

Starts Discussion on the Love of God With the Whole Heart ...

by Martin Luther

Faith in Christ is the foundation of good works, and all good works must flow from faith.

Scripture: John 6:29, Romans 3:28, Romans 14:23, Ephesians 2:8, 1 John 3:23

Topics: "Faith Alone", "Good Works"

Description

Martin Luther preaches about the importance of faith in Christ as the highest good work, emphasizing that all good works must flow from faith in God's commandments. He highlights that faith alone makes all other works good and acceptable, as it trusts God's love and mercy. Luther explains that true good works are those done in faith, where all distinctions between works fall away, and all works become equal in God's sight. He urges believers to trust in God's grace and favor, knowing that faith is the chief work that pleases God.

Transcript

THE TREATISE

I. We ought first to know that there are no good works except those which God has commanded, even as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden. Therefore whoever wishes to know and to do good works needs nothing else than to know God's commandments. Thus Christ says, Matthew xix, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And when the young man asks Him, Matthew xix, what he shall do that he may inherit eternal life, Christ sets before him naught else but the Ten

Commandments. Accordingly, we must learn how to distinguish among good works from the Commandments of God, and not from the appearance, the magnitude, or the number of the works themselves, nor from the judgment of men or of human law or custom, as we see has been done and still is done, because we are blind and despise the divine Commandments.

II. The first and highest, the most precious of all good works is faith in Christ, as He says, John vi. When the Jews asked Him: "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He answered: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." When we hear or preach this word, we hasten over it and deem it a very little thing and easy to do, whereas we ought here to pause a long time and to ponder it well. For in this work all good works must be done and receive from it the inflow of their goodness, like a loan. This we must put bluntly, that men may understand it.

We find many who pray, fast, establish endowments, do this or that, lead a good life before men, and yet if you should ask them whether they are sure that what they do pleases God, they say, "No"; they do not know, or they doubt. And there are some very learned men, who mislead them, and say that it is not necessary to be sure of this; and yet, on the other hand, these same men do nothing else but teach good works. Now all these works are done outside of faith, therefore they are nothing and

altogether dead. For as their conscience stands toward God and as it believes, so also are the works which grow out of it. Now they have no faith, no good conscience toward God, therefore the works lack their head, and all their life and goodness is nothing. Hence it comes that when I exalt faith and reject such works done without faith, they accuse me of forbidding good works, when in truth I am trying hard to teach real good works of faith.

III. If you ask further, whether they count it also a good work when they work at their trade, walk, stand, eat, drink, sleep, and do all kinds of works for the nourishment of the body or for the common welfare, and whether they believe that God takes pleasure in them because of such works, you will find that they say, "No"; and they define good works so narrowly that they are made to consist only of praying in church, fasting, and almsgiving. Other works they consider to be in vain, and think that God cares nothing for them. So through their damnable unbelief they curtail and lessen the service of God, Who is served by all things whatsoever that are done, spoken or thought in faith.

So teaches Ecclesiastes ix: "Go thy way with joy, eat and drink, and know that God accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity." "Let thy garments be always white," that is, let all our works be

good, whatever they may be, without any distinction. And they are white when I am certain and believe that they please God. Then shall the head of my soul never lack the ointment of a joyful conscience.

So Christ says, John viii: "I do always those things that I please Him." And St. John says, I. John iii: "Hereby I we know that we are of the truth, if we can comfort our hearts before Him and have a good confidence. And if our heart condemns or frets us, God is greater than our heart, and we have confidence, that whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

Again: "Whosoever is born of God, that is, whoever believes and trusts God, doth not commit sin, and cannot sin." Again, Psalm xxxiv: "None of them that trust in I Him shall do sin." And in Psalm ii: "Blessed are all E they that put their trust in Him." If this be true, then all that they do must be good, or the evil that they do must be quickly forgiven. Behold, then, why I exalt faith so greatly, draw all works into it, and reject all works which do not flow from it.

