the Concordia Lutheran

"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path." Ps. 119:105.

Vol. XXXXI January-April, 1996 Nos. 1 - 4

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:"

John 15:5

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a monthly or bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of $3.00 per year.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

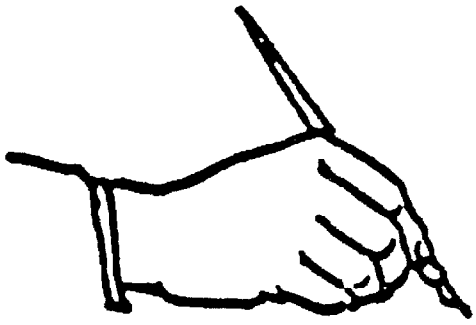
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



The President's Column

This last winter severe storms plagued many parts of our nation. Record-breaking rainfalls, freezing temperatures, snowfalls, etc., occurred in the various states of our country. In our part of the Pacific northwest, for example, heavy rains caused swollen rivers to unleash their fury by inundating large sections of our State of Oregon. Some sections were so devastated that the governor declared them "disaster areas" and applied for federal aid. There were those who lost their homes and possessions to the rampaging rivers. The high water caused mudslides, closing some of our main highways, and resulted in fallen trees where the soil had been weakened by the flooding. One elderly couple had worked so hard to build a home to live in during their declining years only to have it demolished by the raging flood waters. Some even lost their lives. A 9-year-old girl, for example, went out to the mail box and never returned. A woman drove her car to go to the store. Later her automobile was found submerged in water, but there was no trace of the woman. The stories are manifold!

How are we Christians to react to such catastrophes and upheavals in the realm of nature? We must, first of all, recognize the consequences of sin. Not only was man ruined by the Fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden, but the whole realm of nature experienced the consequences of sin! The first great upheaval recorded in the Scriptures is that of the Flood which encompassed the whole earth. What a catastrophe that must have been when "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened ... and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights ... all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died" (Gen. 7:11,12). That sin of which our first parents were guilty was not without its consequences as the world has witnessed ever since in the catastrophic upheavals within the realm of nature: electrical storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, etc. Such manifestations of God's righteous anger because of sin should

prompt us to walk humbly before God by daily repenting of our sins and casting ourselves upon His mercy revealed in the sending forth of His only-begotten Son whose precious blood cleanses us from all sin.

Such upheavals within the realm of nature should also serve to remind us Christians that the Day of the Lord is nigh at hand in which the heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire. Luther correctly observed: "Heaven and earth creak and crack like an old house ready to crash and collapse and act in every way as though they divined that the world is soon to come to an end and that The Day is close at hand" (St. Louis Ed. Vol. VII: 1480f.). These disturbances within the realm of nature should cause us to lift up our eyes heavenward, and with anxious hearts look for our dear Savior who will burst forth in the clouds of heaven accompanied by all of His holy angels (Matthew 24) to take us into His heavenly Kingdom which He has prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25).

When the fury of such occurrences is unleashed within the realm of nature, we Christians need not cower in fear and despair. After all, He who created heaven and earth has promised the true believers that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He reminds His dear children that they are privileged to enjoy the gracious protection of His holy angels who will keep us in all our ways (Ps. 91:11). Therefore let us heed the Scriptural advice of that fine Lutheran hymn writer, Paul Gerhardt -

Commit whatever grieves thee
Into the gracious hands
Of Him who never leaves thee,
Who heav'n and earth commands.
Who points the clouds their courses,
Whom winds and waves obey,
He will direct thy footsteps
And find for thee a way.

TLH 520, v.1

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor M. L. Natterer, President

A CHRISTIAN BURIAL FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY

(a sermon delivered by one of our old Lutheran fathers many years ago)

For many this matter is a vexed question, and they cannot come to any positive decision, and always hesitate as to the action that should be taken. But the matter is, indeed, simple enough, and even from the standpoint of reason and common equity the principle expressed must be conceded as entirely correct. Why do conscientious Christian ministers and their congregations insist on this principle: A CHRISTIAN BURIAL FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY? or, in other words: Why do they refuse to bury with the rites and honors of the church those who lived and died as unchristians? Before I proceed to state the more important reasons for this, let me ask you a question: How do people ever come to demand that the honors of the Christian church be shown to such as never had any connection with the church, or who voluntarily severed that connection, or whom the church, for just reasons, was obligated to expel from her communion? Is there any sense, any reason, any justice in such a demand? What would you say if a military burial, with all the honors of the army or navy, were demanded for a person who never belonged either to the army or navy, or a person who had deserted his flag and post of duty, or one who had been dishonorably discharged and expelled from his office? Or what would you say if the demand were made to bury with all the honors and rites of a secret lodge, or society, such persons as had never been members of such a society, or who had withdrawn from it, or who had been expelled from membership? Would you not say in such and all similar cases, that it were foolish, unreasonable, and unjust in the extreme to make such a demand? Well, why don't people judge in the same way of the demand to bury with Christian honors those who either never were or no longer are, Christians? Is the Church of Christ less than the army or navy, and are the rites and honors which she shows to her departed less sacred than those of lodge and society? For what reason, then, should the Christian church be expected to confer her sacred rites and honors upon them that are outside of her pale? Surely, even from the standpoint of human reason and the laws of equity everyone must concede not only the correctness but also the justice of the principle:

A CHRISTIAN BURIAL FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY

But there are other and graver reasons why this principle shall and must be upheld. One of these is Christian honesty. If anything is expected and demanded from Christians and their ministers it is, that they be honest and upright in all that they say and do, and the most despicable thing that could possibly be laid to their charge is dishonesty and hypocrisy. They must under all circumstances speak the truth, and not only speak it, but act it, too! And this holds good not only in regard to the living, but the dead as well. Now, I say, Christian honesty and the demands it makes upon all Christians shows the correctness of the principle: A Christian burial for Christians only, and the necessity on their part to uphold this principle.

A Christian burial must be regarded in much the same way as a military or any other burial by which special honors are shown to the dead. You see a funeral pass your door, with military attendance, soldiers with shouldered guns, officers with drawn sabers, the flag draped in mourning, drums and bugle sounding forth their sad notes, and as the procession reaches the burial grounds you hear the firing of guns over the grave; seeing and hearing that you need not first be told that he who is thus borne to the grave was a brave soldier, because you know that otherwise such military honors would not be shown him.

Another funeral passes your door, attended by members of some lodge or secret society, with their banners, badges, and regalia, and following them to the grave you see the body placed into it under the rites and ceremonies of the lodge, and as you witness all this you know at once, that man was a member in good standing of that lodge or society, because if he had not been such, these particular rites and ceremonies would not be performed over him and these special honors would not be shown him.

And then another funeral passes by. The hearse bears the emblem of the cross, and in the carriage heading the procession is a Christian minister in his ministerial garb; the church bells ring, the church doors are opened, and under the solemn notes of the church organ the body is carried in and placed before the altar; a Christian congregation is assembled, Christian hymns are sung, Christian prayers are said, Christian doctrine, comfort, and warning are proclaimed; and then the funeral proceeds to the burial-grounds, and again with prayers and rites of the Christian church the body is committed to the grave. Well, what does all this mean? What are all these rites and ceremonies of the Christian church for? What must you

judge when you see a person honored by such a Christian burial? Is it not the most natural thing to assume at once that the person so honored must have been a Christian, a confessor of and believer in Christ crucified, and a member of His holy Church on earth? How could you judge otherwise but for the shameful dishonesty and hypocrisy practiced by many unprincipled ministers of the church in bestowing these sacred Christian rites and honors upon those who were no Christians? "Precious in the sight of the Lord," says the Psalmist (Ps. 116:15), "is the death of His saints," that is, of them that lived and died as Christians, and to them certainly belong the honors of the Christian church. But as to all others we just ask: What has the Christian church to do with them in death who, during life, had nothing to do, and would have nothing to do, with the church? Of them our Savior says, "Let the dead bury their dead," and to bury them with Christian rites and honors is, indeed, a piece of hypocrisy such as it will be difficult to find a second time.

