the law comes knowledge of sin, not virtue in the will. Heap up, therefore, all the imperative verbs...into one chaotic mass, and provided they are not words of promise, but of demand and the law, I shall say at once that what is signified by them is always what men ought to do and not what they do or can do. This is something that even grammarians and street urchins know, that by verbs of the imperative mood nothing else is signified but what ought to be done. What is done, or can be done, must be expressed by indicative verbs” (*Bondage of the Will: Luther’s Works*, AE, 33:127).

Luther identifies another distinction we ought to note: the difference between a law imperative and a gospel imperative. Law imperatives reveal God’s will, demand that people comply, but give no ability to comply; gospel imperatives reveal God’s saving will and, at the same time, give the ability to do what God encourages. The commands to believe, to preach the gospel to all creation, to baptize, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper (in the OT, to circumcise), are not moral law. They are directives by which God sets in motion faith, preaching and the use of the sacraments.

Through the gospel God empowers sanctification. God’s love, Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, what God has done for the sinner’s salvation—this is the message through which the Holy Spirit produces sanctification and causes good works to flourish. The law may point the way, but only the gospel will enable us to live sanctified lives. The law may produce the result of civic righteousness(which often seems so impressive when we are waiting for the fruits of faith to be produced), but this is not sanctification. The Mormons may be able to pay for their buildings before they build them, because they have assessed a tithe of all their members. Better, however, is the widow’s mite given freely from faith, than millions squeezed out of people by the law.

Not only has God given us his spoken and written gospel for our sanctification, he has also given us the “visible Word” (Ap XIII, 5), the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It is in this area that I raise the question, “How often do we make use of the sacraments in the area of sanctification?” Our flesh is often attracted by the law-driven seven steps to here or the five steps to there, drawn up by the Reformed. The Confessions, however, direct us to make use of the gospel and sacraments as the means whereby God empowers

sanctified living. Let us hear again what they have to say concerning the value of the sacraments in sanctification

Scripture speaks of the sanctifying power of Baptism (Tit 3:5, Ro 6). In his Small Catechism (Part IV of Baptism) Luther indicates that Baptism empowers sanctified living. In his Large Catechism, he writes, "Thus a Christian life is nothing else than it daily Baptism, once began and ever continued If you live i» repentance, therefore you are hulking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life bill also produces, begins, acrd promotes it. In Baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and power to suppress the old man so that the new may come forth acrd grow strong" (LC, Baptism, 66, 76).

Here Luther highlights a major difference between Lutheran theology, on the one hand, and Roman and Reformed theology, on the other. In Roman theology the sacraments are the means by which the church dispenses the "divine assistance" (*gratia infusa*) to work out your own salvation. Justification, then, becomes process of sanctified living. In much of Reformed theology (particularly from the Arminian tradition) the gospel becomes information to be acted upon by an individual's personal decision. The sacraments are considered commands we must keep, and sanctification becomes a matter of commands and compliance. In Lutheran theology, the gospel and the sacraments give salvation and are the means through which God gives the ability to lead a sanctified life.

Concerning the Lord's Supper, Luther writes, "Therefore it is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man. While it is true that through Baptism we are first born anew, our human flesh and blood have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint, at times even stumble. The Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger" (LC, Lord's Supper, 23-24).

In his exhortations concerning the Lord's Supper, Luther demonstrates the law/gospel approach. He states, "It is to be feared that anyone who does ran desire to receive the sacrament at least three or four times a year despises the sacrament and is not Christian, just as he is not Christian who does not hear and believe the gospel. Christ did not say: 'Omit this,' or 'Despise this,' but hr said 'Do this, as often as you drink it,' etc. Surely he wishes that this be done and not that it be omitted and despised. 'Do this,' he said...Accordingly, you are not to make a law of this, as the pope has done. All you need to do is clearly to set forth the advantage and disadvantage, the benefit and loss, the blessing and danger connected with this sacrament. Then the people will come of their accord and without compulsion on your part" (Preface to the Small Catechism, 22, 24).

In connection with the sacraments, we should also mention absolution. Though Melancthon lists it in the number of the sacraments in the *Apology* (XIII, 3), he does not include the earthly element used in connection with the word of God in his definition of a sacrament. Luther, in the *Large Catechism* (L C. Baptism, speaks of two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, we should not forget about absolution. The *Augsburg Confession* states, "It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse" (AC XI, 1).

