

TABLE TALK

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...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



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A Man For All Ages - A Faith For All Times!

by Dr. Rev. Ralph Spears



He stood barely five feet four inches tall but he has cast an imposing and indelible shadow down the stretches of time to this day. Because of his brilliance, he planned a career as a lawyer but became instead a monk under vows and a professor at Wittenberg at a rather young age. He sought peace and absolution but felt only undeniable guilt instead. Directed to the Holy Scriptures, he was fascinated but found no solace for an inner sense of sinfulness and torment. He was sent to Rome to find truth and reconciliation, but instead discovered corruption of power and the basest of human values in the seat of the Church itself.

Therefore in 1517 he wrote a list of observations to be debated in Wittenberg University and tacked them on the Castle Church door as was the custom of that day. The date was October 31st. Instead, these 95 ideas or Theses were copied by the newly invented printing press and sent all over Europe finding their way to Rome where Pope Leo X discovered that most of those 95 ideas opposed the Papal office and his unscrupulous means of raising funds to finish his pet project, building the lavish Cathedral of St. Peter there.

He sought the freedom of expression but was placed under house arrest for his own safety by his prince and protector, Fredrick the Wise. This not only spared his life but allowed him to translate the Holy Scriptures into German and write the Catechisms for instruction in the Faith and edit the

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Mass into a more usable form in both Latin and German. All of these labors still endure as trustworthy even brilliant works of translation and interpretation.

While reading the Book of Romans he found his pearl of great price, along with the words of Psalm 71 "Faith by Grace - alone." Here at last was the answer that brought everything together not only for him but for generations of Christians who were looking for the Truth hidden in plain sight. Suddenly the 'dark ages' had a silver lining which shown through and became a Light to all - the reform so needed in the life of the Church.

He sought desperately to bring not only strength and truth back to the Church but Unity, instead, the strain of it all was too much and the Western Church was polarized into Roman Catholic and Protestant. He desired that the Church never be called Lutheran but by an irony of time, his name became the label of that reformation, counter-reformation and attempted resolution.

But is it really important now - 483 years later? Some of those still called Lutherans would say "no" that it is a relic of time like holy bones, once revered.

Many like us would give a resounding "Yes" to this question, saying that the Roman Catholic branch of the Church even the present Pope Benedict especially as Cardinal Ratzinger, still begs the question on the central principle of Justification by Faith - ALONE. They still revere popes with authority well beyond the office of the humble shoes of the fisherman, Peter who confessed his Lord by faith alone - "You are the Christ the son of the living God" - despite the presumptuous structure raised over his martyred bones. They subtly give glory to mankind and not to the "Christ of the Living God" so confessed. Is that just sour grapes from diehard Protestants? No, it is tribute

to 95 points raised by a humble but courageous and brilliant monk of the Augustinian order, that his observations are as valid today as ever.

What Luther discovered is the truth of the Scripture which does not, has not, changed. Grace must be Grace, the gift of God, not cheapened by compromise, nor sullied by man's attempts to revise and improve on this component of redemption. One popular hymn calls Grace, quite simply - "amazing" that it shepherds us through the vicissitudes of fear, doubt and Faith and "leads us home." The second amazing thing about Grace is that it is freely given - no strings attached. It cannot be and is not earned in any way - eliminating any of man's efforts.

And the words from the Hymn of Edward Mote: "My Hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness" and the next line - "NO MERIT OF MY OWN I CLAIM but wholly lean on Jesus' name." Refrain: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

What Luther encountered was the fiendish invention of indulgences by Roman authority which his own parish members were encouraged to buy forgiving grace with their own hard won coins. When forgiveness of future sins was offered for sale - that was too much, Pastor Luther's outrage helped to set off the Protestant Reformation. Selling Grace was not possible and an abomination when compared to Romans 1:17. "The righteous shall live by Faith" an adaptation from Habakkuk 2 and stated again in the 3rd Chapter: "We are justified by grace as a gift!"

What we have encountered in all ages is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer in our own time has called 'cheap grace' which is roughly the hedge to go on sinning having given a nod in the direction of God and His goodness. Man indulges himself attempt-

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ing to make himself worthy while short circuiting this wondrous and amazing Grace. Luther knew this from his own personal struggle.