IV. Now every one can note and tell for himself E when he does what is good or what is not good; for if he 1 finds his heart confident that it pleases God, the work is 5 good, even if it were so small a thing as picking up a straw. If confidence is absent, or if he doubts, the work is not good, although it should raise all the dead and

the man should I give himself to be burned. This is the teaching of St. Paul, Romans xiv: "Whatsoever is not done of or in faith is sin." Faith, as the chief work, and no other work, has given us the name of "believers on Christ." For all other works a heathen, a Jew, a Turk, a sinner, may also do; but to trust firmly that he pleases God, is possible only for a Christian who is enlightened and strengthened by grace.

That these words seem strange, and that some call me a heretic because of them, is due to the fact that men have followed blind reason and heathen ways, have set faith not above, but beside other virtues, and have given it a work of its own, apart from all works of the other virtues; although faith alone makes all other works good, acceptable and worthy, in that it trusts God and does not doubt that for it all things that a man does are well done. Indeed, they have not let faith remain a work, but have made a habitus of it, as they say, although Scripture gives the name of a good, divine work to no work except to faith alone. Therefore it is no wonder that they have become blind and leaders of the blind. And this faith brings with it at once love, peace, joy and hope. For God gives His Spirit at once to him who trusts Him, as St. Paul says to the Galatians: "You received the Spirit not because of your good works, but when you believed the Word of God."

V. In this faith all works become equal, and one is like

the other; all distinctions between works fall away, whether they be great, small, short, long, few or many. For the works are acceptable not for their own sake, but because of the faith which alone is, works and lives in each and every work without distinction, however numerous and various they are, just as all the members of the body live, work and have their name from the head, and without the head no member can live, work and have a name.

From which it further follows that a Christian who lives in this faith has no need of a teacher of good works, but whatever he finds to do he does, and all is well done; as Samuel said to Saul: "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt be turned into another man; then do thou as occasion serves thee; for God is with thee." So also we read of St. Anna, Samuel's mother:

"When she believed the priest Eli who promised her God's grace, she went home in joy and peace, and from that time no more turned hither and thither," that is, whatever occurred, it was all one to her. St. Paul also says:

"Where the Spirit of Christ is, there all is free." For faith does not permit itself to be bound to any work, nor does it allow any work to be taken from it, but, as the First Psalm says, "He bringeth forth his fruit in his season," that is, as a matter of course.

VI. This we may see in a common human example. A man and a woman love and are pleased with each other, and thoroughly believe in their love, who teaches them

how they are to behave, what they are to do, leave undone, say, not say, think? Confidence alone teaches them all this, and more. They make no difference in works: they do the great, the long, the much, as gladly as the small, the short, the little, and vice versa; and that too with joyful, peaceful, confident hearts, and each is a free companion of the other. But where there is a doubt, search is made for what is best; then a distinction of works is imagined whereby a man may win favor; and yet he goes about it with a heavy heart, and great disrelish; he is, as it were, taken captive, more than half in despair, and often makes a fool of himself.

So a Christian who lives in this confidence toward God, a knows all things, can do all things, undertakes all things that are to be done, and does everything cheerfully and freely; not that he may gather many merits and good works, but because it is a pleasure for him to please God thereby, and he serves God purely for nothing, content that his service pleases God. On the other hand, he who is not at one with God, or doubts, hunts and worries in what way he may do enough and with many works move God. He runs to St. James of Compostella, to Rome, to Jerusalem, hither and yon, prays St. Bridget's prayer and the rest, fasts on this day and on that, makes confession here, and makes confession there, questions this man and that, and yet finds no peace. He does all this with great effort, despair and disrelish of

heart, so that the Scriptures rightly call such works in Hebrew *A v e n a m a 1*, that is, labor and travail. And even then they are not good works, and are all lost. Many have been crazed thereby; their fear has brought them into all manner of misery. Of these it is written, Wisdom of Solomon v: "We have wearied ourselves in the wrong way; and have gone through deserts, where there lay no way; but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us."

VII. In these works faith is still slight and weak; let us ask further, whether they believe that they are well-pleasing to God when they suffer in body, property, honor, friends, or whatever they have, and believe that God of His mercy appoints their sufferings and difficulties for them, whether they be small or great.

This is real strength, to trust in God when to all our senses and reason He appears to be angry; and to have greater confidence in Him than we feel. Here He is hidden, as the bride says in the Song of Songs: "Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows"; that is, He stands hidden among the sufferings, which would separate us from Him like a wall, yea, like a wall of stone, and yet He looks upon me and does not leave me, for He is standing and is ready graciously to help, and through the window of dim faith He permits Himself to be seen. And Jeremiah says in Lamentations, "He casts off men, but He does it not willingly."