Why should private absolution be retained? J. Meyer speaks of the evangelical reason. He writes, "As the appointed messenger of God (he) can present the comforting message of the gospel in such a way that it exactly fits our case, and he can in the name of God give us the assurance that we are the very ones for whom Christ died and washed away our troublesome sin in his blood. He can remind us of our Baptism in which God received us as his dear children. He can encourage us to take Communion as God's pledge and seal of our pardon for a strengthening of our faith (*Studies In The Augsburg Confession*, 60). He also speaks of the pedagogical purpose, as an occasion to examine ourselves lest some pet sin gain a stronghold our heart.

Concerning absolution the *Apology* states, "The power of the keys administers and offers the gospel through absolution since 'faith comes from what is heard' (Ro 10: 17)." Hearing the gospel and hearing absolution strengthens and consoles the conscience. Because God truly quickens through tire Word, the keys truly forgive .sins before him, according to the statement (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you, hears me'" (Ap XII, 38). The Confessions speak frequently of absolution giving the forgiveness of sins. Where there is the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit is also at work sanctifying lives.

Throughout this section, the Confessions' concern for the proper application of law and gospel is apparent. It is this proper distinction between law and gospel, and particularly, the gospel approach to sanctification, that is a distinctive feature of our Confessions. As J.A.O. Preus observed, "We probably are correct in asserting that the doctrine of the proper distinction between law and gospel is a doctrine which developed almost entirely and only on Lutheran soil, as was the case also with the concept of *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, the universal priesthood of all believers, the peculiarly Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and several other points. As a person traces the development of the doctrine in early Lutheran history, he will quickly note that the concept of law and gospel developed along with several other doctrinal points, in which we can observe that Luther made several advances and improvements in his theology, that he and Melancthon in the early years worked closely together and supplemented one another, and that in certain points not often noted by Lutherans who have always had trouble with Melancthon the fact is that Melancthon often influenced Luther in very salutary directions, and ideas which at first were most firmly asserted by Melancthon came in time to be even more strongly promoted by Luther. Such is the case also with what we today, with Luther, hold to be one of the cornerstones of Lutheran theology: namely, the doctrine of the proper distinction between law and gospel. The Lutherans were at odds with the enthusiasts over this question from the outset, and Calvin has no locus on the subject in his *Institutes*, and the doctrine has been largely unknown or ignored in Reformed circles to this day" (Chemnitz On Law And Gospel: *Concordia Journal*, October 1989, 409).

It might also be added that the Lutheran Confessions remind us of the proper use of the law. They do not teach the law as an avenue of salvation. They do not preach the law as a means to self-induced contrition (active contrition vs. passive contrition—SA 111, 111, 12). They do not preach the law as a mere condemnation of the evils of the world while ignoring the evil that lurks within each heart. They use the law in sanctification but not as the means for producing sanctification.

Christian teaching in the area of sanctification, then, involves the proper distinction between law and gospel. It is a matter of steering a course between the Scylla of antinomianism and the Charybdis of legalism. Antinomianism can turn the gospel into a new law. Legalism turns the law into a new gospel. Legalism presents the will of God and says you must do this because God says so, not because God's love constrains you. Legalism and its first cousin, moralizing, are what we generally find the Reformed offering us in the area of sanctification.

The results of legalism are not trivial. As Article V of the Formula states, "The mere preaching of the law without Christ either produces presumptuous people, who believe that they can fulfill the law by external works, or drives man utterly to despair" (SD V, 10). Pharisaism or despair—this is where the law by itself leads, and neither is a good place to be. This is why the gospel must predominate in our schools, our churches, our pastoral counseling, etc. Legalism will either puff people up with false pride or leave them burned out, turned off, and in despair. As Melancthon observed in the Apology, only the sweet gospel of free grace can console the sinner and enable him to love God. Where only the law is applied, consciences are tortured and souls are harmed (Ap XII, 31-43) 31-4 3).

One more point before we close this section: prayer is not a means of grace. Through prayer we extend our hands to God. Through the means of grace, God gives his grace to us. Certainly, prayer is a vital part of the Christian's life. But we cannot pray ourselves into a more sanctified life. God will answer our prayer for new vitality in sanctification through the gospel in Word and sacraments. If we look to prayer by itself to accomplish sanctification, we are missing the real means through which God forgives sins and energizes Christian lives.