As evidence of Pastor Luther's gift, we never hear or think of a "Saint" Martin Luther. His bones lie buried unobtrusively some twenty-five feet from the door where he hung those Theses next to the pulpit of the Castle Church. This keeps the whole structure of the Protestant struggle rightly, in perspective. Was he right? Let him answer that question. Luther would say that the Scriptures, the Holy Scriptures are right and unerring in all truth – and he would only answer for them – "This is most certainly True!" No Protestant, indeed no Christian need ever do more - or boast concerning the Faith, because the free gift of Grace has made it shine with clarity for all. The relationship between God and man is in proper perspective. We do not need to "indulge" ourselves.

Going to Wittenberg today along the River Elbe is a remarkable experience, little seems to have changed. There is the Castle Church of Frederick the Wise, with its famous door now a bronzed tribute to the Reformation event. Down across the square and the two larger than life statues of Luther and his fellow Reformer and incomparable friend, Philipp Melanchthon into the town is the Parish Church where both of them taught and preached with the huge baptismal ciborium resting on the backs of the four Gospel writers where the Luther children were baptized.

There are the delightful portraits and paintings of Lucas Cranach – the elder and the younger who brought to life the portraits of Martin and Katharina (von Bora) Luther and Frederick the Wise Elector of Saxony in all of his glory.

Back towards the entrance to the town is the public area where the Pa-

pal Bull – the arrest papers from the Pope – was burned. Further into the town on a main street there is still the large old three story Augustinian friary virtually unchanged where the Luther family entertained and met so many who came to debate and learn from him with the large tile stove occupying one whole corner of the room. There are the wooden tables like the one where Luther had carved with his eating knife the words of Jesus, "This is My Body" to emphasize the "Christ's real presence" and not just a memorial in the Sacrament of The Lord's table to the Swiss Reformer, Zwingli. Many informal discussions, some published as the Table Talks took place here.

The Wittenberg atmosphere is a delightful reminder that "a simple layman armed with Scripture is mightier than the mightiest pope." It is a reminder that Luther, Melanchthon and the Reformers who followed them – turned on the fountain of the Means of Grace through the Scriptures to all believers. This is the living heritage of the Reformation which must be nurtured and kept alive in the Christian witness of the Church.

Traveling about Germany on the Autobahn at break neck speeds there are the great statues erected in many towns like Magdeburg and Leipzig where Luther traveled by oxcart many times to teach and preach. Such trips were hard on the body eventuating his death at 62 on his last trip to a distant town to settle a family dispute.

I was once asked with some other pastors, 'Was Luther right?' I would have to say that he never wrote or said anything of substance with which I could disagree. Rather, I am still amazed again and again at the freshness and clarity of Martin Luther's Faith, life and writings.

No 'Saint' here, because he stands in the great communion and fellowship of Saints. 'There he still stands, he could do no other!' Ω

Apologetics is a word that comes from the Greek word *apologia* meaning a defense against the charges made by the prosecution (see Acts 26:2 and 1 Peter 3:15). Apologetics as a theological discipline is the intellectual defense of the faith.

Do Lutherans Do Apologetics?

By Rev. Korey D. Maas

It is often heard that "Lutherans don't do apologetics." When heard, this claim is frequently followed by a supporting statement to the effect that, "You can't argue people into faith." For good measure, the historically-minded might even point out that Martin Luther himself had some not very nice things to say about theological appeals to fallen human reason.

And while each of these statements might be true, each also needs to be thoroughly qualified. To say that Lutherans don't do apologetics may be, unfortunately, largely true as a simple description of recent North American Lutheranism. Yet it is certainly not the case that Lutherans have always been averse to the project, as becomes evident even upon examining the prolegomena of many seventeenth-century Lutheran dogmatic works.

Similarly, it is indeed true that Luther, in high polemical mode, did sometimes rail against reason's misuse and abuse. Yet in less polemical writings—the Small Catechism, for example—he is quick to point out that reason is, of course, one of God's good gifts. And even in his more controversial writings he could admit that "we must use our reason or else give way to the fanatics" (AE 37:224).

