

How God Grows Christians

Keeping Our Gospel Motivation Strong

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Doesn't that title strike you as a bit odd? We are talking here about something which occurs in us, about something that we're very much a part of. Yet the title emphasizes God's work and downplays man's. "God produces spiritual growth in us," it says, "Let us study God's work in our lives." That sure seems to be a funny way of motivating people! Are we talking about God's work or man's work? Something God does in us, or something we do, too? It almost sounds as if God were the only one who acts, as if we lay there, doing nothing. But if that were true, then why bother to talk about motivating, or moving people to do something? We should just sit back and let God do all the work!

And in fact, Lutherans have often been misunderstood on this point—maybe we misunderstand it a bit ourselves—so that when we emphasize God's work not only in justification but here too in sanctification, it may sound as if we were issuing a stirring call to complete passivity, a trumpet blast telling every Christian to take it easy and do nothing. Some hear these words as robbing Christians of all responsibility for their life of sanctification. "Be frozen, chosen!" Of course, this is not what we're saying.

Now if you had gone to a motivational seminar instead of a church conference like this, you would have heard dynamic speakers who would have gotten you charged up and ready to go. They would have given you a "how-to" list in all the things you would have needed to do to keep yourself motivated and living a productive life. I remember going to a sales meeting once for the purpose of getting revved up. This was during my brief stint as a Cutco salesman in college. We were told by enthusiastic people how wonderful the product was (and it was terrific).

Then out from behind a curtain came this great guru of a salesman to give an inspiring talk on how he had succeeded in getting women all over western Wisconsin to buy Cutco Cutlery in anticipation of their getting married some day. It all seemed so natural, so easy, coming from him. We looked at him and thought not only, "I *want* to be like him," but "I *can* be like him." What a role model! He inspired us in the perfect righteousness of selling Cutco. He placed before us the gleaming path to success. Following his talk, we all stood up on our chairs (I kid you not) and shouted in the full fervor of faith, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten: I AM A CUTCO SALESMAN! The last words resounded off the walls as if to blast them down like Jericho. That's how we would deal with anything that stood in our way! We had faith in ourselves. We were going to sell the product!

A week later, I was walking the streets of Beaver Dam in a chilly drizzle. Door after door slammed in my face even before I could give them the free cookbook. Finally I gained admittance into one nice lady's house, and in the middle of the demonstration stabbed myself with the fork. It was a deep wound, and produced a lot of blood. As we tried to staunch the flow, the lady—bless her heart—offered to buy a paring knife. I refused. I had enough shreds of dignity left not to want to accept pity sales. My inspiration was gone. My spirit was dead. I could sell nothing. I was nothing. And I vowed never again to sell anything.

So, too, is bound to perish any motivation which has its roots in the law.

By that I mean any motivation which points us to ourselves rather than to the grace of God, or which expects us, by demand or threat, to manufacture from ourselves something which our nature of itself cannot produce. Any motivation like that is bound to be a make-shift deal. It's all flash and spark with no enduring fire, since it had no real life in the first place. Only God can produce that.

So we come back to where we started: all things are from God! Our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier can and will produce fruits of faith in us through the power of the gospel. We can have complete confidence in him, not only to save us, but to equip us with everything we need to live our lives for him. For this, he has given

us his Word which is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

To God alone be the glory!

Now then, what is this "gospel motivation" we've been talking about? How exactly does it happen? For me, the words "gospel motivation" are best understood by using the same terms Paul uses in his letter to the Galatians. Paul sees life under the gospel as freedom. He sets it in opposition to life under the law, which he describes as slavery: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourself be burdened again with a yoke of slavery." (Ga 5:1). To probe this idea, let us say that

I. The Gospel Heart Is The Heart Set Free

To begin with, I would like to remind you of a parable our Lord taught about two sons. Both of them lost their freedom. Yet each in a different way. The younger son lost his freedom in trying to escape any and all restraint. He demanded his share of the estate in advance of his father's death. But he wasn't satisfied with just the money. He wanted to get away from the watchful eye of his father. "So he set off for a distant country" (Lk 15:13). He didn't want to be made to feel guilty or to answer to anyone for what he did. He thought freedom was found in giving free rein to his own selfish will.