This faith they do not know at all, and give up, thinking that God has forsaken them and is become their enemy; they even lay the blame of their ills on men and devils, and have no confidence at all in God. For this reason, too, their suffering is always an offence and harmful to them, and yet they go and do some good works, as they think, and are not aware of their unbelief. But they who in such suffering trust God and retain a good, firm confidence in Him, and believe that He is pleased with them, these see in their sufferings and afflictions nothing but precious merits and the rarest possessions, the value of which no one can estimate. For faith and confidence make precious before God all that which others think most shameful, so that it is written even of death in Psalm cxvi, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." And just as the confidence and faith are better, higher and stronger at this stage than in the first stage, so and to the same degree do the sufferings which are borne in this faith excel all works of faith. Therefore between such works and sufferings there is an immeasurable difference and the sufferings are infinitely better.

VIII. Beyond all this is the highest stage of faith, when; God punishes the conscience not only with temporal sufferings, but with death, hell, and sin, and refuses grace and mercy, as though it were His will to condemn and to be angry eternally. This few men experience, but

David cries out in Psalm vi, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger." To believe at such times that God, in His mercy, is pleased with us, is the highest work that can be done by and in the creature; but of this the work-righteous and doers of good works know nothing at all. For how could they here look for good things and grace from God, as long as they are not certain in their works, and doubt even on the lowest step of faith. In this way I have, as I said, always praised faith, and I rejected all works which are done without such faith, in] order thereby to lead men from the false, pretentious, pharisaic, unbelieving good works, with which all monastic houses, churches, homes, low and higher classes are overfilled, and lead them to the true, genuine, thoroughly good, believing works. In this no one opposes me except the unclean beasts, which do not divide the hoof, as the Law of Moses decrees; who will suffer no distinction among good works, but go lumbering along: if only they pray, fast, establish endowments, go to confession, and do enough, everything shall be good, although in all this they have had no faith in God's grace and approval. Indeed, they consider the works best of all, when they have done many, great and long works without any such confidence, and they look for good only after the works are done; and so they build their confidence not on divine favor, but on the works they have done, that is, on sand and water, from which they

must at last take a cruel fall, as Christ says, Matthew vii. This good-will and favor, on which our confidence rests, was proclaimed by the angels from heaven, when they sang on Christmas night: "Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory to God in the highest, peace to earth, gracious favor to man."

IX. Now this is the work of the First Commandment, which commands: "Thou shalt have no other gods," which means: "Since I alone am God, thou shalt place all thy confidence, trust and faith on Me alone, and on no one else." For that is not to have a god, if you call him God only with your lips, or worship him with the knees or bodily gestures; but if you trust Him with the heart, and look to Him for all good, grace and favor, whether in works or sufferings, in life or death, in joy or sorrow; as the Lord Christ says to the heathen woman, John iv: "I say unto thee, they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And this faith, faithfulness, confidence deep in the heart, is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment; without this there is no other work that is able to satisfy this Commandment. And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed, in which they exist, and by which they are directed and measured, so also its work, that is, the faith or confidence in God's favor at all times, is the very first, highest and best, from which all others must proceed, exist, remain, be directed

and measured. Compared with this, other works are just as if the other Commandments were without the First, and there were no God, Therefore St. Augustine well says that the works of the First Commandment are faith, hope and love. As I said above, such faith and confidence bring love and hope with them. Nay, if we see it aright, love is the first, or comes at the same instant with faith.

For I could not trust God, if I did not think that He wished to be favorable and to love me, which leads me, in turn, to love Him and to trust Him heartily and to look to Him for all good things.