But this is not at all to suggest that one can argue people into faith. Doing so, however, is not the task of apologetics. Given that faith is created by God Himself via the proclamation of the Gospel, the primary apologetic task might simply be

characterized as addressing those intellectual objections the unbeliever raises in an attempt to dismiss a clear proclamation of the Gospel. And quite understandably, these objections are most frequently aimed at matters of empirical fact, the sorts of Christian claims that might at least in theory be verified or falsified by some logical or investigative means. The reason this is perfectly understandable is that Christianity, unlike most world religions, is firmly grounded in objective historical events.

To ask whether Jesus existed, or whether He publicly claimed to be God incarnate, or whether He rose from death in order to establish that claim is not at all to ask an esoteric "religious" question such as, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" It is to ask a question about objective, historical facts. It is, therefore, not surprising that the apostles themselves regularly appealed to empirical evidence in their proclamation of Christ. John insists that he writes about what he and his companions "have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched" (1 John 1:1). Peter, presenting the case for Christ to a hostile audience, not only reminds his hearers that he was an eyewitness to the events described, but refers to these events having happened "as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

Likewise, the modern apologist says merely that if there are certain objections to the faith that can be addressed by reasonable appeals to evi-

(Apologetics continued)

dence—or certain foundational facts that can be similarly established—then by all means, when speaking to the rational unbeliever, make every possible use of reason and evidence. By all means, tear down the intellectual barriers the skeptic has constructed to "protect" himself from a confrontation with the Gospel. No, doing so will not argue anyone into faith. But by means of reasonable and persuasive argument, as by means of the Law, "every mouth may be silenced" (Romans 3:19). And with mouths closed, perhaps way is made for ears to be opened.

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In the following article, the *Preface* to Luther's Small Catechism, we find Luther taking great care to assure those who will read and study the Catechism, that the teachings of the Church are pure, and that they are to take care that they remain pure. In the Catechism the Christian finds clear and concise answers for the faith. Even if one is familiar with the *Preface*, it is good to read it through once again and be reminded of Luther's concern for good theology and solid teaching.

LUTHER'S PREFACE

Martin Luther to all faithful and godly pastors and preachers: Grace, mercy, and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord!

The deplorable condition in which I found religious affairs during a recent visitation of the congregations has impelled me to publish this Catechism, or statement of the Christian doctrine, after having prepared it in very brief and simple terms. Alas, what misery I beheld! The people, especially those who live in the villages, seem to have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and many of the pastors are ignorant and incompetent teachers. And, nevertheless, they all maintain that they are Christians, that they have been baptized, and that they have received the Lord's Supper. Yet they cannot recite the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; they live as if they were irrational creatures, and now that the gospel has come to them, they grossly abuse their Christian liberty.

Ye bishops! What answer will ye give to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people, and paid no attention to the duties of your office? I invoke no evil on your heads. But you withhold the cup in the Lord's Supper, insist on the observance of your human laws, and yet, at the same time, do not take the least interest in teaching the people the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or any other part of the Word of God. Woe unto you!

Wherefore I beseech you in the Name of God, my beloved brethren, who are pastors or preachers, to engage heartily in the discharge of the duties of your office, to have mercy on the people who are entrusted to your care, and to assist us in introducing the Catechism among them, and es-

(Preface, Continued next page)

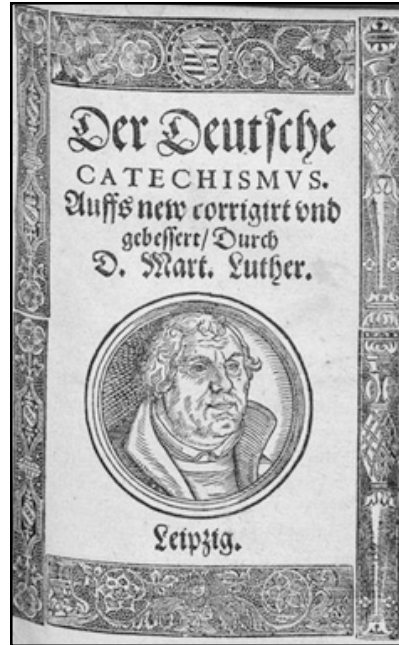
(Preface, Continued from page 5)

pecially among the young. And if any of you do not possess the necessary qualifications, I beseech you to take at least the following forms, and read them, word for word, to the people, on this wise:

In the first place, let the preacher take the utmost care to avoid all changes or variations in the text and wording of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Sacraments, etc. Let him, on the contrary, take each of the forms respectively, adhere to it, and repeat it anew, year after year. For young and inexperienced people cannot be successfully instructed unless we adhere to the same text or the same forms of expression. They easily become confused when the teacher at one time employs a certain form of words and expressions, and, at another, apparently with a view to make improvements, adopts a different form. The result of such a course will be that all the time and labor which we have expended will be lost.

