

What is the NATURE OF FAITH IN JUSTIFICATION?

- Thesis 1: From eternity and throughout time, the God of the Tetragrammaton has acted and revealed himself as the unique deity, who always chooses first and foremost to deal compassionately with rebellious mankind.
- Thesis 2: True gospel preachers shall speak of this compassion both positively, as an active love by which God blesses all sinners with free gifts, and negatively, as his fervent desire to withhold condemnation, commute all punishment, and suspend (if not obliterate) any form of death.
- Thesis 3: The LORD showed his compassion most explicitly starting within the eternal counsel of the Trinity by speaking into existence a declaration of forgiveness, which God the Son would earn for all humanity by the payment of Christ's atoning blood.
- Thesis 4: God's Word tells about this absolving declaration in such a way that we may know the heavenly Trinity announced not only the removal of worldwide guilt, but also the imputing of righteousness for everything redeemed by Jesus' holy blood.
- Thesis 5: Since God Almighty announced his Son would achieve absolution of universal sin, it devalues the blood of our Lord Jesus to say the God-man's holy life, innocent death, and his exaltation accomplished anything less than forgiveness of the world's offenses against our Creator.
- Thesis 6: The Word of the Lord also makes this forgiveness into an object that any sinner in the world may, through the miraculous working of God's Spirit, apprehend.
- Thesis 7: Often, God's Word calls this forgiving entity: "righteousness," barely distinguishing between the item called "righteousness" or "forgiveness" and Christ himself.
- Thesis 8: In order for God to make reliable his declaration to absolve and re-pristiniate the universe, he ordained and worked and completed Christ's justifying act without regarding any kind of merit, virtue, deed, or disposition in the sinners he saved.
- Thesis 9: Holy Scripture teaches that, although our Father spoke to God the Son this declaration justifying the ungodly without ever seeing any reason for it in them, still the Lord did not declare this only within the Trinity, but wanted it bestowed on wicked mankind, for whom he intended it.
- Thesis 10: Since the Formula of Concord: Article III takes such pains to exclude from the righteousness of faith works by any person except Jesus, Christian teachers will differentiate carefully between justification's Second Article reality and its Third Article realization (like Luther commenting on Galatians or John) so as not to distract from Christ's completed righteousness.
- Thesis 11: Biblical texts, the ancient church fathers, and the Lutheran Reformers use terms like "reconcile," "redemption," and "atone" (along with their linguistic derivatives) to present from various perspectives the same gospel of justification or forgiveness.

- Thesis 12: Because of God's justifying declaration to his Son in eternity, Christ did not stay dead, but resurrected to demonstrate that he left universal guilt buried in his grave thus earning vivification for all he created, both those who believe it & the damned, since the Lord says about the Last Day that both groups will rise bodily from death.
- Thesis 13: The problem of people without justifying faith is not that the Lord withholds or that there is for them no forgiveness, righteousness, Christ, heaven, justification, angels, or kingdom of God; rather, the problem of unbelievers is they cannot see any of it.
- Thesis 14: When believers speak about "*the righteousness of faith*," the term "*faith*" modifies the preceding "*righteousness*" adverbially describing it according to the only means for receiving it, like an aroma that describes the general idea of food one might eat.
- Thesis 15: Theologians do well to avoid talking about "*faith*" as the cause, origin, or source of a Christian's *righteousness* unless the topic has changed from discussing "justification in God's sight" to discussing the cause, origin, or source of a believer's good deeds.
- Thesis 16: Since we help no one by speaking of *faith* as the cause, source, or origin of its righteousness, Christians can instead describe the aroma or character of this "righteousness" properly in a way that understands the modifying term "of faith" as a means or instrument, a hidden organ that thrives on other unseen substances.
- Thesis 17: From Bible verses, faithful testimonies of church history, and even humbly reflecting on attacks from heretics whom God graciously sends to test believers, we can learn that our Lord rarely (if ever) wants us to talk about the universal scope of objective justification without also imploring those who hear it to receive it in subjective faith.
- Thesis 18: All humans, who have this organ of the soul quickened and find themselves making use of it, comprise a distinct party and an eternally blessed group separate from those souls, in whom this spiritual instrument remains or becomes dead in unbelief.
- Thesis 19: On the one hand, any soul found without the righteousness of faith when its time of grace expires will go straight to the torments of hell forever, but on the other hand, this fact has no bearing on and doesn't belong in any discussion of justification.
- Thesis 20: It confuses law and gospel quite severely whenever anyone adulterates the comfort & joy God intended by affixing pronouncements of guilt to the article of justification.
- Thesis 21: Although the sinner at conversion only becomes a passive recipient in this work because of the Holy Spirit's gracious miracle, the fact remains that Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions do talk about believing as a *work* that God requires according to the FIRST Commandment.
- Thesis 22: If God had not declared a gracious pardoning of all people throughout history, sinful human ministers could never carry out Jesus' assignment to absolve anyone confidently without (in the process) claiming to have an attribute that Scripture teaches shall belong only to God, namely, the ability to read human hearts.