A person receiving a military burial is thereby publicly honored as a brave soldier; people buried under the rites and honors of a lodge are thereby publicly honored as members of the lodge; likewise all those who receive a Christian burial are thereby publicly honored as Christians. This is the way, too, in which everybody looks at this matter. People want a Christian burial for their dead so that they may be publicly declared as people who died as Christians. They know that to refuse them a Christian burial is to say that, as far as men can judge, they were not Christians. This is regarded as a disgrace, and to avoid or to cover up the disgrace the services of a Christian minister are required, which many think must always be readily tendered, no matter what may be the purpose. But the disgrace is well-deserved, and the Christian church and her ministers are not to blame for it. They who live and die without Christ, without His Word and His church and His ministers, must themselves bear the burden of the disgrace if they are also buried accordingly. The Christian church and her ministers dare not, for their sake, play the part of hypocrites, and though Christian charity covereth a multitude of sins, yet it dare not do one sin to cover up others: it cannot countenance dishonesty and hypocrisy even at a burial; and Christian honesty and uprightness demand that the principle be ever upheld: *A CHRISTIAN BURIAL FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY.*

But here, methinks, I hear some objections raised which still need attention before I can close for to-day. I hear someone say: Why lay so must stress on a Christian burial as being an act honoring the dead? The dead do not need any such honors shown them and know nothing of the whole proceeding. But there are the living attending the funeral, and, above all, the bereaved family. Why not consider them who, on such occasions, are deeply in want of sympathy and of comfort and encouragement? Surely - the funeral services even at a Christian funeral are not held for the dead one but for the sorrowing ones who stay behind in this dreary world! I answer, my friend, What you have said is to some extent quite true. But your main assertion on which your entire argument hinges, is not true: It is not true that even a Christian burial does not concern the dead but the living.

The burial is for the dead, not for the living, and by the honors of the Christian burial not the living, but the deceased is to be publicly honored as a Christian. This I have already sufficiently shown you, and that this cannot be done in the case of such as have not lived and died as Christians has been clearly proved. As to the bereaved family, however, and others that may be in need of sympathy and comfort, they are, of course, in a sad position, and the Christian church and her ministers will certainly do for them all that they can conscientiously do, even if they are forced into the necessity of refusing to grant to the deceased member of their family the honors of a Christian burial. Besides this, the Word of God, which alone can give true comfort to grief-stricken hearts, is not preached at funerals only, and surely no mourners can ever find true comfort and consolation by uniting with others in a public falsehood and securing a Christian burial for those who were no Christians.

But I hear someone else say, Is there really no way of getting around this matter? Just think of all the dissatisfaction and ill-feelings it causes when a minister refuses to officiate at a funeral! See how people get offended, leave the church, or become only more turned against it, while otherwise many might be gained as members! Could not this matter, then, be adjusted in such a manner as to satisfy everybody, while, at the same time, the minister would not act contrary to his duty and calling? Why could he not officiate at the funeral even of those who cannot be regarded as Christians? The easiest way out of the difficulty would be to ignore the dead altogether, not mention him, and speak only to the living in

attendance. I answer, my friend: 1) As to the offense created by refusing a Christian burial, this is not offense given, but taken, and only the offended are responsible for it. 2) As to trying to get around this matter in the manner proposed, this would only be an additional act of dishonesty and hypocrisy, and where duty has clearly shown the way there cannot conscientiously be any diverging from it for the sake of pleasing others. And 3) as to not mentioning the dead and speaking only to the living, this is simply impossible, because everything spoken and done at a Christian burial has direct reference to the dead. For his sake the funeral is held; he is honored thereby as a Christian; over his body the words are spoken: "We commit this body to the grave in the certain hope of the resurrection unto life everlasting, through our Lord Jesus Christ; his body we commend into the hands of God the Father, who has created it, God the Son, who, together with its soul, has redeemed it, God the Holy Ghost, who by Baptism has sanctified it and made it to be His temple."

Can such words be honestly spoken at the grave of one who lived and died without God, without Christ and His Word? Can there then, be any such thing as not mentioning the dead and thus getting around this matter in order to please others? Nay, even the attempt to do so would be a dishonest proceeding. For the very presence of a Christian minister at a funeral, in his official capacity as a minister of the Christian church, makes it a Christian burial, a public act, by which the dead one is publicly honored as a Christian, and I have shown you that such honor can be honestly and conscientiously bestowed upon Christians only.

But I hear one more objection. I hear some good-natured and kind-hearted person say: Should not the Christian church and her members in all instances be charitable and therefore give the benefit of the doubt even to the dead? If one or the other did not live as Christians who knows but they might nevertheless have died as Christians; and should those who in their last moments repented of their sins and took refuge to Christ, their Savior, be excluded from the honors of a Christian burial? I answer my friend: Jesus receives sinners that come unto Him and at any time when they come, even if they come only in their last hour. And as Jesus Himself, so is His Church and so are His ministers also minded. Though a person had evidently been no Christian all his lifetime, though he had lived a life of vice and shame, yet, if even in his last hours he repent of his sins and confess faith in Christ, his Savior, no Christian minister will turn away

from him and refuse him a Christian burial. You certainly never heard of a case in which that was done. Nay, if there be a reasonable hope, as far as we can judge, that the sinner might yet have been a Christian, or by repentance and faith might still have become a Christian, he will always be dealt with according to charity, and he will be buried with all Christian honors in the certain hope that by the grace of God in Jesus Christ he was saved and has gone to heaven. But further than this even Christian charity is not permitted to go. If, as far as we were able to see and hear, a person has evidently passed from this life as an unbeliever; if he was taken away in his sins and wickedness; if he willfully despised and neglected God's Word; if he did not even so much as call a Christian minister to his sick-and-deathbed to be shown the way unto salvation; in a word, if he died as he lived, without God, without Christ, without His Church, His Word, His sacraments, and showed not even a sign of repentance, then even Christian charity with its ever wide heart cannot help such a person. God in His holy Word judges him an unbeliever, and we must also so judge him, and when called upon to show to such a person the honors of a Christian burial we cannot but refuse the demand and to abide by the well-founded and only Scripturally correct principle: A CHRISTIAN BURIAL FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY!

(submitted by Pastor M.L. Natterer)

CONVENTION ESSAY

(Presented by Rev. Paul R. Bloedel,
Pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Seattle, WA)

The Absolute Necessity of Good Works in the Life of Every True Christian

Dear Pastors and Members of the Concordia Lutheran Conference gathered here in Oak Forest, Illinois for our 44th Annual Convention:

I. What It Means To Be A True Believing Christian

Before we can consider the absolute necessity of good works in the life of a true believing Christian, it is imperative to know, with absolute certainty, what a true believing Christian is. Many seem to be of the opinion that, having been baptized, having gone to Sunday School and instruction classes, and having been confirmed and having gone to church as regularly as possible, they cannot help but be true believing Christians. Others look at their background and apparently think that faith is generated in their hearts through their believing parents and that consequently, because they come from a long line of Lutherans, they are Christians indeed. Others seem to think that because they know hundreds of Bible passages and can recite all of Luther's *Small Catechism* perfectly, they must be true believing Christians. And still others may think that, because they are so well-versed in the Scriptures and know all of the doctrines of Holy Writ, and have taken a firm stand against error and false doctrine, boldly upholding and defending the Word of God in all its truth and purity, they are surely true believers. And there are still others who may think that, because they are so capable of applying the Word of God to themselves and others and have dedicated their lives to the preaching and teaching of God's Word, they must be true children of God. Any one of these descriptions of what a true Christian is, namely, being baptized, confirmed, regular in church attendance, having Christian parents, a good knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, knowing many Bible passages and Luther's *Small Catechism* by heart, boldly defending the Word of God in all its truth and purity, and dedicating one's life to the preaching and teaching of God's Word, MAY apply to a true Christian BUT NONE OF THEM (nor all of them put together) determine whether or not a person is a true believing Child of God.

A true believing Christian is one who in the light of God's Holy Law recognizes, with sorrow of heart, his natural sinfulness, wretchedness, and depravity, and cries out before the Lord, **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!"** (Ps. 51:5) From the depths of his soul, the true Christian agonizes over the innumerable sins of omission and commission of which he is guilty every day in his thoughts, desires, words, and deeds because of which he deserves everlasting punishment in Hell and exclaims, **"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"** (Romans 7:24) And from his inmost heart, the true Christian finds his highest joy and deepest comfort in life and death in Christ Jesus his only Savior and Redeemer

who took his place under the Holy Law of God, kept every commandment of God's Law perfectly in his stead and suffered in His own sinless body the eternal torments of Hell as his Substitute, a punishment which the Christian himself so richly deserves because of his sins; yes, that Christ has done everything for his salvation without a smidgen of merit or worthiness in him. A True Christian is therefore one who trusts only **in the grace of God in Christ Jesus his Savior** through whom alone he has the forgiveness of all his sins and the certain hope of life everlasting. This is that which every true Christian firmly believes and of which he is convinced from Holy Writ, around which his entire life revolves and which really makes his life in this world worth living. If this is what you find in YOUR heart, then you are indeed a true, believing child of God. Now YOU know what it IS to be one, and only YOU and GOD know for sure whether YOU yourself are indeed *a true believing Christian* such as is mentioned in the title of this essay.

--Good Works Are Always Ruled Out ***As Far As Your Salvation Is Concerned***

Certainly there was nothing in you or nothing that you did before you came to a saving knowledge of Christ that helped you become a Christian. There is nothing about your faith itself, inasmuch as you do the believing, that causes you to be deserving of eternal salvation. And there is nothing that you **are** or that you **do** or **did** after you became a Christian which is necessary for your salvation or even helps to retain saving faith in your heart.