At first, it seemed as if he found what he was looking for. He played the game by nobody's rules but his own. He did just what he pleased and lived a wild, reckless life. In the original, Jesus used the word ἀσώτως to describe it, which means literally "unsalvageable". It carries with it the picture of a man who is a hopeless case, out of control and bound for destruction. If a person defiantly throws off the demands of the law, and instead tries to exercise his own will, he will find himself a prisoner to the penalty of the law. It follows on inexorably.

So, too, in the case of the younger son. In seeking freedom by doing what he wanted, he found the most miserable slavery. He became a wretched slave to wretched desires he could not satisfy: "He longed to fill his stomach with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything" (Lk 15:16).

Coming to himself—a true self-understanding—he realized that the only freedom worth anything was the one he had lost all right to forever: the freedom of being a son in his father's house. Yet he made up his mind to go back anyway, hoping he could find a place as a hired hand. Even that was better than what he now had.

The next part of the story offers the most precious gospel in all of Scripture. In picturing the heavenly Father's love, Jesus has the father in the story see his son "while he was still a long way off" (Lk 15:20). That means he's been looking for him, his eyes scanning the road every day, hoping against hope that one day his son will return. When he does, there is no trial, no punishment, no probation, no hurt accusations—how could you do this—there is only compassion and complete pardon. "The father does not allow him to finish his prepared speech of repentance; the penitent, returning son is son with full honors"¹. What greater freedom could that young man have found than the freedom he had discovered in his father's pardoning love? He is restored to the status of son, and can remain in his father's house.

Now we come to the older son. He also lost his freedom. Yet he became a slave in an entirely different way. His moment of truth was not with the pigs, but when his younger brother came back. What a shattering moment when he realized that all he had built his life on was a lie! He thought he earned his rights as a son by what he did. In thinking that, he made himself a slave.

You see, he was going to be the good boy—not like that useless brother of his. It was typical of him that he was out in the field when the younger son came back. Always the dutiful one, he carried on alone after his brother left. He did what was expected. Oh, there might have been days when he would have preferred to lie in bed instead of getting up to do chores. No doubt there were a few times when he longed to cut loose, let go—if only for one night. But he didn't. He stuck it out and did it all according to the book.

When I was younger, I identified more with the younger son. As I grow older, I see my mirror-image in the other one more and more. Under the circumstances, I can understand his thinking that he had a perfect right

to be called his father's son and to live in his house. After all, in comparison with his younger brother, he had earned those rights.

How wrong he was! Not in thinking that his father loved him. His father surely did. But he had missed the mark completely in thinking of his father's love as something he could earn, as something he had earned. He discovered his error when he heard the sounds of a party floating from the house as he came back from a hard day's work. The servant told him, "Your younger brother has returned and your father is celebrating."

How those words cut him! What struck him right to the bone was the way his father so casually gave his love away, a love he had worked so hard for. All those years of sacrifice—of getting up when he didn't feel like it, and working hard while others were having fun—all those years of sacrifice and toil had just been made worthless. What good are they, if father gives his love away? Or to use his own words, "all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never even gave me a young goat. But when this son of yours comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" (Lk 15:29, 30).

What a miserable slavery it is, too, for one who draws his motivation from the law! It leads to this that it declares cheap the costly grace of God. Someone ruled by law can neither accept the grace of God for himself (hear the father pleading with the older son: "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours."), nor does he want others to enjoy it. He grumbles and mutters when the Son of God fellowships with sinners.

True freedom is to know and believe that you are a son of God by grace. That freedom comes only through the pardoning love of Christ. There is no other way to set the heart free.

The younger son was still a child of the law even though he tried to escape from it. His whole life revolved around it. In trying to escape its demand, he simply became a slave to its penalty. He also became a slave to sin. Before he repented, he lived his life in reaction to his father's will. He saw it as a restriction on his freedom, and freedom lay in doing whatever his father did not want him to do. As Paul observes in Romans, "I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Thou shall not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment produced in me every kind of covetous desire" (Ro 7:7-8). Living in reaction to the law makes a person a slave of sin. Natural man is so constituted that he wants what God does not want him to have, and the more he realizes it is forbidden, the more he wants to have it. This is slavery: to be driven compulsively to want what is wretched and unfulfilling. Humans longing for pig food.