This point was well understood by our venerable fathers, who were accustomed to use the same words in teaching the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. We too should follow this plan when we teach these things, particularly in the case of the young and ignorant, not changing a single syllable, nor introducing any variations, when year after year we recur to these forms and recite them anew before our hearers.

Choose, therefore, the form of words which best pleases you and adhere to it perpetually. When you preach in the presence of intelligent and learned men, you are at liberty to exhibit your knowledge and skill, and may present and discuss these subjects in all the varied modes which are at your command. But when you are teaching the young, retain the same form and manner



Title page of Luther's Small Catechism - 1560 Leipzig

without change. Teach them, first of all, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., always presenting the same words of the text, so that those who learn can repeat them after you and retain them in the memory.

But if any refuse to receive your instructions, tell them plainly that they deny Christ and are not Christians. Such persons shall not be admitted to the Lord's Table, nor present a child for baptism, nor enjoy any of our Christian privileges, but are to be sent back to the pope and his agents, and indeed to Satan himself. Their parents and employers should, besides, refuse to furnish them with food and drink, and notify them that the government was disposed to banish from the country all persons of such a rude and intractable character.

For although we cannot, and should not, compel them to exercise faith, we ought nevertheless to in-

struct the great mass with all diligence, so that they may know how to distinguish between right and wrong in their conduct towards those with whom they live or among whom they desire to earn their living. For whoever desires to reside in a city, and enjoy the rights and privileges which its laws confer, is also bound to know and obey those laws. God grant that such persons may become sincere believers! But if they remain dishonest and vicious, let them at least withhold from public view the vices of their hearts.

In the second place, when those whom you are instructing have become familiar with the words of the text, it is time to teach them to understand the meaning of those words, so that they may become acquainted with the object and purport of the lesson. Then proceed to another of the following forms, or, at your pleasure, choose any other which is brief, and adhere strictly to the same words and forms of expression in the text, without altering a single syllable; besides, allow yourself ample time for the lessons. For it is not necessary that you should, on the same occasion, proceed from the beginning to the end of the several parts; it will be more profitable if you present them separately, in regular succession. When, for instance, the people have at length correctly understood the First Commandment, you may proceed to the Second, and so continue. By your neglect of observing this mode, the people will be overburdened and prevented from understanding and retaining in memory any considerable part of the matter communicated to them.

In the third place when you have thus reached the end of this short Catechism, begin anew with the Large Catechism, and by means of it furnish the people with fuller and more comprehensive explanations.

Explain here at large every commandment, every petition, and, indeed, every part, showing the duties which they severally impose, and both the advantages which follow the performance of those duties, and also the dangers and losses which result from the neglect of them. Insist in an especial manner on such commandments or other parts as seem to be most of all misunderstood or neglected by your people. It will, for example, be necessary that you should enforce with the utmost earnestness the Seventh Commandment, which treats of stealing, when you are teaching workmen, dealers and even farmers and servants, inasmuch as many of these are guilty of various dishonest and thievish practices. So, too, it will be your duty to explain and apply the Fourth Commandment with great diligence when you are teaching children and uneducated adults, and to urge them to observe order, to be faithful, obedient, and peaceable, as well as to adduce numerous instances mentioned in the Scriptures which show that God punished such as were guilty in these things and blessed the obedient.

Here, too, let it be your great aim to urge magistrates and parents to rule wisely, and to educate the children, at the same time admonishing them that such duties are imposed on them, and showing them how grievously they sin if they neglect them. For in such a case they overthrow and lay waste alike the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, acting as if they were the worst enemies both of God and of man. And show them very plainly the shocking evils of which they are the authors, when they refuse their aid in training up children to be pastors, preachers, writers, etc., and set forth that on account of such sins God will inflict an awful punishment upon them. It is indeed neces-

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sary to preach on these things; for parents and magistrates are guilty of sins in this respect which are so great that there are no terms in which they can be described. And truly Satan has a cruel design in fostering these evils.