X. Now you see for yourself that all those who do not at i at all times trust God and do not in all their works or sufferings, life and death, trust in His favor, grace and good-will, but seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep this Commandment, and practise real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commandments, and in addition had all the prayers, fasting, obedience, patience, chastity, and innocence of all the saints combined. For the chief work is not present, without which all the others are nothing but mere sham, show and pretence, with nothing back of them; against which Christ warns us, Matthew vii: "Beware of false prophets, which N come to you in sheep's clothing." Such are all who wish with their many good works, as they say, to make God favorable to themselves, and to buy God's grace from Him, as if He were a huckster

or a day-laborer, unwilling to give His grace and favor for nothing. These are the most perverse people on earth, who will hardly or never be converted to the right way. Such too are all who in adversity run hither and thither, and look for counsel and help everywhere except from God, from Whom they are most urgently commanded to seek it; whom the Prophet Isaiah reproves thus, Isaiah ix: "The mad people turneth not to Him that smiteth them"; that is, God smote them and sent them sufferings and all kinds of adversity, that they should run to Him and trust Him. But they run away from Him to men, now to Egypt, now to Assyria, perchance also to the devil; and of such idolatry much is written in the same Prophet and in the Books of the Kings. This is also the way of all holy hypocrites when they are in trouble: they do not run to God, but flee from Him, and only think of how they may get rid of their trouble through their own efforts or through human help, and yet they consider themselves and let others consider them pious people.

XI. This is what St. Paul means in many places, where he ascribes so much to faith, that he says: *Justus ex fide sua vivit*, "the righteous man draws his life out of his faith," and faith is that because of which he is counted righteous before God. If righteousness consists of faith, it is clear that faith fulfils all commandments and makes all works righteous, since no one is justified except he keep all the commands of God. Again, the works can

justify no one before God without faith. So utterly and roundly does the Apostle reject works and praise faith, ; that some have taken offence at his words and say: "Well, then, we will do no more good works," although he condemns such men as erring and foolish.

So men still do. When we reject the great, pretentious works of our time, which are done entirely without faith, they say: Men are only to believe and not to do anything good. For nowadays they say that the works of the First Commandment are singing, reading, organ-playing, reading the mass, saying matins and vespers and the other hours, the founding and decorating of churches, altars, and monastic houses, the gathering of bells, jewels, garments, trinkets and treasures, running to Rome and to the saints. Further, when we are dressed up and bow, kneel, pray the rosary and the Psalter, and all this not before an idol, but before the holy cross of God or the pictures of His saints: this we call honoring and worshiping God, and, according to the First Commandment, "having no other gods"; although these things usurers, adulterers and all manner of sinners can do too, and do them daily.

Of course, if these things are done with such faith that we believe that they please God, then they are praiseworthy, not because of their virtue, but because of such faith, for which all works are of equal value, as has been said. But if we doubt or do not believe that God

is gracious to us and is pleased with us, or if we presumptuously expect to please Him only through and after our works, then it is all pure deception, outwardly honoring God, but inwardly setting up self as a false god. This is the reason why I have so often spoken against the display, magnificence and multitude of such works and have rejected them, because it is as clear as day that they are not only done in doubt or without faith, but there is not one in a thousand who does not set his confidence upon the works, expecting by them to win God's favor and anticipate His grace; and so they make a fair of them, a thing which God cannot endure, since He has promised His grace freely, and wills that we begin by trusting that grace, and in it perform all works, whatever they may be.

XII. Note for yourself, then, how far apart these two are: keeping the First Commandment with outward works only, and keeping it with inward trust. For this last makes true, living children of God, the other only makes worse idolatry and the most mischievous hypocrites on earth, who with their apparent righteousness lead unnumbered people into their way, and yet allow them to be without faith, so that they are miserably misled, and are caught in the pitiable babbling and mummerly. Of such Christ says, Matthew xxiv: "Beware, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there"; and John iv: "I say unto thee, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in

this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship God, for the Father seeketh spiritual worshipers."

These and similar passages have moved me and ought to move everyone to reject the great display of bulls, seals, flags, indulgences, by which the poor folk are led to build churches, to give, to endow, to pray, and yet faith is not mentioned, and is even suppressed. For since faith knows no distinction among works, such exaltation and urging of one work above another cannot exist beside faith. For faith desires to be the only service of God, and will grant this name and honor to no other work, except in so far as faith imparts it, as it does when the work is done in faith and by faith. This perversion is indicated in the Old Testament, when the Jews left the Temple and sacrificed at other places, in the green parks and on the mountains. This is what these men also do: they are zealous to do all works, but this chief work of faith they regard not at all.