--Contrition ***Does Not Help Toward Your Eternal Salvation***

But, someone might ask, What about CONTRITION? The Bible has much to say about contrition and even speaks of it in connection with our salvation. For example, the Lord says, **"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word."** (Isaiah 66:2) **"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."** (Psalm 34:18) **"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."** (Psalm 51:17) Such contrition as is spoken

of in these passages evidently refers to that **"godly sorrow"** for sin (II Corinthians 7:10) in a true Christian which is produced in him **through the Gospel**. O, how filled with grief a Christian is over his sins especially in the light of all that his Savior had to suffer for those very sins which he commits every day in his thoughts, desires, words, and deeds (*Theological Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, p. 222; Walther's *Law & Gospel*, p. 254; *Lutheran Hymnal* #140). Jesus therefore **characterizes** Christians in His Sermon on the Mount as being **"poor in spirit."** Such contrition is then something which is in him after his conversion, a fruit of his faith in Jesus as his only and personal Savior. It is **not** something **because of which** his sins are forgiven BUT rather the Christian is contrite BECAUSE he has already received the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood and righteousness. It is **not** something which is necessary for his salvation or which he needs to sustain his Christian faith BECAUSE salvation is already his through faith in Christ Jesus and true faith is nurtured and sustained **only** by the Gospel.

There is, however, a contrition which must necessarily precede faith, a contrition without which conversion would be impossible. Such contrition, as a necessary pre-requisite of saving faith, does not help a person become a Christian nor does it in any way sustain his faith or help toward his salvation. Contrition, with its terrors of conscience, is worked in an unbeliever through God's Holy Law and he is brought to the brink of despair. This, however, does not make him a Christian. Through the Holy Law of God the heart of an unbelieving person is prepared for his reception of the Gospel, but the Law in no way produces in a person the saving knowledge of Christ. This can be accomplished only by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Gospel. A person can be ever so contrite, so sorry for his sins, and yet never be or ever become a Christian. Your contrition, **as an unbeliever**, does not help you become a Christian or remain a Christian; it does not produce faith or help to produce faith; it does not help you get to heaven; it is not a good work in God's sight or pleasing to Him (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 8:8); it is not necessary to salvation. The **most**, then, that can be said about contrition is that it is, as we said above, a **necessary *prerequisite*** of saving faith in an unbeliever and, as *godly* sorrow, it is a **necessary *fruit*** of saving faith in a Christian.

--Making Your Own Decision For Christ *Does Not Help Toward Your Salvation*

You also did not become a Christian because you made your decision for Christ. Some people who call themselves Christians credit themselves with "making their own decision for Christ" and fuel for this attitude is furnished by Billy Graham and other such false prophets. This is a *"You can do this and God will do the rest"* attitude. A true believing Christian who says that he has *"made his decision for Christ"* must realize that such a decision was already worked in his heart by the Holy Ghost through the power of the Gospel and is in itself the same as saving faith, and that he has contributed nothing, by his own reason or strength, toward such a decision.

--Praying For Christ To Come Into Your Heart *Does Not Make You A Christian*

There are also those, such as Billy Graham, who simply urge an unbelieving person to ask the Lord Jesus to come into his heart and that through such a prayer he will become a true believer. This, of course, would be making a work, namely, prayer, a Means of Grace (such as the Gospel and the Sacraments). Such a prayer, prior to faith, would then be necessary for salvation-whereas a true and proper prayer is something which an unbeliever is not able to do. Prayer is always and only a fruit of faith in a true child of God. Wherever *making one's own decision for Christ* or *praying for Christ to come into your heart* is made necessary for salvation or even as a necessary pre-requisite of saving faith, such a teaching only succeeds in embracing Roman Catholicism with its brazen salvation by works through which souls are led to trust in themselves to their own eternal destruction.

--Faith, As A Work, *Does Not Save You*

Faith is a good work produced in you by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God (Philippians 1:6). It is not a work of the Law, but it is obedience to the Gospel (Romans 1:5). Faith in Christ as your only Savior and Redeemer is **"doing the will"** of God, for Jesus says, **"This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last**

day" (John 6:40). However, you are **not** saved by faith **because** YOU do the believing; **nor** are you saved by faith **because** GOD has worked it into your heart, BUT ONLY **because *of Him in whom*** you trust and believe, rejoice and take comfort, namely, Jesus your Savior. It is in this sense only that you are saved **"through faith"** (Romans 3:25; Romans 3:30; Ephesians 2:8) or **"justified by faith"** (Romans 3:28; Romans 5:1; Galatians 2:16). You are therefore NOT saved, nor are your sins forgiven, because YOU BELIEVE in Jesus, **but rather** because you believe IN JESUS! It is not YOUR WORK of believing which has brought about your salvation but ONLY YOUR SAVIOR who has taken your place under the Law, kept it perfectly in your stead, and suffered the torments of Hell as your Substitute. (See: ***Formula of Concord***, Thorough Declaration, Article III, *Triglotta*, p. 919, § 13.) And it is the Holy Ghost, moreover, who has worked such saving or justifying faith in your heart through that wonderful Gospel of Christ and Him crucified. Your faith is then merely the hand that receives God's gracious benefactions in Christ Jesus your Savior and which you could not even extend by your own reason or strength so that your salvation from beginning to end is by God's grace alone! (Ephesians 2:8-9)

--What You Do *or* Have Done As A Christian *Cannot Save You*

There are actually many churches which teach and many so-called Christians who believe that your Christian faith **must** be ***supplemented*** by good works before you can be saved, that faith in Christ **plus** good works, as a fruit of your faith, save you or are necessary for salvation. This is, of course, a grave error by which many have been and are still being blinded and by which many have been and are still being led on the pathway to Hell. Let us make no mistake about this! This error is as old as Christianity itself and is a remnant of the religion of man as he is by nature. When Christianity joins hands with heathendom, the result is always salvation by faith **and** works. All heathen religions, which are representative of the only types of religion natural man is able to invent, teach a way of life which is blessed by God because of man's proper conduct or a way of salvation by works, by which alone mankind earns the favor of God. This is the best natural man can do as a result of the Law written in his heart, which is blurred and corrupted because of sin (Romans 2:14,15; I Corinthians 2:14).

--Faith *and* Works As Taught by Rome, the Reformed, and Modernists *Cannot Save You*

Roman Catholicism, Reformed Protestantism, and, of course, modernism in all the various camps of external Christendom, permit this basic tenet of heathendom to permeate their theology either to a greater or lesser degree. The Roman Catholics are brazen in their teaching of work-righteousness, i.e. that the outward act or work, in itself, is important and indispensable in gaining God's favor (*ex opere operato*). The founders of Reformed Protestantism went so far as to claim that ancient heathen men, such as Plato and Socrates, were saved simply because they made the very best use they could of the gifts which God had given them. They continue to teach salvation by works whenever they find in man, by nature, the ability to decide for himself in spiritual matters, a free will by which he is able to make his own *"decision for Christ,"* to *"take Christ into his heart,"* and that the Christian's life must be a determining factor in his salvation. Many Reformed sects also stress that, by faith in Christ, the Christians, being new creatures, are enabled to do good works which are meritorious, by which they continue to earn God's grace and favor. These are those to whom the Reformed people often refer as *"fabulous Christians."* Modernism, in the various Christian bodies, lays stress almost entirely on the good works of the individual person motivated by a social gospel which is nothing else than an ego-theology or humanistic pandering. Their funeral services are devoted exclusively to a celebration of the lives of those who have departed. Such a stress on good works succeeds only in making people *"fabulous Pharisees"* upon whom the Savior pronounces His stinging woes and curses in Matthew 23:13-33 and Luke 11:39-52.

--Faith *and* Works As It Is Taught Among *So-called* Lutherans *Cannot Save You*

Shortly After Luther's Death...

After the death of Luther in 1546, leading theologians in the Lutheran Church, in fact the entire theological faculty at Wittenberg, insisted that good works are necessary to salvation, couching their position, however,

in deceptive language. Melanchthon, himself (Luther's closest colleague and co-worker who even preached Luther's funeral sermon at Wittenberg), was the first to introduce and to promote the phrase, *"Good works are necessary to salvation"* in his dogmatics (*Loci*) which he published in 1535, eleven years **before** Luther's death. His position, however, at that time, met with energetic opposition in Wittenberg, and when Luther became aware of it, he declared that such a teaching was tantamount to *"treading Christ and His blood under our feet"* and expressed *"grave fears as to the future doctrinal soundness of his Wittenberg colleagues."* Luther had always insisted that *"new obedience"* on the part of a Christian is an *"effect necessarily following justification,"* but he rejected in no uncertain terms the statement, *"New obedience is necessary to salvation."* Melanchthon modified his false position, as long as Luther was alive, but soon after Luther's death he fell back again into his former error. Some of Melanchthon's students (Major and Menius), who had become professors at Wittenberg, persisted in teaching his false doctrine, namely, that good works are necessary to salvation. This met with bitter opposition from certain genuine Lutheran theologians who, by God's grace, were able to defend the pure Scriptural teaching in the ***Formula of Concord***, in 1580, where we read in its Epitome, Article IV, Negativa #1, (*Triglotta*, p. 801, § 16): ***"Accordingly, we reject and condemn the following modes of speaking: when it is taught and written that good works are necessary to salvation; also, that no one ever has been saved without good works; also, that it is impossible to be saved without good works."***

Among *Present-Day* Lutherans...