Finally, inasmuch as the people are now relieved from the tyranny of the pope, they refuse to come to the Lord's Table and treat it with contempt. On this point also it is very necessary that you should give them instructions, while at the same time you are to be guided by the following principles: That we are to compel no one to believe, or to receive the Lord's Supper; that we are not to establish any laws on this point, or appoint the time and place; but that we should so preach as to influence the people without any law adopted by us, to urge and, as it were, to compel us who are pastors to administer the Lord's Supper to them. Now this object may be attained if we address them in the following manner: It is to be feared that he who does not desire to receive the Lord's Supper at least three or four times during the year despises the Sacrament and is no Christian. So, too, he is no Christian who neither believes nor obeys the gospel; for Christ did not say: "Omit or despise this" but "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it," etc. He commands that this should be done and by no means be neglected and despised. He says: "This do."

Now he who does not highly value the Sacrament shows thereby that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell; that is to say, he does not believe that such evils exist, although he may be deeply immersed in them and completely belong to the devil. On the other hand, he needs no grace, no life, no paradise, no heaven, no Christ, no God, no good thing. For if he believed that he was involved in such evils and that he

was in need of such blessings, he could not refrain from receiving the Sacrament, wherein aid is afforded against such evils and, again, such blessings are bestowed. It will not be necessary to compel him by the force of any law to approach the Lord's Table; he will hasten to it of his own accord, will compel himself to come, and indeed urge you to administer the Sacrament to him.

Hence you are by no means to adopt any compulsory law in this case as the pope has done. Let it simply be your aim to set forth distinctly the advantages and the losses, the wants and the benefits, the dangers and the blessings, which are to be considered in connection with the Sacrament; the people will doubtless then seek it without urgent demands on your part. If they still refuse to come forward, let them choose their own ways, and tell them that those who do not regard their own spiritual misery, and do not desire the gracious help of God, belong to Satan. But if you do not give such solemn admonitions, or if you adopt odious compulsory laws on the subject, it is your own fault if the people treat the Sacrament with contempt. Will they not necessarily be slothful, if you are silent and sleep? Therefore consider the subject seriously, ye pastors and preachers! Our office has now assumed a very different character from that which it bore under the pope; it is now of a very grave nature and is very salutary in its influence. It consequently subjects us to far greater burdens and labors, dangers and temptations, while it brings with it an inconsiderable reward and very little gratitude in the world. But Christ himself will be our reward, if we labor with fidelity. May He grant such mercy unto us who is the Father of all grace, to whom be given thanks and praises through Christ, our Lord, for ever! Amen. Ω

WITTENBERG AD 1529

If we should think a good grounding in the teachings of our faith and that being able defend those teachings is not relevant to Christians in our day, the following article will hopefully help to convince otherwise.

The Battle for Your Mind

by Dr. Angus J. L. Menuge

In 1963, Harry Blamires' book, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* warned that there was no longer a Christian mind in post-Christian Europe. There still was a reservoir of Christian values, but even intelligent Christians had lost the ability to think Christianly about the world. According to Mark Noll in *The scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, despite America's greater Christian vigor, the Christian mind has suffered here as well. Starting in the late nineteenth century, universities and even seminaries were increasingly influenced by the naturalistic assumptions of modern science, doubting the miraculous and reducing Jesus to an ideal human example. Many Christians responded by withdrawing from the intellectual world, which only accelerated its secularization.

Today, this means that almost everything the academy calls knowledge is deeply conditioned by a secular outlook. This may not matter in the case of basic facts (there is no so-called Christian periodic table), but it does matter when we consider questions of meaning, value, and purpose. Is work simply a means to gain revenue, or is it a calling from God to serve one's neighbor? Are human beings merely biological and sociological resources, or are they especially made in the image of a God who also redeemed them?

The abdication of Christian thought to secularism has produced



the confused and divided Christians of today. In *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Nancy Pearcey has shown that contemporary evangelicals have conflicted, two-story minds. In the

Many of today's Christian teenagers subscribe to an unbiblical moralistic therapeutic deism. In this vision, God is a comforting spiritual abstraction who exists to make you feel good about yourself but who does not pester you with any actual teachings or demands on your life.

lower story, one finds the realm of objective fact. Scientific materialism, and secularism reign. Ethics, religion, and meaning are relegated to the upper story of subjective, personal opinion where

knowledge is impossible.