XIII. Where now are they who ask, what works are good; what they shall do; how they shall be religious? Yes, and where are they who say that when we preach of faith, we shall neither teach nor do works? Does not this First Commandment give us more work to do than any man can do? If a man were a thousand men, or all men, or all creatures, this Commandment would yet ask enough of him, and more than enough, since he is commanded to live and walk at all times in faith and confidence toward God, to

place such faith in no one else, and so to have only one, the true God, and none other.

Now, since the being and nature of man cannot for an instant be without doing or not doing something, enduring or running away from something (for, as we see, life never rests), let him who will be pious and filled with good works, begin and in all his life and works at all times exercise himself in this faith; let him learn to do and to leave undone all things in such continual faith; then will he find how much work he has to do, and how completely all things are included in faith; how he dare never grow idle, because his very idling must be the exercise and work of faith. In brief, nothing can be in or about us and nothing can happen to us but that it must be good and meritorious, if we believe (as we ought) that all things please God. So says St. Paul: "Dear brethren, all that ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Now it cannot be done in this Name except it be done in this faith. Likewise, Romans vii: "We know that all things work together for good to the saints of God."

Therefore, when some say that good works are forbidden when we preach faith alone, it is as if I said to a sick man: "If you had health, you would have the use of all your limbs; but without health, the works of all your limbs are nothing"; and he wanted to infer that I had forbidden the works of all his limbs; whereas, on the

contrary, I meant that he must first have health, which will work all the works of all the members. So faith also must be in all works the master-workman and captain, or they are nothing at all.

XIV. You might say: "Why then do we have so many laws of the Church and of the State, and many ceremonies of churches, monastic houses, holy places, which urge and tempt men to good works, if faith does all things through the First Commandment?" I answer: Simply because we do not all have faith or do not heed it. If every man had faith, we would need no more laws, but every one would of himself at all times do good works, as his confidence in God teaches him.

But now there are four kinds of men: the first, just mentioned, who need no law, of whom St. Paul says, I. Timothy i, "The law is not made for a righteous man," that is, for the believer, but believers of themselves do what they know and can do, only because they firmly trust that God's favor and grace rests upon them in all things. The second class want to abuse this freedom, put a false confidence in it, and grow lazy; of whom St. Peter says, I. Peter ii, "Ye shall live as free men, but not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," as if he said: The freedom of faith does not permit sins, nor will it cover them, but it sets us free to do all manner of good works and to endure all things as they happen to us, so that a man is not bound only to one work or to a few.

So also St. Paul, Galatians v: "Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Such men must be urged by laws and hemmed in by teaching and exhortation. The third class are wicked men, always ready for sins; these must be constrained by spiritual and temporal laws, like wild horses and dogs, and where this does not help, they must be put to death by the worldly sword, as St. Paul says, Romans xiii: "The worldly ruler bears the sword, and serves God with it, not as a terror to the good, but to the evil." The fourth class, who are still lusty, and childish in their understanding of faith and of the spiritual life, must be coaxed like young children and tempted with external, definite and prescribed decorations, with reading, praying, fasting, singing, adorning of churches, organ playing, and such other things as are commanded and observed in monastic houses and churches, until they also learn to know the faith. Although there is great danger here, when the rulers, as is now, alas! the case, busy themselves with and insist upon such ceremonies and external works as if they were the true works, and neglect faith, which they ought always to teach along with these works, just as a mother gives her child other food along with the milk, until the child can eat the strong food by itself.

XV. Since, then, we are not all alike, we must tolerate such people, share their observances and burdens, and not despise them, but teach them the true way of faith. So

St. Paul teaches, Romans xiv: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, to teach him." And so he did himself, I. Corinthians ix: "To them that are under the law, I became as under the law, although I was not under the law." And Christ, Matthew xvii, when He was asked to pay tribute, which He was not obligated to pay, argues with St. Peter, whether the children of kings must give tribute, or only other people. St. Peter answers: "Only other people." Christ said: "Then are the children of kings free; notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and in his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money; take that and give it for me and thee."

Here we see that all works and things are free to a Christian through his faith; and yet, because the others do not yet believe, he observes and bears with them what he is not obligated to do. But this he does freely, for he is certain that this is pleasing to God, and he does it willingly, accepts it as any other free work which comes to his hand without his choice, because he desires and seeks no more than that he may in his faith do works to please God.