If we want to describe the younger son's emotional state we could say that lack of trust in his father led to suspicion, guilt, and fear. These are the motivating influences in anyone who defines his relationship to someone else in terms of law. In the younger son's case, these emotions were born out of a reaction to the law, and a desire to escape its restrictions.

The older son in a much more obvious way defined his relationship to his father in terms of law. He did not try to escape the law by trying to throw off his father's will. Instead, he tried to build his life on keeping his father's will so as to earn his father's favor. So he became a slave as well, to duty, to obligation, to a schedule. Those telling words, "All these years *I've been slaving for you,*" really say it all. They inform us that he was by no means a willing "slave to righteousness" as Paul urges us to be in Romans 6. Far from it! He was not free in what he did. He was not glad in what he did. He played the role of dutiful son not because he wanted to, but because he felt he had to. He certainly did not trust his father. How can anyone be said to trust another whose love he feels he must earn, whose will he feels driven to obey?

His lack of trust also led to such emotions as suspicion, anger, pride, envy and a harshly critical attitude towards others. When these emotions rule a person, there is no freedom. And these emotions flow directly from the fact that a person defines himself and his relationships in terms of the law. Such was the case with the older brother. His thoughts ran somewhat as follows: "I am who I am because I obey. He is who he is because he has failed to obey the way I do. Father loves me because I do what is right. He cannot love someone who does wrong. He cannot love my worthless brother." Someone who lives from the law like this is bound to be on an emotional roller-coaster—now up in the heights, now down in the dumps depending on how his thoughts accuse or commend him. And someone who lives from the law like this is bound to resist grace, stubbornly and angrily. He shouts, "Not fair! What about all I've done?"

We have spent this time on how the law-motivated personality acts and reacts so as to better understand by way of contrast what true Gospel freedom is. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Ro 10:4).

The law becomes a dead letter to me in Christ. It really has nothing to say to me insofar as I am in Christ. When I have been worn out by the burden of carrying it, pushed into the dust by its demands and its threats, the gospel of Christ gives me the heart to believe that God loves me, and that He's always loved me. The law cannot threaten me or condemn me: Christ suffered for me every penalty ever threatened by the law—sorrow and woe, death and hell. "There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). The law can make no demands on me. Christ has met those demands for me. He did everything well. At last here was the Son in whom the Father was well-pleased. And since I was clothed with Christ in Baptism (Ga 3:27), I can be sure the Father is well pleased with me. Once the Spirit works faith in my heart through the message of God's Son, I build my life not on the law, but on this sentence: "He loved me and gave himself for me" (Ga 3:20).

This is true freedom, since I am freed from both the slavery to sin and the power of the law to enslave me. No longer headstrong, I'm not driven by a desire to be free from the law's restrictions. According to my new man, the spirit of Sonship, I no longer see them-as restrictions. They are the loving will of a Father who loves me. My reborn nature says, "His will is my will!" So I delight in the law of the Lord. I walk in it, secure in the word of pardon for sin. I am a son. I want to live as a son. Or could we possibly suppose that the younger son, once he was restored, still saw his father's will as a burden, as a heavy demand? Never!

Even more than this: the gospel renews my mind, so that I now know my God in a way I never could have known him before. I know him as he is in his true nature. I know him as a Giver, the Giver of "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17). He didn't begrudge me his own Son, but freely "gave him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). By teaching me to know him in this way—as the God whose very essence is nothing but sheer love to me and to a world of helpless sinners—God renews my mind not only towards him, but towards all things. I look out at the same old world in a whole new way (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). He writes his law on my heart so that from my new and reborn self, I freely and gladly carry out in each new situation that which stands at the heart of the law, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:9-10). "A Christian man living in this faith has no need of a teacher of good works, but he does whatever the occasion calls for, and all is well done."²

For these same reasons, I will not let the law enslave me again with its demands, as it did with the older son. I am not God's son on approval. I am not God's son because I am dutiful. I do not earn the right to be his son by my performance. The heart set free by the Gospel of Jesus says, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Co 15:10). I am God's son because of what Jesus did for me. I live by this assurance and do my Father's will not because I have to, but because I want to.