This is why some Christians are afraid to confess that Jesus is the only way of salvation. And it is a reason some reject apologetics: if faith is like a private preference for rum truffles, how can it possibly be defended? While some argue that we should simply get on with preaching the Gospel, the great Presbyterian theologian J. Gresham Machen long ago revealed the weakness in this approach in his *The Importance of Christian Scholarship in the Defense of the Faith*:

When men talk thus about propagating Christianity without defending it, the thing that they are propagating is

(Battle, Continued next page)

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pretty sure not to be Christianity at all [but] . . . an anti-intellectualistic, non-doctrinal Modernism; and the reason why it requires no defense is simply that it is so completely in accord with the current of the age.

Machen has been proved correct.

With no way to defend Christian doctrine as truth, say Christian Smith and Melissa Denton in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, many of today's Christian teenagers subscribe to an unbiblical moralistic therapeutic deism. In this vision, God is a comforting spiritual abstraction who exists to make you feel good about yourself but who does not pester you with any actual teachings or demands on your life.

Sensing the intellectual weakness of contemporary Christians, the so-called "new-atheists" have mounted a ferocious attack on Christianity, which can be clearly seen in works such as Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation* and Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*. In many ways, this has been a blessing in disguise. Bewildered and unprepared Christians have been awoken

We can outdo our critics in admitting the weaknesses of individual Christians but show that God is not a delusion and that authentic Christianity has been great from civilization in many ways that are often forgotten.

to the need to defend their faith. They have flocked to seminars on apologetics. And they have been encouraged by a torrent of articulate and scholarly replies to the skeptical onslaught. We can outdo our critics in admitting the weaknesses of individual Christians but

show that God is not a delusion and that authentic Christianity has been great for civilization in many ways that are often forgotten. Really, we can see this situation as a gift, and opportunity to recapture

the idea of Christian truths, and to show the world just how much Christianity has to offer.

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Luther on *Truth*

Where to Go for Certainty of the Truth Stick to Scripture and God's Word. There is the truth; there you will be safe; there are reliableness and faithfulness, completely, purely, sufficiently, and constantly. (W 7, 454 - E 24, 150 - SL 15, 1565)

The Way to Be Disliked The way of the world is such that people cannot bear the truth. Let him who would live in the world be silent about the truth. Let him tell dirty lies and engage in foul deceit. If, however, you want to testify to the truth, then be prepared to have as enemies the devil with all his angels, the world with its wisdom and its greatest intellect, nay, to have as enemies your parents, your father and mother, and your best friends. Matters will take no other turn (*da wird nichts anders aus*). (W 28, 321 - E 50, 345 - SL 8, 915)

Luther: A Devotional for - The Feast of the Reformation

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. (1 Corinthians 3:11-23)

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

So must we trust and be sure that the soul can live without all things except the Word of God; and without the Word of God nothing can help you. But when she has the Word she needs nothing else, for in

the Word she has enough food, joy, peace, light, art, justice, truth, wisdom, and all good things superabundantly.

What is, then, this Word that bestows such high grace, and how shall I use it? Answer: It is nothing other than the actual preaching of Christ as it is contained in the Gospel. The purpose of the preaching is that you should hear God speaking to you, telling how all your life and works are nothing before God, and how you and all that is in you would perish eternally. If you truly believe how sinful you are, you will despair of yourself entirely and confess that the words of the prophet Hosea are truth: "O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help" (Hosea 13:9). But in order that you may be saved from yourself and out of yourself - that is, out of ruin - He presents to you His dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ and bids you, through His living and comforting Word, yield yourself to Him with a cheerful heart. For the sake of such faith all our sins will be forgiven, your ruin overcome, and you will be just and true, content and devout, fulfilling all His commandments, and set free from all things.

Therefore this should be the one work and exercise of all Christians, to implant in their souls this Word of Christ and practice and strengthen this faith unceasingly, for there is no other work which can make a Christian. Therefore a right faith in Christ means indescribable wealth, for it bestows all blessedness and takes away all wretchedness.

On the freedom of a Christian, 1520
W.A.7.22 f.

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