

Forgiveness belongs to us.

The Formula of Concord says: “Concerning the discharge of Christ’s office, the person acts and does its work not in, with, through, or according to one nature alone but in, according to, with, and through both natures, or, as the Council of Chalcedon says, each nature does its work in communion with the other, whatever specific characteristic may be involved” (FC SD VIII:46).

In carrying out His work as our Prophet, Priest, and King, each nature in Christ contributed what was its own work according to its own properties. However, in all of Christ’s official acts, the other nature participated in that act. To submit to the Law, Jesus had to be true man. To submit for all people, He had to be God. To suffer and die for the sins of the world, Jesus had to be man. To make that suffering and death sufficient for all people, Jesus had to be God.

The Formula of Concord quotes Luther to this effect:

“We Christians should know that if God is not in the scale to give it weight, we, on our side, sink to the ground. I mean it this way: if it cannot be said that God died for us, but only a man, we are lost; but if God’s death and a dead God lie in the balance, His side goes down and ours goes up like a light and empty scale. Yet He can also readily go up again, or leap out of the scale! But He could not sit on the scale unless He had become a human being like us, so that it could be called God’s dying, God’s martyrdom, God’s blood, and God’s death. For God in His own nature cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is called God’s death when the man dies who is one substance or one person with God.” From this it is evident that it is incorrect to say or write that these expressions, “God suffered,” “God died,” are simply *praedicatio verbalis* (that is, simply mere words), which are not in fact true. For our simple Christian creed demonstrates that the Son of God, who became human, suffered for us, died for us, and redeemed us with His blood. (FC SD VIII:44-45)

Therefore, we sing in one of our Lenten hymns, “Oh, sorrow dread; God’s Son is dead!” (Hymn 63). God cannot suffer and die. Yet by virtue of the personal union, God the Son did suffer and die. This is a mystery that goes beyond all comprehension. God forsaken by God on the cross! How can this be? Yet it happened, as God Himself tells us in His Holy Word. Because it happened, we are certain of our forgiveness and eternal life with our Lord in heaven.