But since in this discourse we have undertaken to teach what righteous and good works are, and are now speaking of the highest work, it is clear that we do not speak of the second, third and fourth classes of men, but of the

first, into whose likeness all the others are to grow, and until they do so the first class must endure and instruct them. Therefore we must not despise, as if they were hopeless, these men of weak faith, who would gladly do right and learn, and yet cannot understand because of the ceremonies to which they cling; we must rather blame their ignorant, blind teachers, who have never taught them the faith, and have led them so deeply into works. They must be gently and gradually led back again to faith, as a sick man is treated, and must be allowed for a time, for their conscience sake, to cling to some works and do them as necessary to salvation, so long as they rightly grasp the faith; lest if we try to tear them out so suddenly, their weak consciences be quite shattered and confused, and retain neither faith nor works. But the hardheaded, who, hardened in their works, give no heed to what is said of faith, and fight against it, these we must, as Christ did and taught, let go their way, that the blind may lead the blind.

XVI. But you say: How can I trust surely that all my works are pleasing to God, when at times I fall, and talk, eat, drink and sleep too much, or otherwise transgress, as I cannot help doing? Answer: This question shows that you still regard faith as a work among other works, and do not set it above all works. For it is the highest work for this very reason, because it remains and blots out these daily sins by not doubting that God is so

kind to you as to wink at such daily transgression and weakness. Aye, even if a deadly sin should occur (which, however, never or rarely happens to those who live in faith and trust toward God), yet faith rises again and does not doubt that its sin is already gone; as it is written I. John ii: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ, Who is the propitiation of all our sins." And Wisdom xv: "For if we sin, we are Thine, knowing Thy power." And Proverbs xxiv: "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." Yes, this confidence and faith must be so high and strong that the man knows that all his life and works are nothing but damnable sins before God's judgment, as it is written, Psalm cxliii: "In thy sight shall no man living be justified"; and he must entirely despair of his works, believing that they cannot be good except through this faith, which looks for no judgment, but only for pure grace, favor, kindness and mercy, like David, Psalm xxvi: "Thy loving kindness is ever before mine eyes, and I have trusted in Thy truth"; Psalm iv: "The light of Thy countenance is lift up upon us (that is, the knowledge of Thy grace through faith), and thereby hast Thou put gladness in my heart"; for as faith trusts, so it receives.

See, thus are works forgiven, are without guilt and are good, not by their own nature, but by the mercy and grace

of God because of the faith which trusts on the mercy of God. Therefore we must fear because of the works, but comfort ourselves because of the grace of God, as it is written, Psalm cxlvii: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that I fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." So we pray with perfect confidence: "Our Father," and yet petition: "Forgive us our trespasses"; we are children and yet sinners; are acceptable and yet do not do enough; and all this is the work of faith, firmly grounded in God's grace.

XVII. But if you ask, where the faith and the confidence can be found and whence they come, this it is certainly most necessary to know. First: Without doubt faith does not come from your works or merit, but alone from Jesus Christ, and is freely promised and given; as St. Paul writes, Romans v: "God commendeth His love to us as exceeding sweet and kindly, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; as if he said: "Ought not this give us a strong unconquerable confidence, that before we prayed or cared for it, yes, while we still continually walked in sins, Christ dies for our sin?" St. Paul concludes: "If while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, how much more then, being justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him; and if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life."

Lo! thus must thou form Christ within thyself and see how in Him God holds before thee and offers thee His mercy without any previous merits of thine own, and from such a view of His grace must thou draw faith and confidence of the forgiveness of all thy sins. Faith, therefore, does not begin with works, neither do they create it, but it must spring up and flow from the blood, wounds and death of Christ. If thou see in these that God is so kindly affectioned toward thee that He gives even His Son for thee, then thy heart also must in its turn grow sweet and kindly affectioned toward God, and so thy confidence must grow out of pure good-will and love -- God's love toward thee and thine toward God. We never read that the Holy Spirit was given to any one when he did works, but always when men have heard the Gospel of Christ and the mercy of God. From this same Word and from no other source must faith still come, even in our day and always. For Christ is the rock out of which men suck oil and honey, as Moses says, Deuteronomy xxxii.

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