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"If you want Peace, seek Justice for all"

Walk in Righteousness, depending on the Love and Spirit of Christ, as His servant forever"

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Dear Friends in Christ,

That we are saved by Faith alone and not by good works is a flag waving slogan of the Protestant Reformation. They claimed with good reason that the Roman Church of their day talked and acted by the principal that we are saved by doing good works which were beneficial to the church. So that if you did what the church required you could sin, break all the commandments and still be good with God. Rich folks are always happy to hear they can sin all they want if they pay off God's spokesmen. This idea was refuted by the truth that we are saved by faith alone.

Satan and our devious human hearts replaced the old error with a false understanding of that truth. Since we are saved by faith alone and not by good works as long as we believe in Jesus we are free from the commandments and can do whatever we want. As a minister told me, he was not committing adultery (that's in the Old Testament) he sharing the love of Christ, in the freedom of the Gospel, good news. Some of the most evil people I have known are confident they are saved.

Once we have identified an enemy we hate to change the label. The Roman Church had a Counter Reformation and removed the worst abuses and rededicated itself to the true service of Christ. They did not meet all the requirements of the Protestants so remained condemned. The Protestants keep splitting because new requirements keep coming up and one group does not do everything the way another demands. "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" 2 Corinthians 6:14.

St Paul who wrote the above about Christian dealings with heathen also wrote how we were to treat fellow Christians in Romans 14. "As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. . . . Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand." In Romans 15: "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. . . . Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

In the name of one called by God to proclaim His Love for all,

Stephen H. Funck

The Sign of Concord

He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves,
but for him who died and was raised for them. 2 Cor. 5:15

FAITH ALONE / GOOD WORKS

It is an idea and practice of some that since they know “Salvation is by Faith Alone”, they are freed from keeping the Commandments.

That we are saved by “Faith Alone” does not render obedience to God’s Law optional. The following quotes from Lutheran Confessions makes this clear. Luther wrote in the Small Catechism: The Eighth Commandment. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. What does this mean?-- Answer. We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.”

It is God’s will that we do good. Even if we refrain from doing evil, no one is ever able to do all the good he should. Although we are unable to perfectly do everything, we must still diligently do our best.

Creed: The First Article. “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. What does this mean?--Answer. I believe that God has made me and all creatures; . . . without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it (it is my duty) to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.”

The Augsburg Confession: Article XX: Of Good Works. “Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works . . . Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.”

The Smalcald Articles written by Luther states Part III, Article IX. Of Excommunication. “manifest and obstinate sinners are not admitted to the Sacrament . . . until they amend their lives and avoid sin.” Manifest = publicly known. Obstinate = refuse to repent, apologize, amend, correct.

That we are saved by “Faith Alone” is perfectly valid. That does not mean anyone can decide on the basis of his own opinion of himself that he has “sufficient faith” to guarantee his salvation. God alone is the Judge. The only opinion of himself, a Christian can have, is that he is a sinner unworthy of God’s mercy. As such all he can do is hope, have faith, in Jesus as his Redeemer. That hope means of necessity he will seek God’s Spirit, repent, amend and strive to live as one of the redeemed of the Lord. Anyone who thinks his place is heaven is assured, has put himself in place of God. As St. Paul said “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”. God is good. We can be confident in Him. It is ourselves of whom we need to be in constant fear. Pride, confidence goes before the fall. The Good News of redemption is good news to be believed, the foundation for a living hope. Rejoice in the Love of God and pass it on. To God alone is the glory.

To hear is to obey / To believe is to do.