"The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me" (Ga 3:20). That sentence makes this whole present world too small an arena in which to praise God. The joy it gives requires a new heaven and new earth in which to express it. Gone are the fear, suspicion, guilt, anger and sense of grudging obligation born of the law. They are replaced with the love, joy, peace, patience, etc. which is the fruit of the Spirit (Ga 5:22). This sentence stands at the center of my life and forms the motivating power of all I now do. The Gospel heart is the heart set free.

II. How Do We Keep Gospel Motivation Strong In Us?

If we were completely reborn in Jesus, there would be no need to ask this question. Peter would not have to say, "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18), nor would Paul set before us the goal of "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). In other words, we are born again, but not completely. We are renewed, but not perfectly. We are spirit, but we are still flesh. And because we still have an old Adam, we still need to hear the law.³ Because we are not perfectly renewed, nor ever will be this side of heaven, we still have a deep need to revive and refresh our newly-born spiritual nature with the gospel of Jesus. So the short answer to the question, "How do we keep gospel motivation strong in us?" is simply: by law and gospel.

A. *The Christian uses the law to reveal his sin and discipline his old Adam.*

We need the law to keep us aware of our fleshly nature. How easy it is to think (after God has given us new life by the Spirit), "I can finish this up on my own!" (Ga 3:1-5) The law reveals just how deeply sin has sunk its roots in us. When we sin, it is not just a minor aberration, a glitch in an otherwise flawless performance. When we sin, we are acting true to form, true to the way we were born. "Surely I have been sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5).

Now only a heart set free by the gospel is able to live with the law of God in this deep, radical sense. We are here talking about the way the law of God condemns us not only for what we do, but for what we are by nature, and which leads us to recognize the ugly marks of sin in everything that comes from our heart—even in our good works! Only a heart set free by the gospel is able to tolerate the law of God in this deep sense, since only a heart consoled by Christ and his pardon could live with the thought that God condemns us for what we are by nature. A heart without this comfort must either despair, or soften God's demand in some way.⁴

Since we are consoled by the gospel promise of complete remission of sins, our new man gladly uses the law to expose sin so that, led by the Spirit, he can put off sin in its every manifestation. Our new man recognizes that the old Adam within us cannot be reformed; he can only be coerced and cowed into obedience. The old Adam does not need to hear the gospel, he needs to hear the demand, threat and condemnation of the law, and to hear it constantly.⁵ So a Christian accepts no rationalization of sin, no broad and easy road. He is ruthless in his dealing with sin. He hears what Jesus says, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away" (Mt 5:29). He will not go easy on sin within himself, nor accept any pardon for it whatever. No pardon, that is, except the pardoning love of Christ.

Again, it is only a Christian who can live this way. If the ground of my being is Christ and if in him alone I have found my peace, then I can afford to be relentless on myself in rooting out sin and despising the evil within. Christ has freed me from the need to put a good face on things. If I don't have Christ, I must avoid a doctrine like this, for it destroys the selfish ego. If I don't have Christ, I must preach self-esteem, and self-righteousness. How else could I live in my skin?

As God's people, we need to use the law in these ways. Otherwise we will soon lose our gospel heart. This has always been the threat in antinomianism: not that we lose the law, but that we lose Christ. Without the law to reveal sin, we will begin to think we can do it on our own, and lose our thirst for the righteousness that comes only by faith. Without the law to discipline our old Adam, we grow slack and sloppy, and thus show our contempt for grace. Paul says, "You who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?" (Ro 2:21-22).

In other words, when we preach and teach the law, let us use it first on ourselves and understand that it condemns us no less than others. Then, having tackled the plank in our own eye, we will see better to deal with the speck in our brother's. We will admonish others with a humble spirit, in the fear of God, "keeping your eyes on yourself, lest also you be tempted" (Ga 6:1).

In the Spiritual Growth project, we identified a number of areas where we say, "Sin has made its power felt on us as a Synod, sapping our strength in Christ." Surely, most of the things mentioned came as no great surprise to anyone. Surely everyone understands that we do not mean that all of these things trouble every congregation or ministry—not to mention each individual—in exactly the same way or degree. We mentioned problems in our mission spirit, in the state of the family, in male leadership, in women being encouraged to use their spiritual gifts appropriately, in our evangelical flexibility.