In present-day Lutheranism there are theologians and entire church bodies which teach that *"good works are necessary to salvation"* when they teach 1) predestination *"in view of faith,"* 2) *"refraining from willful resistance"* in the doctrine of conversion, and when 3) by *a denial of objective justification* they make a person's **believing**, or his **faith**, the *determining factor* in his salvation rather than the **object** of his faith, namely, **Christ and the forgiveness of sins** pronounced upon all mankind through His work of redemption which is **received** by faith. Scripture teaches ever so plainly that salvation is by God's Grace Alone without any dependence upon ourselves or anything that we might think, say, or do, **"for by grace**

are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast," (Ephesians 2:8-9). As soon as good works are brought into the picture ***in connection with eternal salvation***, no matter how minuscule, or not at all obvious, those works may seem to be --such as *refraining from willful resistance*-- the Scriptural teaching of salvation by God's grace alone without our own good works or merits is destroyed. St. Paul writes in Romans 11:6, that if we are saved **"by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work!"** (See also Acts 15:11 and Romans 3:22-24.) There is no room for anything that we might do as far as our eternal salvation is concerned. Here it is all salvation by grace --***BY GRACE ALONE!*** (Notice how clever Satan is in using man's natural inclination to find some merit or worthiness in himself no matter how small and nearly indiscernible it might be, bringing into external Christendom, as has been pointed out above, even into the camp of Lutheranism, man's own accomplishment, his own action or activity in some shape or form with which eternal salvation is connected and through which souls are being deceived and led to eternal perdition. Let us never underestimate Satan, for the devil is a liar and a murderer. He is the father of all error and false teaching.)

--A Recapitulation . . .

Once more then we reiterate: A true believing Christian is a person who despairs of his own righteousness, of who he is or whatever he has done or continues to do in his life, and trusts alone in the grace of God in Jesus for the full and free forgiveness of all his sins and life everlasting.

II. Which Works are Good Works or Works Pleasing to God?

--*Self-Chosen* Works

There are **self-chosen works**, works of self-aggrandizement, self-abnegation, and self-imposition which some individuals and church bodies regard as just as important or even more important than those

works which the Lord God sets forth in His Word. Such works are spoken of in Scripture as, for example, the works which the Pharisees bound upon themselves --works neither commanded nor forbidden by God in His Word but which regulated the minutest details of everyday life, referred to as the *"tradition of the elders"* (Matthew 15:2,3,6; Mark 7:3,5,8,9,13), the breaking of which was a sacrilege deserving of excommunication. Roman Catholicism, the Church of the Antichrist, is filled to overflowing with such works: Turning the rosary, refraining from certain foods, fasting, wearing certain apparel, making a pilgrimage, burning candles, auricular confession, ordination, extreme unction, penance, prohibition of marriage for the clergy, buying the forgiveness of sins, praying to saints, acts of self-denial during the Lenten Season, the observance of canonical hours, poverty, chastity, obedience to the respective monastic laws and their almost innumerable Canon Laws composed of the decrees of councils and popes. We find an abundance of such self-chosen works also in some Protestant sectarian churches in which, for example, headcovering for women is required in the divine service, women must not wear slacks or trousers but always skirts and dresses, hands must be raised during prayer, card playing is regarded as a sin, smoking and drinking beer and wine is forbidden even by the church's constitution, no work is permitted on Sundays, and the like, so that the impression is definitely given that a person, for example, who smokes or drinks is going to hell and a person who does not smoke or drink is going to heaven, and that a person who lifts up his hands during prayer in the divine service as well as a woman who wears something on her head are better Christians than those who do not do these things. Such is the nature of man-made self-chosen works which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God in His Word and which therefore must not be regarded as works which are especially pleasing to the Lord or which must be done in order to gain or retain God's favor.

--*Outward* Works

There are works which we may also refer to merely as **OUTWARD works**. These are either those self-chosen works or works which are commanded by the Lord God in His Word which are performed **only** in an *outward, physical manner.* In no way do they proceed from the heart. Such works are those performed by the Pharisees who acted pious **"that**

they may be seen of men" (Matthew 6:1; 6:5; 23:5) and who boasted of their good works in comparison with others (Luke 18:9). The clergy in the Roman Catholic Church insist on such outward works to fulfill penance imposed upon those who confess their sins. Such works, they claim, are meritorious simply *by virtue of the outward performance of the deed* (*ex opere operato*). In this connection they **also** speak of *"works of supererogation"* or works which were performed by the saints over and above those works which were necessary for their own salvation. These works are accumulated in what Catholicism calls *"the Treasury of the Church"*, which works may be purchased with money in order to help oneself or a loved one escape the pains of purgatory. Any purely outward work performed by one who considers himself to be a Christian is not, in the least, pleasing to God. The promoters of such outward works among the sects are fond of such expressions as: "Do good to others in order that some day they might do good to you. You should help those in need because who knows when you yourself might need help." Dr. P. E. Kretzmann writes in his *Popular Commentary*: "That is the usual, the customary way of dealing in the world: Kind deeds are rewarded with kind deeds, friendly words are given in return for friendly words. That is the height of human morality.". (Vol. II, p. 30). Thus they misuse the Scriptures which say, **"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets,"** (Matthew 7:12) and **"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days,"** (Ecclesiastes 11:1). These Scripture passages teach us to extend to other people the same love and consideration which we would extend to ourselves and to give freely to others of that which the Lord has given to us, for which He promises that we will not be in need or give ourselves poor. The Word of God teaches us that in order to determine what you should do for others simply consider what you would like others to do for you under similar circumstances. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to do good to others in order that, one day, they might do good to us. In fact, the *opposite* is expressed in our Savior's Words to His disciples in Luke 6:31-35.

--*Civil* Righteousness

To ***outward*** **works** belong also all the works of the heathen or unbelievers which comply externally with the Moral Law. The **reason** for doing such

works may flow from a high or lofty code of morals produced by parental instruction, from experience, from the natural inclination to work, from natural sympathy or compassion, from natural parental love or love toward one's parents, from the desire to be known for one's honesty, integrity, or generosity, from the desire for fame or an honorable reputation, by concern for the unfortunate or the improvement of society and the promotion of education, even from the recognition of one's own sinfulness and to merit salvation by works of consideration for one's own fellowmen and for the environment. That such works of civil righteousness are being done is stated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:14,15 where unbelievers, who do not know the Law of God as it is set forth in the Bible, nevertheless **"do by nature the things contained in the Law,"..."show the work of the Law written in their hearts."** Such Civil Righteousness is indeed rewarded by God with *physical* or *temporal* blessings. (See ***Apology***, Article IV, *Triglotta*, p. 127, § 22; ***Formula of Concord***, Thorough Declaration, Article IV, *Triglotta*, p. 941, § 8) In this connection, the Lord God says, **"Righteousness exalteth a nation,"** (Proverbs 14:34). Gross sinners are also restrained by the threats of the Law which serve as a Curb (I Timothy 1:9). The **practical benefit** of civil righteousness is that it makes it possible for Christians to live quiet and peaceful lives in a godless and perverse world. The outward uprightness and civility on the part of unbelieving neighbors, business people, and professionals, of those who live near you in your neighborhood, of those with whom you deal in business and on whom you depend for things necessary for your family's needs, and of those in whose hands you place the health of your body and life and upon whose skills you rely under the gracious guidance of your heavenly Father makes this evil world a more tolerable place in which to live.

--The *Connection* between Outward Works *and* God's Holy Law

All outward works are in themselves a caricature or an abuse of God's Holy Law as it is outlined in the *Ten Commandments*. Certainly, as a *curb*, God's Law checks, to some extent, the wicked words and actions of men and helps in the area of civil righteousness to maintain some degree of peace and tranquillity on earth for the benefit of the Christians. This may also aid in providing an environment conducive to the spread of the Gospel without let or hindrance from tyrannical authorities. God's Law

also helps to curb the evil aspirations of the Old Adam in Christians so that the New Man may daily come forth and arise. Yet, in this respect, namely as a *curb*, the Law is not used spiritually but carnally; for this use of the Law does not serve the Gospel in the heart of a person. Also, if the Law is used as a *rule* for unbelievers, to regulate their lives, it again does not serve the Gospel but succeeds only in making Pharisees of men and encouraging self-righteousness by means of outward works.

