

Study of Concordia - The Lutheran Confession of Faith

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Week 7 - Article VI



Review/Summary:

The Augsburg Confession is the specific Lutheran confession of the Christian faith which we believe, teach, and confess in our churches according to God's Holy Word. It was written by Philip Melanchthon in consultation with Luther and others and presented to the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530 AD. The aim of the confession was to present as fully as possible the doctrinal articles of the Orthodox Christian faith, as taught in Scripture and the "Church catholic" (universal). Rome had charged Luther and "the Lutherans" of teaching heresy. The Lutherans presented their case before Emperor Charles V, and the confession was accepted making it "legal" to be Lutheran Christians because our teachings did not dissent from the Orthodox Christian teaching of Scripture.

It consists of 28 articles of which the first 21 deal with the "chief articles of faith"— most following the model of Thesis-Antithesis. That is each states the belief we hold and then states the false beliefs which are condemned (as heresy). The last 7 articles are the abuses which had been corrected by the Lutherans, showing why Rome was actually guilty of heresy and justifying the changes made by the Lutherans with regard to customs and ceremonies.

Article I: Of God— This article proceeds from the creeds (especially the Nicene council) and teaches that there are three persons in the God-head who are of the same essence and power and who are co-eternal.

Article II: Of Original Sin— All men are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence (desire for sin); and this disease, or vice of origin is truly sin.

Article III: Of The Son of God— Christ Jesus, true God and true man, suffered and died to reconcile the Father unto us and be a sacrifice for all sins of men. He sends the Holy Spirit.

Article IV: Of Justification— The righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who believe.

Article V: Of The Ministry— In order that we may be brought to faith in Jesus Christ the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted by God.

Article VI

New Obedience

¹ Our churches teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruit [Galatians 5:22–23]. It is necessary to do good works commanded by God [Ephesians 2:10], because of God's will. We should not rely on those works to merit justification before God. ² The forgiveness of sins and justification is received through faith. The voice of Christ testifies, "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (Luke 17:10). ³ The Fathers teach the same thing. Ambrose says, "It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving forgiveness of sins, without works, through faith alone."

Note: Lutherans are sometimes accused of denying that Christians should do good works. The article on new obedience follows on the heels of the articles on justification and the ministry, and clearly states that Lutherans do insist on good works. The faith given by the Holy Spirit is a living and active power in our lives, bearing the fruit of good works. We must do good works. God commands them. However, they do not save us. They are always the result of saving faith. This article refers to an Early Church Father as proof that this teaching is anchored in the Church's historic teaching and practice. (See also Ap V.)

McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (pp. 33–34). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Outline of the Article:

VI. New Obedience

- A. Faith should produce good works. (1)
- B. We must do all such good works as God has commanded (in contrast with man-made work).
- C. We should do good works according to God's Will, yet not put our trust in them. (1,2)
- D. Forgiveness comes through faith alone, without works/merit. (3)

Terms Defined:

The Fathers— The Church Fathers, Early Church Fathers, Christian Fathers, or Fathers of the Church are ancient and generally influential Christian theologians (some of whom were noteworthy teachers, writers and bishops of the Church) who set the theological and scholarly foundations of Christianity. The era of these scholars largely ended by 700 AD. Most Church Fathers are also honored as “saints.”

Chief among the Church fathers would be the ones which Western Christianity calls the “Eight Doctors of the Church”: Ambrose (340-397AD), Jerome (347-420), Augustine (354-430), Gregory the Great (540-604), Basil the Great (329-379), Athanasius (296-373), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389) and John Chrysostom (347-407).

Faith and Good Works: *Martin Luther (from his Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans)*

Faith is not the human notion and dream that some people call faith. When they see that no improvement of life and no good works follow— although they can hear and say much about faith— they fall into the error of saying, “Faith is not enough; one must do works in order to be righteous and be saved.” This is due to the fact that when they hear the gospel, they get busy and by their own powers create an idea in their heart which says, “I believe”; they take this then to be a true faith. But, as it is a human figment and idea that never reaches the depths of the heart, nothing comes of it either, and no improvement follows.

Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John [1:12-13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. Oh it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him this grace. Thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire.

Questions:

Article VI begins, "Our churches teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruit." "This faith" references what was just previously established in Article IV: Justification.

Why do the confessors begin with the doctrine of justification by grace through faith?

What do we mean when we say that something is "bound to happen"?

To "bind" something is to tie it up. How are we tied up by sin? More importantly, in what way are we tied to Jesus?

Read Matthew 7:15-20. Is it the tree that makes the fruit or the fruit that makes the tree?

Can we really identify faith by the works it produces?

Why is it wrong to "rely on good works?"

How might you tell the difference between relying on works and just doing them?

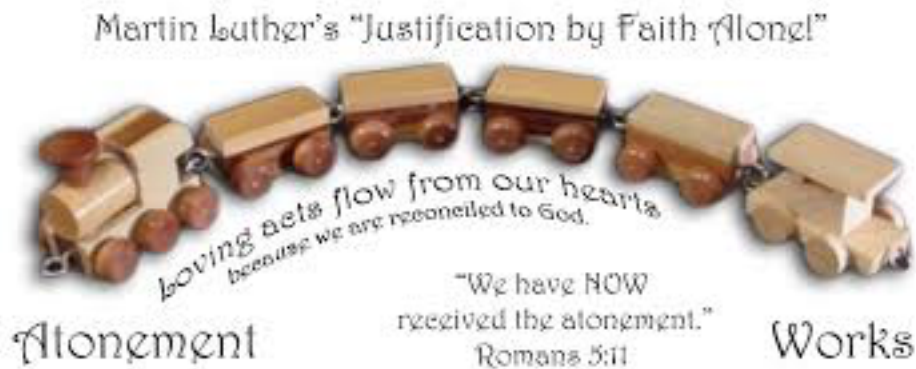
Read James 2:14-26. Does James contradict our Lutheran teaching on good works?

Read Ephesians 2:8-10. What is the relationship between faith and good deeds?

How do these verses show that faith itself is not a human work?

What is faith then?

Justification before Sanctification
(or Faith before Works)



One of the ways to think about the relationship between faith and works, would be to think of the relationship between a train engine and the cars it pulls. Cars filled with all the good works in the world cannot get anywhere without the engine of faith, and an engine alone would be rather useless without some cargo to pull. It is faith that drives the works that follow.

Application Questions:

1: Who decides what is or is not a good work? How would you respond to someone who said: “Truth is found within us”?

2: Your friend (a Christian) says that it is okay for her to have sex outside of marriage because God will forgive her anyway. Another friend believes she can say evil things about her fellow church member and still go to communion with him. How do you respond to the belief that leads to this approach to the Christian life?

3: In contrast to question 2, many Christians approach Christianity or church membership with a standard of behavior and good works (piety) which is not in Scripture (Pietism... e.g. “Don’t drink,” “Don’t smoke,” “Don’t dance,” “Don’t play cards,” that you must pray folding your hands a certain way or standing a certain way, etc.). What is the problem with this approach to the Christian life?

Scripture Passages Cited:

Matthew 7:15–20 (ESV)

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

James 2:14–26 (ESV)

Faith Without Works Is Dead

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.