What surprised the committee was the reaction we heard at times, "Surely things aren't that bad!" If someone points out in some specific ways that the power of sin still works among us, does it follow that everything among us is bad? Must we either become the church "where never is heard the discouraging word" or the church of perpetual gloom? Is no third course open to us? Of course there is! So long as the world stands, as a Synod of justified sinners, we will freely and gladly use the law both to bring to light common sins and to curb them. As August Pieper once said (apparently at another time of tough finances):

Lutherans can all too easily fall into spiritual inactivity and fleshly security. . .among us financial need in all branches of church activity is a chronic conditionour faith does not now have enough strength or energy to overcome the indolence of the old Adam. (Yet) the cure for our lack of works does not consist in this, that we become more legalistic in our Christianity... but in this that we, in a genuinely Lutheran spirit, apply the law in its sharpness as a mirror to our lazy flesh, that we allow ourselves to be judged and condemned by it, that we become alarmed at our lack of energy because of which we neglect God's kingdom, and that we flee again to grace and from its fullness and fervor.. .acquire for ourselves new, free, spiritual willpower.⁶

Those called to gospel service will want to serve as models in this respect. As we consider ourselves in our office as gospel servants, there are a number of specific sins we might like to keep in mind: First there is sinful pride. This crops up in various ways: 1) a feeling of clannishness over against "laypeople"—who themselves serve Jesus no less than we do in their God-given callings; 2) a sense of superiority as we on high announce the law and gospel to those down below, 3) a feeling of self-satisfaction in the outward form of the office (or worse: in mistakenly thinking that some outward form of gospel service enjoys a higher and more divine institution). These are very real and very present dangers to us. In all these ways we can lose our focus on the message God has given to us to share with fellow sinners. As J. P. Koehler put it:

A feeling of superiority attaches to the right to tell another what to do and how to do it. Too readily the teacher allows himself to be placed on a pedestal, finds pleasure in this superior position and finally condescendingly talks down, even then when he patronizingly becomes one of the crowd.⁷

Pride reveals itself in a smug self-satisfaction, a "no flies on me" attitude, in which we show that we're blind to the real situation: "I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold... so I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, "I am rich: I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." (Re 3:15-18). How insipid to Christ are the works of the smug and the self-satisfied, and how near he is to judgment!

Closely related to pride is the "poor little old me" syndrome: "I work so hard, but I am so unappreciated. How exasperatingly difficult the people/the students/the school parents can be! Always complaining. Never praising. Always demanding more. Never volunteering anything. In fact, sometimes I almost feel as if the people/the students/the school parents are the enemy! Must I do it all? "Must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Nu 20:10). So said Moses at Kadesh. God condemns this attitude. His judgment is according to truth.

Then there is the sin of dealing with the Word not with humble awe and fervent faith, but with a cold professionalism. This happens whenever we treat the Bible as mere grist for the intellectual mill, as we worship and admire the outward form—the Bible fact as such, and the fact that we know it. Writing a sermon, teaching Bible History becomes a matter of spitting out bits of useful information. "Let's crank out another one," we say as we approach the task. And so we do. We tell ourselves all is well. But all is not well.

You cannot master the true faith as a person might master a lesson in arithmetic. The purpose of studying the truths of the Bible is to bring us, by the living Word of the living God into a living relationship with our Savior Jesus Christ. Anything less is having a form of godliness but denying its power. Therefore our first priority in preaching a text, or teaching a Bible lesson must be a *personal* one: what is God saying to me here? How does He reveal my sin, strengthen my hope, guide my life?

The informational" or "intellectual" approach to Scripture has another form in which it displays itself. At least, so I have noticed when I apply the law to my life. It is the form of stubborn, dogmatic resistance to change because it is a change. No matter looking into the reason for the change, no bothering with asking in an honest heart if the change might be just a different, perhaps better way of doing things. It is a change and so I don't like it. I already know enough. I fear it and I resist it as I resist dying. Oh, I may come up with all sorts of "scriptural" reasons for my resistance. But when I look at the basic impulse—rooted as it is in fear, and a desire

to be satisfied with what I have achieved already—I recognize that it is a work the law has inspired in me. Fear and self-satisfaction are law-works.

