

According to Christ's teaching they should abstain from their sins, repent, believe His promise, and entirely trust in Him. Since we cannot do this by ourselves, by our own powers, the Holy Spirit desires to work these things—repentance and faith—in us through the Word and Sacraments. In order that we may receive this, persevere in it, and remain steadfast, we should beg God for His grace, which He has promised us in Holy Baptism. No doubt He will give it to us according to His promise, as He has said,

What father among you, if his son asks [him for bread, will give him a stone; or if he asks] for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:11–13)

In the same way this doctrine must also be guarded on the other side against Manichaean errors. So the following erroneous doctrines are rejected and so are similar doctrines: in the beginning, human nature was created pure and good, but after the fall original sin is infused and mixed with the nature from outside itself by Satan (as something essential). It is like when poison is mingled with wine.

Human nature was originally created pure, good, and holy in Adam and Eve. Sin did not enter their nature through the fall in the way enthusiastically taught by the Manichaeans, as though Satan had created or made some evil substance and mixed it with their nature. By Satan's seduction through the fall, Adam lost his created state of hereditary righteousness according to God's judgment and sentence. Human nature is perverted and corrupted as a punishment, by this deprivation or deficiency, want, and injury, that was caused by Satan. So now human nature is passed down (together with this defect and corruption) to all people, who are conceived and born in a natural way from father and mother. Since the fall, human nature is not created pure and good at first, but only afterward corrupted by original sin. In the first moment of our conception the seed from which a person is formed is sinful and corrupt [Psalm 51:5]. Furthermore, original sin is not something by itself, existing independently in, or apart from, the nature of the corrupt person. It is neither the real essence, body, or soul of the corrupt person or the person himself. Original sin and human nature (corrupted by original sin) cannot and should not be distinguished as though the nature were pure, good, holy, and uncorrupted before God, while original sin alone (which dwells in human nature) is evil....

Let this be enough, according to the plan of this document, as a summary explanation of the doctrine of justification by faith. For this is described at length in the above-mentioned

writings. From these, the antitheses (i.e., the false contrary doctrines) also are clear. In other words, in addition to the errors listed above, the following and similar errors must be rebuked, exposed, and rejected, since they conflict with the explanation now published, as when it is taught:

1. Our love or good works are a merit or cause of justification before God, either entirely or at least in part.
2. Or by good works a person must make himself worthy and fit so that Christ's merit may be given to him.
3. Our real righteousness before God is the love or renewal the Holy Spirit works in us and which is in us.
4. Or two things or parts belong to the righteousness of faith before God: (a) the gracious forgiveness of sins, and then, (b) renewal or sanctification.
5. Faith justifies only initially; either in part or primarily, and that our newness or love justifies even before God, either completely or secondarily.
6. Believers are justified before God, or are righteous before God, both by credit and by beginning to act righteous at the same time, or partly by the credit of Christ's righteousness and partly by the beginning of new obedience.

7. The application of the promise of grace happens both by faith of the heart and confession of the mouth, and also by other virtues. This means that faith makes righteous for this reason alone, that righteousness is begun in us by faith, or (in this way) that faith takes the first step in justification. Nevertheless, renewal and love also belong to our righteousness before God. However, love belongs in such a way that it is not the chief cause of our righteousness. But our righteousness before God is not entire and complete without such love and renewal. Likewise, believers are justified and righteous before God at the same time

by the righteousness given by Christ and the initial, new obedience, or in part by the crediting of Christ's righteousness and in part by beginning new obedience. Likewise, the promise of grace is gained for us by faith in the heart and confession made with the mouth, and by other virtues.

This is incorrect—a person must be saved in some other way or through something other than justification before God. So we are indeed justified before God through faith alone, without works. But it is impossible to be saved without works or obtain salvation without works.

This is false because it is directly opposed to the declaration of Paul, “[Blessed is] the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works” (Romans 4:6). Paul's reason is that we receive both salvation and righteousness in one and the same way. In fact, when we are justified through faith, we receive adoption at the same time and are made heirs of eternal life and salvation. For this reason Paul uses and emphasizes the exclusive terms, that is, those words by which works and our own merits are entirely excluded. He uses “by grace,” “apart from works,” as forcibly in the article about salvation as in the article about righteousness....

Whoever would be saved should not trouble or torment himself with thoughts about God's secret counsel, about whether he also is elected and ordained to eternal life. Miserable Satan usually attacks with these thoughts and afflicts godly hearts. But they should hear Christ, who is the Book of Life, and hear about God's eternal election to eternal life for all of His children. Christ testifies to all people without distinction that it is God's will that all people should come to Him “who labor and are heavy laden” with sin, in order that He may give them rest and save them [Matthew 11:28].