

The Smalcald Articles

Lesson Three

The Church Stands or Falls

Part II, Article I

The Second Part

Treats of the Articles which Refer to the Office and Work of Jesus Christ, or Our Redemption.

This is the first and chief article: [Q1]

1] Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins, and rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25). [Q2]

2] And He alone is the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). [Q3] God has laid all our sins on Him (Isaiah 53:6). [Q4]

3] Likewise: All have sinned and are justified without earning it by His grace, [Q5] through the redemption from Jesus Christ that is in His blood (Romans 3:23-25).

4] Since this must be believed, and it cannot be acquired or grasped in any other way, by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3:28: *We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.* Likewise in 3:26 . . . *so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.* [Q6]

5] Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even if heaven and earth, and whatever will not remain, falls. [Q7] *There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved,* Peter says in Acts 4:12. And in Isaiah 53:5 we read, *By his wounds we are healed.* All that we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the world depend on this article. [Q8] Therefore, we must be absolutely certain concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and everything else will defeat and triumph over us. [Q9]

Discuss

1. What does justification mean? [Preface]
2. Go to the source. [Para 1]
Read Romans 4:25.
 - What trade does this verse describe?
3. Go to the source. [Para 2]
Read Hebrews 9:19-28.
 - Why did John the Baptist call Christ a Lamb (John 1:29)?
 - Is there any need for more sacrifices for our sins?

- Some people have a problem with this statement: “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Why do you suppose that is?

4. You make the call. [Para 2]

Tom’s mother has a very sensitive conscience. Even though she regularly attends church, she sometimes makes comments like, “If I get into heaven.” She clearly believes that other Christians are better than she is. What comfort can Tom offer her from Isaiah’s statement: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6)?

5. Go to the source. [Para 3]

Compare Romans 3:23,24 with Ephesians 2:8,9.

- What does *grace* mean?

6. If Jesus paid for all the sins of all people everywhere, why aren’t all people saved? [Para 4]

7. How much room is there for having a different understanding of these issues? [Para 5]

8. Why does all that we teach and practice depend on this article? [Para 5]

9. You make the call. [Para 5]

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, some Lutherans and some Catholics have been trying to overcome the division between the two churches. In 1999, they signed a convergence on the doctrine of justification. In order for that convergence to be real, what position must it take regarding how we are declared righteous before God? What judgment must we render if the convergence does not teach the true doctrine of justification?

During the week

1. Reread Part II, Article I.
2. Read Part II, Article II, paragraphs 1-10.
3. Why do you suppose so many churches and people misunderstand the doctrine of justification? During the week, think about the forces and the opinions that you come into contact with in your life and even in your own heart that lead you away from a true understanding of justification by faith.