I do not mean to give a blanket endorsement of any and every change that comes down the pike in society or in the church. New ways of doing things must be evaluated in the light of God's unchanging will for man. We will adopt methods worthy of the gospel. It is, however, meant to be a condemnation of that suspicious spirit in me who wants to stay just the way he is. Always. He is my old Adam, and I will take the stick of the law to him and say, "Following Christ involves the most basic change of all: you have to die. By grace through faith I now want Christ to do his work in me, and thus I will be continually changing—which means you will be dying—until Christ works the final transformation on this lowly body, making it like his glorious body."

Finally, in using the law on ourselves as gospel servants, let us use it to expose the sin of being so busy about our doing that God has no more time in our lives to be about his doing. We live in a society that worships activity for its own sake, any kind of activity. But activity alone is not to be confused with spiritual life. Jesus said to the church at Sardis, "You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God." Martha was very active. Mary was comparatively inactive. All she was doing was listening. But we remember Jesus reserved his rebuke for Martha. Martha had set a low priority on what needed to have top priority.

In short, what matters is not the activity as such, but the motivation from which it springs. If the driving spirit in my life becomes the press of time and need, then I am living from the law and not the gospel. Then I must put down my pots and serving dishes, and join Mary at Jesus' feet. All my working is not helping anyway. Especially if it serves to rob me of time to learn from and be refreshed by Jesus.

The Christian uses the law to expose and discipline his old Adam. Pride, self-satisfaction, self-pity, treating the Word in an intellectual way, a dogmatic resistance to change as change, letting our doing crowd out God's doing—these may not be areas where the flesh troubles you. I mention these things by way of example, because that is how my flesh troubles me.

Take, then, two basic thoughts from this section: first, to keep our gospel heart alive we will gladly use the law to expose sin and work in us that heartfelt consciousness of sin as sin: a damnable affront to the most Holy God. Otherwise how will we see our need and run to Christ as our only shelter from the storm of God's well-deserved wrath?

Second: we want to use the law as a club to beat our old Adam into submission. Paul says, "I do not run like a man running aimlessly: I do not fight like a man beating the air. No I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). The law reveals in my personality what I hate and want to destroy, according to my new man. "The Christian, who recognizes the pardoning of his guilt as a release from a loathsome, hateful burden, cannot help but hate sin."⁸ So I will do what I don't feel like doing just to spite my old Adam. If I can quote from hazy memory what Professor Balge once said in Galatians class, "Men, sometimes the only reason why you go to church is because it's Sunday and the bells are ringing."⁹

B. The Christian lives from the gospel

The gospel is the great truth which consoles us in the law's terrors, and gives us hope in the face of death. It is also a truth we dare never take for granted. It so easily slips from the center of our soul, and is replaced by some monkey-business Satan puts there. So we find ourselves living from guilt—not the terrors of conscience so much, but the sense, "Well, I'd better do this or I'll get in trouble." Or we live from all the expectations others have of us, and derive our sense of who we are from how well or badly we feel we've met those expectations. Or we look to others for validation, and, like a crazed caricature of Ed Koch¹⁰ say in spirit to everyone we meet, "How'm I doin'?" Satan has a number of ploys to crowd the gospel from the center of life and to put the law there instead.

Using the law lawfully cuts through all the nonsense and reveals our work for what it is: fuel for the fire if judged strictly. So we must simply collapse all our righteousness in a heap and despair of it utterly. What's to be gained by further analysis when we reach that point? Why, we can't even fully discern the wickedness of our own heart! We despair of our own self according to the law, that we may live according to the only verdict that matters. I'm talking about the gospel verdict God has pronounced on us in Christ.

We get up in the morning and pray, "Father, you tell me that today I can rise up new in Jesus. I truly am your child for his sake, and his pardoning love has covered all my yesterdays, so that I may approach today as his new creation. Because it is your word, it is true. Amen." At the end of the day, we feel weary with looking at how often we missed the mark, and how pitiful our attempts at holy living were. So we find our rest in the wounds of Christ. We take comfort in the thought he pronounces our works good for his love's sake and graciously forgives the evil in them. During the day as we become conscious of sin and as guilt lays heavy on our thoughts, we have to drive out the Accuser with the message of One who pleads in our defense: Jesus Christ the Righteous.

