

# The Just and the Justifier

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**Salvation through faith alone in Christ**—this teaching, which is expressed succinctly in AC 4, is the chief and central article. On it the whole Christian church stands or falls. To justify means “to declare righteous.” It involves an external word, a declaration. It is legal and binding and not subject to appeal. God declares us righteous for the sake of Christ, without any merit or worthiness in us. Through the gift of faith we hear this Gospel and believe it.

Jesus is the Just. Only He has lived the just life, expressed by His obedience under God’s Law. This Obedient One comes to us rebels as one of us, truly human. His obedient and just life is offered to God the Father on our behalf. And this truly human Brother is also truly divine. Thus, all humanity is represented in His own obedience. True God. True Man. The only obedient one (Rm 5:19; Ep 3.3 and SD 3:9—a wonderful summary).

He has lived the life we should have lived and has died the death we deserved. In Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we have been saved by the judgment of a just and gracious God.

He is our Justification. An external word was spoken from this Man who offered himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world—“It is finished” (Jn 19:30).

What hope and comfort does this chief article offer us? First, it clearly defines the work of Jesus Christ for our salvation and makes very clear—as in declaring it so—that the work of your salvation “is finished.” Second, it offers us comfort in that it removes doubt and uncertainty over our salvation. Since it’s God’s work alone, and we can offer nothing to it, we trust that God has completed—“finished”—His work. There are no conditions yet to be met. Third, the more we settle into this blessed rest of having been saved, the glory of God and His riches toward us are made more apparent. God becomes not Judge, but Savior; and we become more blessedly aware of His grace and our daily sustenance in it through His Word and Sacrament. We rest in God and find our joy in Him just like you do at the end of hard day that has been “finished.” “When [the chief article] is understood correctly, it illumines and amplifies Christ’s honor. It brings necessary and most abundant consolation to devout consciences.” (AP 4.2)

## Further reading

Summary—AC 4, SC 2, SD 2.9; Deeper—Ap 4, SA 8, LC 2.25-33, SC 3; Scripture—Rom 1:17, 3:9-21, 4:13-25, 5:17-19, 8:33; Eph 2:4-10, Gal 3:11, Heb 11

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## Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession  
Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession  
SC = Small Catechism  
LC = Large Catechism  
SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)  
Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope  
Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome  
SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

**NOTE:** Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period. Please note that the first number in citations of SC and LC points to the Chief Part; any numbers following the period point to the specific section/paragraph. Thus SC 1.8 does not point to the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment, but to the explanation of the 4<sup>th</sup>.