--The Holy Law of God is *Spiritual* and NOT Carnal

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 7:14, **"The Law is spiritual!"** This certainly teaches us that the Law is not meant to direct itself merely to some member of the body to act outwardly as God would have it act. It addresses itself to the heart and soul, to the will and affections of men. Dr. Walther states in his Tenth Evening Lecture (*Law and Gospel*, p. 81), "When the Law says: 'Thou shalt not kill,' that sounds as if it applied only to the hand. But it applies to the heart, as we can see from the Ninth and the Tenth Commandment, which prohibit evil desires of the heart." Again, Walther states, "Listen; when God says: 'Thou shalt not kill,' that does not mean that you are no murderers when your hand has slain no one, when you have not assaulted any one like a highway robber, nor put his life in jeopardy. Do not think that you have kept the Fifth Commandment if you have refrained from such outward acts. By no means; the Law aims at the heart, at the spirit in man."

--The Law, as a Mirror, *Shows* Man His *Sins* to *Prepare his Heart for the Gospel*

The *chief* office or force of the Law (***Smalcald Articles***, Article II, *Triglotta*, p. 479, § 4) is to reveal the true nature, guilt, and deserved punishment of sin, how sin permeates the very heart and soul of man and everything that we want and desire, and brings upon us God's wrath and displeasure, death and damnation. The Law, originally written into man's heart, has been erased (by man's fall into sin) to such a great extent that it is incapable of working in man the knowledge of his total depravity. It is incapable of producing in him the terrors of conscience and contrition which is a necessary pre-requisite of saving faith. His conscience would

only bear witness to the most obvious prohibitions and requirements of God's Holy Law on the basis of which his thoughts would either **"accuse or excuse"** him (Romans 2:14,15). It could not reveal to him the total corruption of his human nature from his mother's womb (Psalm 51:5) and his daily sins against God in all his thoughts, desires, words, and deeds (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 58:3). This the Holy Ghost does through clear Law passages throughout the Bible. In these passages, **"He reproves the world of sin"** (John 16:8) in order that He might be able to perform effectually **His *chief* work**, namely, that of proclaiming the comfort and grace of God in Christ Jesus, the Savior of all people. In like manner, the Lord Jesus also teaches the Law and explains it spiritually as exemplified in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7), and in His Sermon on the Plain, (Luke 6:20-49) before He is able effectually to reveal Himself as the Son of God and Redeemer of the world (See: ***Formula of Concord***, Thorough Declaration, Article V, *Triglotta*, p. 955, § 10; ***Apology***, Article III, *Triglotta*, p. 159, § 11-14). Even the heart of Christ's Work of Redemption, His holy, innocent, bitter suffering and death on the cross for the sins of the world, becomes the most forceful, the most terrible declaration and proclamation of God's wrath against sin in order that the beauty of the vicarious atonement might shine forth in all its splendor that the words, **"God hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin FOR US,"** might bring to us its greatest comfort, peace, and joy! Only then can we truly appreciate the fact that the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of the living God, became man, was made under the Law, kept the Law perfectly in our place, and suffered, as our Substitute, the torments of Hell which we so richly deserve by our sins, that all who believe in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

--Good Works are *Produced* ONLY by the *Gospel*

Now you have the Good News, the Good Tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, the Joyous Tidings of salvation, the Gospel which, as **"the power of God"** (Romans 1:16), is able to produce saving faith in the human heart. Here you have that precious Gospel through which the Holy Ghost has made you a Christian ***in order that*** you might be able to do works which are pleasing to God, **"for we are His workmanship** (His *product*), **created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,"** Ephesians 2:10. And

this is actually the final purpose for which Christ died, namely, as St. Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:15, **"That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."** Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, sang of this great purpose of our Savior's work of Redemption in his *Benedictus*, Luke 1:74,75, **"That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."** And Luther, after having described, in his classic explanation to the Second Article of the *Apostles' Creed*, what Jesus, our Savior, has done for each one of us lost and condemned creatures, namely, how He purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, *continues* with these words, **"That I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."** And the Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, chapter 2, verse 24, writes concerning Jesus, **"who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,"** and then continues, **"that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness!"** A good work, a work which is pleasing to God, is therefore something which a child of God does without even thinking, without even pondering the fact that he is doing a good work, because good works are the very proof or evidence of the fact that saving faith has been created in his heart through the power of the Gospel and therefore good works flow spontaneously out of his love for Christ motivated by His redemptive work. A good work, properly speaking, is, then, anything which a true believing Christian does or refrains from doing in thought, word, or deed; which is not contrary to the Word of God, that is, which is not in and of itself sinful, and thus is ***normed*** by God's Law [*"according to the Ten Commandments,"* Cat. Qu. 170]; and by which the Lord God is glorified and by which the neighbor is benefited both physically and especially spiritually, motivated only by the Christian's faith in and love for Jesus, his Savior. (Cf. Luther, *St. Louis Ed.*, I, 858; IV, 871; XII, 196 --Quoted in *What Luther Says*, III, #s 4908, 4916, 4892 respectively.)

Yes, when you know in your heart the Lord Jesus and with your soul recognize all that He means to you as your *personal* Savior --as YOUR Redeemer-- WHAT, then, *WILL* AND *MUST* HAPPEN? Will you exalt YOURSELF? NO! You will exalt HIM; you will praise HIM; you will

glorify HIM; you will honor HIM; and you will abhor yourself and recognize your filthiness and unworthiness. When ***saving faith*** has been worked in your heart by the Holy Ghost through the power of the Gospel, can your attitude toward life be expressed any longer in the words of the heathen poet, "*I am* the master of *my* fate; *I am* the captain of *my* soul," or, in plain words, "I want to live as **I** please, do as **I** please, make **my own** plans, and see that they are carried out and accomplished in my life the way **I** want them done without any interference from *anyone*!" --OR will you sincerely look to the ***Word of God*** for guidance day by day and earnestly strive to serve the Lord in everything you do or say, out of love for Him because of all that He has done for YOU!? This should help you evaluate the CHANGE which must necessarily occur in the heart and life of a Christian --a change produced in you *ONLY through the power of the Gospel!*

--Salvation is *Alone through Faith in Christ*, <u>BUT</u> True Faith in Christ is *Never Alone*

Good Works do **not** belong to the *essence of faith*, for then we would be saved by faith *and* works, which, of course, is contrary to Scripture, (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:16). Since the Lord Jesus has atoned for the sins of the whole world and since, because of Christ's *Universal Atonement*, God has forgiven the sins of all mankind (*Objective Justification*), the sinner actually needs no work of his own for eternal salvation. God has done it all and what God has done the sinner simply receives by faith. To add anything of our own as being necessary to salvation is a mockery of God's grace and the height of arrogance by which a person would be excluded from heaven (Galatians 5:4). Nevertheless, good works are so intimately connected with faith that *"faith is never alone"* (Luther). As soon as a person is brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, he becomes a **"new creature"** --a **"new man"** is created in him which is *"able to overcome sin and do good works,"* (*Catechism*, Question 169, p. 129). St. Paul writes, **"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,"** II Corinthians 5:17. If a person comes to faith in Christ, his life will be changed. Everything that he does will be affected by His saving knowledge of Jesus, His Savior, in whom he now trusts and believes and whom, having not seen, he loves, and in whom he rejoices

"with joy unspeakable and full of glory," I Peter 1:8. When Zacchaeus, the publican, became a true believer in Christ, he said to the Lord, **"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold,"** Luke 19:8. --For one who becomes a Christian, his whole life takes on *new meaning and purpose!* If, before you became a Christian, you were in the habit of cursing and swearing, as soon as you became a true child of God you were no longer comfortable with taking the name of your God in vain and soon overcame this wicked habit. If you had been given to lying so that, without blushing, you could stretch the truth and tell the greatest lies to anyone, as soon as you became a true Christian you would be greatly concerned with that Word of God which says, **"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor,"** Ephesians 4:25, and **"All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death,"** Revelation 21:8. Before you became a believer, attendance at Church and Bible Class meant nothing to you; but after the Holy Ghost worked saving faith in your heart through the Gospel, you no longer felt comfortable being absent when your fellow Christians were assembled together to hear and to learn God's Word, for public worship, and to **"teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,"** Colossians 3:16, and to carry on the work of the Church in the Voters Assembly. Staying at home, watching a ball game, going fishing or golfing, or working on your farm or in the office, no longer appealed to you in the light of Hebrews 10:25, which says, **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,"** especially in view of the nearness of the Day of Judgment. Before you became a true believer in Christ, you may have delighted in destroying the good name and reputation of others by slander or innuendo, or your life may have revolved around idle gossip about someone or another, and you would enjoy adding your two-cents' worth of news about this or that person; however, as soon as you became a Christian, such behavior was no longer enjoyable and juicy gossip was no longer palatable in the light of that Word of God which says, **"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,"** Matthew 7:12, and **"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell... it is an unruly evil,**