### **Good Works Constitute The Sanctified Life**

Good works are the concrete deeds which make up the sanctified life. Only believers can do them (Heb 11:6). While the unbeliever may do what is beneficial in a horizontal relationship with his fellowman, he cannot do good in his vertical relationship with God (Isa 64:6). Good works are fruits of faith (Gal 5:22) which flow from love (Ro 13:10). Good works are not deeds of a self-determined piety (Mic 6:6-8; 1 Sa 15:22), nor can they be determined by the church (Mt 15:9). They are those works commanded by God (Ro 13:10, Ps 119:9)

and done for his glory (Mt 6:1-5). Good works are not perfectly good, in and of themselves. All good works of the believer are contaminated by sin. Nevertheless, they are acceptable to God for Christ's sake (1 Pe 2:5).

The church in Luther's day invented all kinds of works they regarded as superior to those performed in normal vocations. Concerning such "traditions" the Augsburg Confession states, "These traditions were exalted far above God's commands. This also was regarded as Christian life: whoever observed festivals in this way, prayed in this way, fasted in this way, and dressed in this way was said to live a spiritual and Christian life. On the other hand, other necessary good works were considered secular and unspiritual: the works which everybody is obliged to do according to his calling—for example, that a husband should support his wife and children and bring them up in the fear of God, that a wife should bear children and care for them, that a prince and magistrates should govern land and people, etc. Such works, commanded by God, were to be regarded as secular and imperfect, while traditions were to be given the glamorous title of alone being holy and perfect works" (AC XXVI, 8-11). Men went off on crusades and pilgrimages, or entered monasteries, leaving their wives and children behind to fend for themselves. The Confessors told them they should stay home and do what God commands rather than think they are serving God by a service they invented for themselves.

When we think of this, we are reminded of the rules of self-determined piety found in Catholicism, Pietism, Methodism, etc. But we need to be aware that our Old Adam is quite capable of doing exactly what the Confessions condemn. Do we feel that our people will live holier lives if they are busy with something at the church every night than if they stay home and spend sometime with their families? Those of us involved in the ministry also face the temptation to justify a neglect of responsibilities toward wife and children by saying we are doing something more important at church. Is it nobler for us to take a pilgrimage into our studies than it is to give our wife a hand by changing the baby's diaper? Yes, even changing the baby's diaper is a good work when done in faith. Is it God-pleasing to spend an inordinate amount of time listening to the hypochondriac who glories in her misery when our wife may be in misery because we don't spend any time with her? We have responsibilities as ministers of the gospel, as husbands, and as fathers. Though we will give the Lord the first place in our lives, we do not glorify him by shirking our responsibilities as husbands and fathers.

### **The Christian's Life Is A Life Under The Cross**

There have been those throughout the ages who tell us, if we simply follow the steps God gives us in his Word, our lives will be successful and God will shower his temporal blessings upon us. Someone should have told Job of this theology of success. The Christian's life is not, as one newspaper columnist stated, a matter of overstuffed church people sitting on overstuffed chairs. The Christian's life is, first of all, a life of daily repentance.

As the Apology states, "Beside this mortification brought on by the cross, a voluntary kind of exercise is also necessary. Of this Christ says (Luke 21:34), 'Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation,' and Paul says (1 Co 9:27). 'I pummel my body and subdue it.' We should undertake these exercises not as services that justify but as restraints on our flesh, lest we be overcome by satiety and become complacent and idle with the result that we indulge and pamper the desires of our flesh. In this we must be diligent at all times because God commands it at all times" (Ap X V, 46-48. Cf. also Fourthly of Baptism).

The Christian life is also a matter of suffering for the sake of the gospel. The devil and the world leave the Christian no rest. They hated Christ; they also hate those who are Christ's. As Luther observes in his explanation of the Third Petition, " (The devil) cannot bear to have anyone teach or believe rightly. It pains him beyond measure when his lies and abominations ...are disclosed and exposed...Therefore, like a furious foe, he raves and rages with all his power and might, marshaling all his subjects and even enlisting the world and our flesh as his allies..Therefore we who would be Christians must surely count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies and must count on their inflicting every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's Word is preached, accepted or believed, and bears fruit, there the blessed holy cross will not be far away. Let nobody think that he will have peace" (LC, Third Petition. 63, 65).

