

## “Joy and Sweetness to a Broken Heart”

### God’s Justifying and Sanctifying Love according to Martin Luther

#### PART ONE

#### Loved, Lovely, and Loving: The Redeeming Power of God’s Justifying Love



1. *Anfechtungen* (intense spiritual tribulations) and *Wiedergeburt* (rebirth)

**Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

**Psalms 22:1** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

2. Doing Your Best: The Popular Theology of Luther’s Day

- a. Do what is in you!
- b. What is in you?

3. Throwing Down the Gauntlet: The Heidelberg Disputation (April 1518)<sup>1</sup>

- a. What then is in you? Luther’s attack on our good works.

**Ephesians 2:1** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.

**Jeremiah 2:13** For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

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<sup>1</sup> Latin text: *WA* 1, 355-74; English translation: *AL* 1, 80-120. The standard critical edition of Luther’s works in Latin and German is *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883-2009) (abbreviated as *WA*). The standard English translation of Luther’s works is *Luther’s Works* (American Edition), ed. Helmut Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress/Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986) (abbreviated as *LW*). Updated English translations of select works have appeared more recently in *The Annotated Luther*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert, 6 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017) (abbreviated as *AL*).

**Isaiah 64:6** We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

**Heidelberg Thesis 16:** “The person who believes that one can obtain grace “by doing what is in oneself” adds sin to sin and thus becomes doubly guilty.”<sup>2</sup>

**Heidelberg Thesis 17:** “Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but rather for humility, for it arouses the desire to seek the grace of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

4. An Ernest Mirror: “A Sermon on the Meditation of Christ’s Holy Passion, 1519”<sup>4</sup>

a. In the cross we see ourselves as wretched sinners

b. On the cross the old Adam is executed

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

c. In the cross we see the friendly heart of Christ:

“ . . . pass through [the suffering] and see Christ’s friendly heart and how full of love it is toward you that it impels him to carry with heaviness your conscience and your sin. Then your heart will be sweet toward him, and the confidence of faith will be strengthened. Now go further and rise through Christ’s heart to God’s heart, and you will see that Christ would not have shown his love for you if God, to whom Christ with his love for you is obedient, did not want to hold [you] in eternal love. There you will find the divine, good, fatherly heart.”<sup>5</sup>

5. God’s justifying love makes us lovely (cf. Ephesians 5:25-30; Revelation 19:6-8)

**Heidelberg Thesis 28:** “God’s love does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it.”<sup>6</sup>

**Proof for Thesis 28:** “Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows out and bestows good. For this reason, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive . . . This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good, which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the evil and needy person.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> AL 1, 83.

<sup>3</sup> AL 1, 83.

<sup>4</sup> German text: WA 2, 136-42; English translation: AL 1, 169-78.

<sup>5</sup> AL 1, 176-77. Cf. John 1:18.

<sup>6</sup> AL 1, 85.

<sup>7</sup> AL 1, 104-105.

## 6. God's justifying love joins us to Christ, as a bride to her husband

Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers?

. . . He shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow him up, these were necessarily swallowed up by him in a mighty duel; for his righteousness is greater than the sins of all men, his life stronger than death, his salvation more invincible than hell. Thus, the believing soul by means of the pledge of its faith is free in Christ, its bridegroom, free from all sins, secure against death and hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of Christ its bridegroom . . . Who then can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, "If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his," as the bride in the Song of Solomon [2:16] says, "My beloved is mine and I am his."<sup>8</sup>

## 7. Good works and the Bride's vow to Christ: "I am yours"

- a. Two kinds of righteousness, Christ's and the believer's (the tree and its fruit):

"through the first righteousness arises the voice of the bridegroom who says to the soul, 'I am yours,' but through the second comes the voice of the bride who answers, 'I am yours' . . . Then the soul no longer seeks to be righteous in and for itself, but it has Christ as its righteousness and therefore seeks only the welfare of others."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "The Freedom of a Christian," trans. W. A. Lambert in *Three Treatises*, 2d rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 286-87.

<sup>9</sup> "Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness" (*AL* 2, 17).

## PART TWO

### The Spirit and the Communion of Saints

#### Abiding in God's Sanctifying Love



#### 1. Daily Catechism

- a. Ten Commandments; Creed; Lord's Prayer; Sacraments
- b. Regular Ruminations: "In such reading, conversation, and meditation the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new and greater light and fervour, so that day by day we relish and appreciate the Catechism more greatly."<sup>10</sup>

#### 2. The Creed

"In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly love, his sheer, unutterable love. He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed on us everything in heaven and on earth, he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. As we explained before, we could never come to recognize the Father's favour and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart . . . but neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit."<sup>11</sup>

#### 3. The Third Article of the Creed

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.

#### 4. The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints

"The Holy Spirit effects our sanctification through the following: the communion of saints or the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. In other words, he first leads us into his holy community, placing us upon the

<sup>10</sup> *The Larger Catechism of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 3.

<sup>11</sup> *The Larger Catechism*, 63. Cf. John 13-17; 1 John 1:1-4.

bosom of the church, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ. Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe in him and take him as our Lord, unless these were first offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>12</sup>

“I was brought to [the church] by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God’s Word, which is the first step in entering it . . . Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit. Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel.”<sup>13</sup>

“Therefore everything in the Christian church is so ordered that we may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs appointed to comfort and revive our consciences as long as we live. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are in the Christian church, where there is full forgiveness of sin. God forgives us, and we forgive, bear with, and aid one another. But outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness.”<sup>14</sup>

“For this purpose [the Spirit] has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work. For he has not yet gathered together all his Christian people, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>15</sup>

## 5. Communion and Confession: “In this church we have the forgiveness of sins”

- a. The communion of saints is a communion of sinners
- b. Secret confession and the priesthood of all believers
- c. Confession, the Cross, and Communion

“Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride . . . It was none other than Jesus Christ himself who suffered the scandalous, public death of a sinner in our stead. He was not ashamed to be crucified for us as an evildoer. It is nothing else but our fellowship with Jesus Christ that leads us to the ignominious dying that comes

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<sup>12</sup> *The Larger Catechism*, 59.

<sup>13</sup> *The Larger Catechism*, 61.

<sup>14</sup> *The Larger Catechism*, 62.

<sup>15</sup> *The Larger Catechism*, 63.

in confession, in order that we may in truth share in his Cross. The Cross of Jesus Christ destroys all pride. We cannot find the Cross of Jesus if we shrink from going to the place where it is to be found, namely, the public death of a sinner. And we refuse to bear the cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession. In confession we break through to the true fellowship of the Cross of Jesus Christ, in confession we affirm and accept our cross. In the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother – which means, before God – we experience the Cross of Jesus as our rescue and salvation. The old man dies, but it is God who had conquered him. Now we share in the resurrection of Christ and eternal life.”<sup>16</sup>

“What happened to us in baptism is bestowed upon us anew in confession. We are delivered out of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. That is joyful news. Confession is the renewal of the joy of baptism.”<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion: Cruciform Communion

### 1. *Theologus crucis* (not *theologia crucis*)

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

### 2. Catechism and Confession

**1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

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<sup>16</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 114.

<sup>17</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 115.