full of deadly poison," James 3:6-8. Filthy movies or videos, filthy pictures, stories, and literature, as well as filthy language, lose their luster when a person becomes a Christian, for the Word of God says, **"Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks,"** Ephesians 5:3,4; **"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers,"** Ephesians 4:29; **"It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret,"** Ephesians 5:12; **"Flee fornication,"** I Corinthians 6:18; and **"Flee also youthful lusts,"** II Timothy 2:22. Disobedience to parents, lack of respect for husband or wife, quarreling and fighting in the household **changes** when Christ becomes "the Head of the home, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation." --We could continue going through the Word of God and point out the most obvious, the less obvious, and the least obvious sins and requirements of each Commandment of God's Holy Law and show how, as soon as you become a Christian, your entire perspective and outlook on life changes, your lifestyle begins to conform more and more, without force or coercion, to what the Lord says in His Word. Your *Weltanschauung* is no longer *diesseits* but *jenseits* --your philosophy of life is no longer bound up with the things of this world but with the life in eternity, beyond the grave, in the joys of heaven. In the words of Psalm 42, the Christian exclaims, **"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"** (Psalm 42:1,2) ***"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!"*** (II Corinthians 5:17) How absurd it is to think that you can be a disciple of Christ, a true believer in Christ, without doing good works! How foolish it is to think that saving faith dwells in your heart if all your actions are motivated by selfishness, if neither love for God and His Word nor for your neighbor has found a place within you, if coming to church and to Bible classes is boring for you, if the work for Christ and His Kingdom is too time-consuming for you, if the physical and spiritual needs of your fellow human beings, for whom Christ shed His blood, do not concern you! Then you are simply deceiving yourself! Salvation is indeed ALONE through faith in Christ, BUT true faith in Christ is NEVER alone! It must show itself in good works, in works pleasing to God, in the life of every true

believing Christian. It, therefore, belongs to the very nature of a Christian that he does good works.

--General Characteristics of Good Works in the Life of a Christian

Hearty and Cheerful--

The good works of a Christian should therefore be *hearty* and *cheerful* --a hearty and cheerful keeping of God's Commandments which springs from the love of Christ in your heart. Without this attitude, the most exact performance of the letter of the Commandment is of no value whatever. A mere *external* observance of the Law, however exact and however plausible, is like a house built on sand if such works do not have love for Christ as their motive and as their cause. The Savior accepts no sacrifices, He accepts no services, which do not flow *freely*, *heartily*, and *cheerfully* out of love for Him.

Voluntary--

Your obedience to the Commandments of God, if they are to prove or to be the evidence of your saving faith in Christ, are also to be *voluntary*, as we mentioned briefly above. We should never feel as though we are *forced* to follow the Commandments, that we are *forced* to go to church, that we are *forced* to pray, that we are *forced* to do mission work, that we are *forced* to reach out to the unchurched, that we are *forced* to give of our money for the extension of Christ's kingdom, that we are *forced* to come to Bible Class and to the Voters Assembly, that we are *forced* to perform acts of love and kindness, that we are *forced* to let the Lord guide us in all our decisions of life by means of His Word. ***Rather***, as a Christian, you should, with great delight, exclaim with David, **"I have chosen Thy precepts,"** (Psalm 119:137), and in the words of the Savior through the pen of the Psalmist, **"I delight to do Thy will, O my God,"** (Psalm 40:8). Forcing obedience to the Commandments has made oodles of people **hypocrites** --has never produced a genuine Christian-- even though every Christian must use the Law in all its severity as a curb against his Old Adam.

Genuine Respect for All of God's Commandments--

Furthermore, your saving knowledge of Jesus your Savior must show itself by a *sincere and genuine respect* for <u>all</u> of God's Commandments --not only for those which are "easy" for you to observe or which harmonize with your way of thinking, but also those which are the most difficult and the most distasteful to your Old Adam. Jesus says, **"Ye are my friends, if ye do WHATSOEVER I command you."** (John 15:14). A true Christian is one who ***wants*** *to keep* all the Commandments of Christ and *sincerely* ***attempts*** to do so with all his heart, for the Law of God is the ***norm*** or standard of good works, even for the Christian. (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics,* III, pp. 37-42, 46.)

Constancy and Perseverance--

Also, when genuine faith in Christ and genuine love for Him exist in your heart through the power of the Gospel, such faith and love will be demonstrated *constantly* and *perseveringly* in your life and in your conduct: In what you do or say to others, in the way you act, in what you watch on T.V., in what you read, in what you look at, in how you let the Lord lead and guide you in your life without grumbling or complaining if things do not go your way. You will ***want*** to obey Christ **"in holiness and righteousness all the days of [your] life"** (Luke 1:75) BECAUSE He has **"delivered [you] out of the hand of [your] enemies"** (v. 74). Jesus says, **"Be thou FAITHFUL unto death"** (Revelation 2:10). **"This one thing I do,"** writes the Apostle Paul (Philippians 3:13-14), **"forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."** This is the way a true Christian should talk! This is the language of a true believer in Christ in whose heart is the saving knowledge of Jesus which shows itself in a life **"zealous of good works,"** (Titus 2:14).

--Perfection Marred by Imperfection

Truly good works, however, even though they are pleasing to God, are nevertheless spoiled by sin. When the Apostle Paul tells us, **"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,"** he is not referring to the Old Adam (Original Sin) which, as an ally of Satan and

this sinful world, continues to defile with sin even the best works of the Christian so that, Luther says, we are not even able to pray one perfect Lord's Prayer. St. John writes, **"If we (Christians) say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,"** I John 1:8. The sins which a Christian commits daily in his thoughts, desires, words, and actions, and which cause even his best works to be imperfect, are not the fruit of his faith but the fruits of his sinful flesh. As a true believer in Christ, the Christian is opposed to sin in every shape and form, and according to his New Man, his new spiritual life of faith, he continues to do works pleasing to God, even though his works are never perfect because of his Old Adam. God, however, is pleased with your works as a Christian because, in spite of the sins of your flesh, you are, by faith in Christ, covered with His perfect righteousness. This is of considerable **practical value** for Christians, first of all, as a comfort in our weakness, for the Christian recognizes his sins as they really are, an **offense** against God and his Savior Jesus Christ. He battles against them, hates them, flees from them, but they return again and again in ways unnumbered. The Christian, therefore, daily comes to the throne of God's grace for forgiveness and comfort, and looks to the Word and Sacrament for strength. And the very fact that we recognize, hate, and fight against our sins, and are troubled by them, should cause us to realize that we are indeed true children of God and that the Holy Ghost has made our bodies His temple. Unbelievers are not troubled because of their sins. They think, *"So <u>everybody</u> sins! What of it?"* They even look upon certain sins as the joys and pleasures of life to which they are entitled; some are even considered virtues. The fact that even our best works are imperfect should also serve to keep us humble before the Lord and not always ready to condemn those in whom we still see weaknesses and sinful habits and, in this respect, to permit **"charity [to] cover the multitude of sins,"** I Peter 4:8, and **"if [one] be overtaken in a fault...[to] restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,"** Galatians 6:1,2. That we still sin daily in our thoughts, desires, words, and deeds is a truth of Scripture by which we should be exhorted not to be carnally secure or content with our present sinful state, BUT rather that each one of us must, as a Christian, earnestly strive to be a *better* Christian **today** than he was yesterday, and a *better* Christian **tomorrow** than he is today. You must always strive hard to make constant progress in your Christian life. You cannot stand still, for to do so means to go backwards. Weakness of faith is not something with which a Christian should ever be

satisfied, lest he lose his faith altogether. As the Christian grows in his knowledge, faith, and understanding through the Gospel, he will also, by God's grace through the power of the Holy Ghost, *increase* **"in every good word and work," "perfecting holiness in the fear of God,"** (II Thessalonians 2:17; II Corinthians 7:1).

III. Doctrines and Scripture Passages which Encourage Christians to do Good Works

Because *good works are **absolutely necessary** in the life of every true Christian*, there are literally **thousands of passages** which urge Christians to do good works, or connect teachings or doctrines of the Bible with the performance of good works in the life of a Christian. The motive, of course, for doing such good works is found only in the Gospel, for **"the LOVE OF CHRIST constraineth us,"** II Corinthians 5:14; and the Apostle Paul beseeches us **"BY THE MERCIES OF GOD"** to **"present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service,"** Romans 12:1.