The Christian is a sinner living in a sin corrupted world. He must daily fight against the unholy trinity of the devil, the world, and his own flesh. As a sinner, he is heir to the ravages sin has brought into the world. As a

child of God he lives under the loving discipline God sends into our lives to keep us close to himself. Yet, though the Christian life is a life under the cross, it is still a life of hope. As the Formula states, “This doctrine (of election) will also give us the glorious comfort, in times of trial and affliction, that in his counsel before the foundation of the world God has determined and decreed that he will assist us in all other necessities, grant us patience, give us comfort, create hope, and bring everything to such an issue that we shall be saved. Again, Paul presents this in a most comforting manner when he points out that before the world began God ordained all his counsel through which specific cross and affliction he would conform each of his elect to ‘the image of his Son,’ and that in each case the afflictions should and must ‘work together for good’ since they are ‘called according to his purpose’” (S D X1, 4 8-49).

### **Contend For The Faith That Was Once For All Entrusted To The Saints (Jude 3)**

We have reviewed the basics of what the Lutheran Confessions say concerning sanctification. These matters are not new to us. In fact, they are of daily use to us, in our own lives, and in our ministry to the flock God has entrusted to our care. However, there is a danger that familiarity can breed contempt. When confronted by this danger, Luther’s exhortation in the Preface to his Large Catechism is useful. Luther writes, “I once again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to try to be doctors prematurely and to imagine that they know everything .. Let all Christians exercise themselves in the Catechism daily, and constantly put it into practice, guarding themselves with the greatest care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security or vanity. Let them continue to read and teach, to learn and meditate and ponder. Let them never stop until they have proved by experience that they have taught the devil to death and have become wiser than God himself and all his saints. If they show such diligence, then I promise them—and their experience will bear, me out—that they will gain much fruit and God will make excellent men of them. Then in due time they themselves will make the noble confession that the longer they work with the Catechism, the less they know of it and the more they have to learn. Only then; hungry and thirsty, will they truly relish what now they cannot hear to smell because they are so bloated and surfeited. To this end may God grant his grace,” (LC, Preface, 19-20).

There is also a danger that we may be tempted to try shortcuts to produce sanctification in our churches when we do not see the results we would like to see. When I served in the parish ministry, it seemed as if it was always a struggle to receive enough through offerings to meet the bills. When one of my elders told me that the charismatic church just outside of town was bringing in over \$20,000 every Sunday night, I wondered if there was something they knew that I didn’t. When we see Promise Keepers filling football stadiums with high-fiveing men, or the “evangelical” churches busting out of their existing facilities, we are tempted to think they have something we don’t. After all, what they are doing seems to be working.

We look at our own churches and lament: attendance is sagging, contributions are lagging, the council’s feet are dragging, the membership is aging, and the ladies aid is raging, etc. Should we abandon our heritage of law and gospel in favor of the tools the Reformed, in general, the “evangelicals” of today, in specific, offer us? God forbid we should be sucked in by Schuller, swindled by Swindoll, duped by Dobson, or misled by McCartney. Before we buy into the mess of pottage they offer, caveat emptor! As the prophets of Jericho said to Elisha, “O man of God, there is death in the pot” (2 Kgs 4:40). The gospel they proclaim is not the gospel of free grace but of free will. Their justification is not the forensic and objective justification of Scripture, but a justification based on an inner transformation in the Christian. They turn the sacraments into symbols or sacrifices: Their treatment of sanctification is either sans law or driven by the law. The end result of sanctification-based justification, antinomianism or legalism, is Phariseism or despair.

We are not saying the aforementioned are not Christians. Only God can judge the heart. By a happy inconsistency, the gospel may still be found in their midst: Yet; their, way for sanctification is not God’s way. They have a different spirit. The Lutheran Confessions have given us an heritage which will serve us and our people well in our ministry today. The Confessions’ bottom line is not purity of doctrine for purity’s sake (orthodoxism), but purity of doctrine with correct application of law and gospel in the interest of souls. As shepherds of God’s flock, we will use the tools God has, given us for ministry. Law-driven sanctification may produce outward results, but law-driven sanctification is not God’s way. It is the way of the Old Adam, a

reflection of the *opinio legis* which still lurks in each of us. We will use the tools God has entrusted to us to carry out our ministry.

The results are up to God. Not everyone will welcome the message we bring. The prophets proclaimed law and gospel, and they were stoned and killed (Mt 23:37) Some will listen but lapse. The same Israelites who had to be told to stop bringing offerings for the tabernacle because they brought too much (Ex 35 5-7), grumbled and complained their way through the wilderness Some will hear and bear abundant fruit (Mt 13:23, Ac 2:42-7). The Christian ministry is similar to farming. We plant, water, fertilize, weed, prune, and nurture. God must give the increase May God keep us faithful in the proper use of law, gospel and sacraments, as we patiently wait for him to produce the harvest of salvation and sanctification, which is his alone to give.

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