--Creation and the Loss of God's Image

The Bible teaches us that the Lord God created man in the beginning for one prime purpose, namely, for the praise of His glory and majesty, might and dominion, yes, to glorify His holy name even as the seraphim cry out before Him, **"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory,"** Isaiah 6:3 (see also Revelation 4:11), and to serve Him in perfect holiness and righteousness into all eternity. He, therefore, created man **"in His own image, after His likeness,"** Genesis 1:26,27, perfectly holy and blessed. But such perfect holiness did not last. Man, of his own free will, yielded to the temptation of Satan and fell away from God. God's image was lost! From henceforth, all people were conceived and born in sin, Psalm 51:5, and will continue to have this terrible disease or "vice of origin" (***Augsburg Confession***, Article II, § 2) as long as they live in this world, until the end of time. This is *Original Sin*, which is analogous to what the Bible calls your **"Old Adam,"** your **"Old Man,"** your **"Sinful Flesh,"** or merely **"the Flesh,"** which is a rank unbeliever, **"dead in trespasses and sins,"** not able to **"receive the things of the**

Spirit of God," an **"enemy"** of God, without righteousness, filled only with sinful lusts, and having no true fear, love and trust in God. Such is the condition of every one of us by nature, as we are born into this world since the Fall of Adam.

--The Renewal of the Image of God in Every True Believing Christian

God, however, in His all-wise counsel, planned a way for mankind once again **to glorify Him** through the restoration of His image in man and THIS was brought about through the perfect obedience and the sacrificial offering of His own beloved Son for the sins of all people. In all who, through His grace and power, believe in Christ as their only Savior and Redeemer, and trust only in Him for their salvation, He creates a **"New Man which is renewed in knowledge, *after the image of Him* that created him,"** Colossians 3:10, and **"which *after God* is created in righteousness and true holiness,"** Ephesians 4:24. This New Man is the Image of God, which God Himself has renewed in you and in all true believers when He brought us to faith in Christ Jesus, and which will be fully restored in heaven when **"we shall be *like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is!"** I John 3:2 (See also: Psalm 17:15). The Image of God, or the New Man, which once again fears, loves, and trusts in God above all things, as did Adam in the Garden of Eden before the Fall, is the New Spiritual Life of Faith --the New Creature created in the Christian by the Holy Ghost through the power of the Gospel-- by which every true Christian is enabled to avoid sin and to do good works as the fruit of his faith in Christ and to glorify His Creator and the God of his salvation. To glorify God by doing good works should be that righteousness after which you as a Christian **"hunger and thirst,"** Matthew 5:6, daily putting on the New Man by which you **"let your light so *shine* before men that they may *see* your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven,"** Matthew 5:16 (see also I Peter 2:12). Jesus says in John 15:8, **"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much fruit*; so shall ye be My disciples;"** and in Philippians 1:11, we read, **"Being *filled* with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God,"** and again, **"Ye are bought with a price: therefore *glorify God* in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's,"** I Corinthians 6:20. According to your New Man, you earnestly desire to glorify God every minute and day of your life. If this desire is not in your heart, your faith is

DEAD! St. Paul writes in Romans 8:1-13: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For *to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then *they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, *we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*"

--The Doctrine of God's Holiness: A Pattern for the Christian's Good Works

As we have seen, the New Man is the renewal of the Image of God in the Christian. According to the New Man, the Christian is holy and sinless. In fact, the Bible tells us in I John 3:9 that, as far as his New Man in concerned, the Christian **"CANNOT sin."** We have seen, however, that as long as a Christian is in this world he carries about with him his Old Adam which causes everything that he does to be polluted with sin. We have also seen how a Christian, who has received the promises of God's grace in Christ Jesus, should never be content with this situation but should daily **"put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts"** and **"put on the new man, which after** (like) **God is created in righteousness and true holiness,"** Ephesians 4:22-24. The Lord wants His children to be **imitators** of Him (Ephesians 5:1) who **"is righteous in all His ways, and**

holy in all His works," (Psalm 145:17). When the Patriarch Abram, who is called "the Father of the believers," was ninety-nine years old, the Lord God renewed His covenant with him, changed his name from Abram to Abraham and his wife's name Sarai to Sarah, and promised that Sarah should bear him a son. On that occasion, He spoke to Abraham, saying: **"I am the almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou *perfect*!"** (Genesis 17:1) At Mt. Sinai, the Lord God told Moses, **"Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, 'Ye shall be *holy*: *for I* the Lord your God am holy,'"** Leviticus 19:2, and **"Ye shall be *holy* unto Me: *for I* the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine,"** Leviticus 20:26. When the beautiful Temple of Solomon was dedicated in the city of Jerusalem, King Solomon blessed the people, saying at the close of his blessing, **"Let your heart therefore *be perfect* with the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes, and to keep His commandments, as at this day."** I Kings 8:61. In His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus told His disciples, which includes also you and me, **"Be ye therefore *perfect, even as* your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"** Matthew 5:4; and the Apostle Peter writes to Christians everywhere: **"But *as He* which hath called you is holy, *so be ye holy* in all manner of conversation (conduct); because it is written, '*Be ye holy; for I am holy*,'"** I Peter 1:15,16. In Psalm 11:7, we read, **"The righteous Lord loveth *righteousness*."**

--The Decalog: ***An Outline of Good Works for the Christian***

In the *Ten Commandments* we have an outline of God's Holy Law as He had given it to the Children of Israel on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:3-17; Deuteronomy 5:7-21). Here the Lord God describes the true believers as those **"that love Me, and keep My Commandments,"** Exodus 20:6. They love Him because of the promised Savior, and they keep His Commandments, that is, they do good works, as a fruit of their faith in the coming Christ. Summarizing the First Table of the Law (Commandments 1-3), Jesus tells us how much we should love the Lord our God, saying, **"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"** Matthew 22:37 (Cf. Deuteronomy 6:5). He then proceeds to summarize the Commandments of the Second Table (Commandments 4-10) with the words, **"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"** Matthew 22:38 (Cf. Leviticus 19:18). God's Commandments

provide a ***three-fold use*** for the Christians: **1)** As a **CURB**, they help him crucify his flesh with its affections and lusts motivated by his love for Jesus; **2)** As a **MIRROR**, they continue to show him that every day he sins against the very God who has created him and cares for him day by day, who has redeemed him by the precious blood of His beloved Son, and made him a Christian and an heir of heaven by bringing him to faith in Jesus through His Holy Spirit by the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). This knowledge of his sinfulness should keep him from becoming smug and self-righteous, and from thinking that he is better than others. Furthermore, the more he looks at himself in the discerning mirror of God's Law, the more he will realize what he deserves by his sins, namely, everlasting punishment in Hell, and the more precious his only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus, and the promises of the Gospel will become to Him, bringing him true comfort and joy. **3)** Finally, as a **RULE**, the Ten Commandments, together with all of the Law passages throughout the Bible which naturally fall under the various Commandments, telling him what to do and not to do, and how to be, become a precious Guide as he walks along the pathway of life. Furthermore, the better he knows God's Holy Law, the better equipped will he be to recognize the sinful aspirations of his Old Adam, the deceitful snares of Satan, and the beguiling temptations of the world about him from which, by the power of God's grace in Christ Jesus, he will be enabled to flee, as he lives out his life here on earth.

With a good knowledge of God's Holy Law you are informed better as to how God wants you to put off the Old Adam and to put on the New Man and are therefore better supplied with what you need as a rule for your life because, when a person becomes a believer, he earnestly wants to know from Scripture how God wants him to be, what He wants him to do and what He wants him to refrain from doing to live as one whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Let us here briefly dwell only on the First Commandment as the Keystone to all of the other Commandments, because in sinning against any of the other Commandments you sin automatically against the First Commandment, and the fulfillment of all the other Commandments must flow from the fulfillment of the First Commandment. St. Paul writes in Romans 6:12, **"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."** Sin will **not** rule in you if you, by God's grace, "fear, love, and trust in God above all things," as Luther, in his *Small Catechism*, correctly explains the

First Commandment. This means that, because of your faith in Christ, you respect God as the Highest Being, you honor Him with the way you live -- in every aspect of your life-- and you avoid everything which displeases Him; that you always put Him first in your heart and life and gladly serve Him in everything you do; that you put your entire life, first and foremost, into His hands and rely on Him to help you in every distress or hardship of life. This is that toward which you MUST ever earnestly strive as a Christian, and in this way you will indeed **"put on"** the New Man and **"put off"** the Old Adam in your life as a necessary fruit of your faith, not in order to be a Christian BUT because, by God's grace, you ARE a Christian. St. Paul writes in Romans 13:14, **"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."**

--The Sacraments: ***An Aid and Encouragement to Works Pleasing to God***

Inasmuch as the Sacraments are a Means of Grace, they, together with the Gospel, nurture and sustain saving faith in the human heart through which good works are automatically produced or, to state it differently, through which good works are brought forth as a natural fruit. The Bible, therefore, speaks of a person who is *baptized* as one who not only **"puts on Christ"**, being clothed in Christ's perfect righteousness (Galatians 3:27), but also as one who puts away the body of sin; for in Romans 6, verses 3 and 4, we read, **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."** You are, therefore, encouraged to renew your Baptismal Covenant daily in which you promise to renounce the devil and all His evil works and ways and to serve the Triune God and Him only.

In connection with the *Lord's Supper*, you are admonished to partake of the Lord's Supper frequently that you may **"show the Lord's death till He come,"** I Corinthians 11:26 --confessing your faith in the redemptive work of Christ-- and, that you may be a worthy communicant, you are asked to examine yourself as to whether you truly repent of your sins,

believe in Jesus Christ, and have the earnest purpose, henceforth, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to *amend your sinful life*, and whether you truly discern the Lord's body in the Sacrament, I Corinthians 11:28,29. In this way, the Sacraments encourage you to do works pleasing to God!

--Good Works: Presented in Scripture as an Absolutely Necessary *External Witness or Proof* that a Christian's Faith is Alive

It is, of course, true that your **faith itself** is the ***inner* testimony** of the Holy Ghost in your heart to the truth of the Gospel and to the certainty that eternal salvation is yours alone through Christ your Savior. St. Paul writes (Romans 8:16,17), **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."**

Repentance--

Good works, however, are presented in Scripture as a necessary ***external* evidence** of *true repentance*. When John the Baptist was sent to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming Savior, he exclaimed to the Pharisees, **"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,"** Matthew 3:8. To the publicans, he said, **"Exact no more than that which is appointed you."** To the soldiers, he said, **"Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."** And to the people in general, he said, **"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise,"** Luke 3:11-14. In other words: If you **ARE** a Christian, **LIVE LIKE ONE!**

Vocation--

Good works are also presented in Scripture as necessary ***external* evidence** of your *calling as a Christian*; for we read in Ephesians 4:1-3, **"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** As

Christians, we are God's product: He made us to be true believers in Christ that we might do works pleasing to Him (Ephesians 2:10).

Saving Faith--

Likewise, good works are presented in the Bible as a necessary ***external*** **evidence** of *saving faith*; for we read in James 2:17, **"Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone;"** and in Ephesians 2:10 we read, **"We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."**

Predestination--

Good works are also presented in Scripture as a necessary ***external*** **evidence** of your *eternal election* or *predestination* and your certainty of salvation; for we read in II Peter 1:5-11, **"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."** The more you abound in good works as the fruit of your faith in Christ, the greater will be the certainty through this external testimony of the Holy Spirit in your life that you are an elect child of God. The more barren you are, the greater will be your uncertainty.

Justification--

Good works also are an absolutely necessary **witness *before men*** that your sins are forgiven, even as Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee concerning the sinful woman, **"Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not**

ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much," Luke 7:44-47. This also applies to the stages of admonition and absolution in *Church Discipline* spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-18, and the words of James, in chapter 2:14, **"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."**

Last Judgment--

Good works are spoken of in Scripture also in connection with the Judgment of all men on the Last Day, for Jesus says, **"The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works"** (Matthew 16:27); and in Revelation 20:13, we read, **"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."** In the Last Judgment, Jesus, therefore, describes the separation of the believers from the unbelievers and how He will then say to the believers, **"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me"** (Matthew 25:34-36). These works, of course, would be worthless, if they did not flow out of love for Christ. And notice in the context that their works were such natural fruits of faith in the lives of the Christians that they wonder when they did all those things which the righteous Judge enumerates. In John 5:28, Jesus says, **"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."**

--The Doctrine of the Church and Its Ministry ***as it Relates to Good Works***

The ***Church***, as a divine institution, is also spoken of in Scripture in connection with good works. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25, **"Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish;"** and in Titus 2:14, we read, **"(Christ) gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."** Speaking of the Church, Peter says, **"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation"** (I Peter 2:9-12).

The ***Ministry***, also a divine institution, is to encourage Good Works among the Christians, the pastor himself being an example, as the Apostle Paul writes to Titus, chapter 2:7, **"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works,"** and exhorting the members of his congregation to do good works, as we read in St. Paul's letter to Timothy, **"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate"** (I Timothy 6:17,18). The same Apostle also writes to Titus, **"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men"** (Titus 3:1,2); **"And these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works"** (Titus 3:8), **"that they be not unfruitful."** (Titus 3:14).

--The Bible Connects Prayer and the Trials of Life with *Godly Living*

In the **very first** petition of the Lord's Prayer, the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray that His glorious name may be hallowed among us. Here we pray against all false teaching and godless living by which His holy name would be profaned and ask that His name be hallowed among us by true teaching and godly living --that His Word would be preached among us in all its truth and purity and also *demonstrated in our lives* **"in every good word and work"** (II Thessalonians 2:17). How fervent such a prayer should be especially in view of the times in which we live!

Also the *trials of life* or the *crosses* which you as a Christian are called upon to bear in your life add to the necessity and encouragement for you to do good works out of love for your Savior. We read in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, beginning with verse 7, **"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth *the peaceable fruit of righteousness* unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet*, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."**

--God Graciously Rewards the Good Works of the Christian

Just a short paragraph yet on the rewards which God, in His Word, promises to bestow upon the good works of His children. There are many, many Bible passages which speak of such promised rewards --many of them connected with *good works* with which the Lord God is especially pleased. Thus we find the Lord emphasizing the importance and benefit of keeping the Fourth Commandment by adding the promise, **"That it may be well with Thee, and Thou mayest live long on the earth."** The Lord

Jesus speaks of those who are hated, ostracized, reproached, and persecuted because of their faith in Him, and then continues with the words, **"Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven"** (Luke 6:22; Matthew 5:11,12). Christians are encouraged by their Savior to love their enemies, to do good and to lend, hoping for nothing in return, and for such as observe these words of Jesus, we find the promise, **"Your reward shall be great!"** In connection with doing works of charity, the giving of alms, and with your manner of praying, Jesus tells us not to seek glory from those who may praise you for your generosity and piety BUT **"that their alms may be in secret"** and that you pray **"in thy closet;"** and then He adds this promise, **"And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly"** (Matthew 6:1-6). Jesus urges us Christians to show kindness especially to our pastors and fellow Christians, adding the promise that he **"shall receive a prophet's reward," "shall receive a righteous man's reward," "shall in no wise lose his reward."** Concerning pastors who either plant the Seed of God's Word or who water the Seed as it grows in the hearts of his hearers, the Apostle Paul writes, **"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor"** (I Corinthians 3:8). After speaking of the conduct of Christians in their various stations of life, urging them with the words, **"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men,"** the Apostle Paul follows these words by saying, **"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ"** (Colossians 3:24). Many more such passages could be cited, but this will serve well as a sample of these many references to the Reward of Good Works.

St. Paul writes to Timothy, **"Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"** (I Timothy 4:8). In comparison with **"godliness," "bodily exercise"** is of little value. True piety in the exercise of works pleasing to God is always of great value, not only in this life but also beyond the grave into all eternity where the Good Works of the believers **"do follow them"** (Revelation 14:13). So great is the Lord's mercy toward us that He speaks of heaven with its various degrees of glory as **"rewards of labor,"** graciously calling the eternal joys of heaven a **"reward"** for the good works of the believers, which are only the *proof* or *evidence of their faith in Christ*; and being received into heaven is a matter of God's grace alone and not of merit. Furthermore, God is really

rewarding, in effect, what He Himself has accomplished in you and through you for it is God only in whom we *"live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:18) and who **"worketh in [us] both to will and to do of His good pleasure"** (Philippians 2:13). All of the **"rewards"** spoken of in Scripture in connection with the good works of believers are for our *encouragement*, namely, to recognize the importance and necessity of Good Works in our lives as Christians --BUT they must always be regarded as *rewards of mercy and grace* in Christ Jesus, our Savior.

In Conclusion--

May it be our prayer that we **"might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins"** (Colossians 1:10-14). **"Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."** (Hebrews 13:20,21).

O, dear Lord, grant us Thy grace that we, as Thy servants, may be guided and directed in our lives according to Thy Word, and that we may abound more and more in every good work, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

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Note: Services are also held each Sunday in our Midland, Michigan chapel at the **Ramada Inn**, 1815 South Saginaw Road:

Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... 6:30 p.m.
Worship Service ..... 7:30 p.m.

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Telephone: (206) 723-1078

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Bible Class ..... 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service .....10:30 a.m.

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9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118
Telephone: (206)723-7418

Note: Services are also held in Victoria, British Columbia on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Sunday School ..... 3:00 p.m.
Worship Service ..... 3:45 p.m.
Bible Class ..... 5:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Wilmot, SD 57279

Worship Service .....
(June 1st through September 30th)
..... 9:30 a.m.
(October 1st through May 31st)
.....10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class
..... after the service.

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