What I am talking about here is how we Christians in our life of sanctification constantly need to grasp and appropriate our justification. Remember the question before us is, "how do we keep gospel motivation strong in us?" And in answering this question we cannot separate sanctification from justification, or justification from sanctification:

The Holy Spirit does not first bring man to faith, and then, after the work of justification is done, begin his work of sanctification. . . This is life we are talking about and the miracle of its growth. What the Holy Spirit creates is life, not just a single act divorced from the whole of life... Justification is always complete, and yet it goes on continually. And equally faith is continually engaged in grasping salvation."¹¹

In the same spirit, Paul writes, "I consider (all things) rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ... I want to know Christ" (Phil 3:8-10). What is this but the longing every believer has to grow in grace, and to keep Christ at the center of his being? What is Paul saying but that he wants to derive his sense of who he is not from what he does, but from what Christ has done for him.

Now we all know that we are not saved by the depth of our longing to do this, and it is not active faith which justifies. But to understand that faith is mere passive in justification is not to deny that it lives and breathes in sanctification. And so it is perfectly right to encourage Christians to hold onto the Word, to grow in grace. The reason why we long for it, of course, is because we know that we can't—by our own power—produce spiritual life in ourselves. So when we encourage one another to grow, we don't point within, or to a believer's own natural powers (this was the great mistake of the Pietists). We point them to the giving God who will work mighty miracles in us through his life-giving means of grace.

What a great comfort we find, too, as we go back to the Word of Truth. Don't we become frustrated and sad and beaten down by the way our good intentions are misunderstood, our best efforts despised? How critical people can be! So if we derive our sense of who we are from the expectations and verdicts of those around us, aren't we just running into a wall of despair? Worse than this is the bite of conscience when we realize how much we do is inspired by sinful ego and self-will.

But we look to Christ and find someone who is everything we are not and fail to be. We look to Christ and find someone who met every good expectation—not only of man, but also of God. We look to Christ and find someone whose bitter sufferings and death cover up all our sin. "This he did for me," we say, "according to God's own Word, it counts as if I did it. And his death for sin counts as if I died already for my sin. This is God's verdict, not man's and so it stands forever no matter what I or others feel." Christ is who I am before God! Luther expressed the desire of all of us before God when he prayed,

Let us not lose courage because of our sinful and guilty lives. Let us regard your mercy as higher and broader and stronger than all our being...Judge us not by the evidence of the devil and by our own depressed consciences. Hear not the cry of our enemies who accuse us day and night before you. Take from our souls the heavy burden of all our sins, so that with a clear, joyful and sincere conscience we may endure and do all things, and live and die fully confident of your mercy.¹²

I would like to close this section with a word about faith and feelings, or faith and the experience of faith. To make it pointed: are we believers because we are conscious of the moving of the Spirit and the fruits he produces in our lives? The answer is: no! This thought belongs with any discussion of drawing life from the gospel. Faith, in its purest form, is mere receptivity. It is the receiving hand. Faith, in its purest form, is not even conscious of itself. It looks only to Christ. Luther could describe justifying faith as a mathematical point, without content and without extent. This is precisely because faith takes me outside myself and lets me look at my life through the eyes of God, that is, through his Word alone. Though I feel my weakness, experience nothing but sin and death, and the judgment of God, the reality is I am a forgiven child of God, bound for heaven. The reality is the Word and I cling to that Word by faith which the Word awakens.

Now certainly the receiving hand becomes an active hand. It is perfectly right to speak of faith as being a living, busy, mighty and active thing. Yet it does not derive life from the doing, but from the receiving. And what it receives and grasps is the Word. Therefore I want the Word and the Word alone to remain at the center of my thinking. The gospel assures me I am God's child. I hold to this and let the rest go. The feelings will return again—if not in this world, then in the next. Experience will follow faith in God's Word.

But when I focus in on that experience, or when I examine my feelings to probe their depth; if the experience of faith comes into the center of my life instead of the Word of pardon, then I am living from the law again. My spiritual life will then inevitably dry up, since it has lost its source. Christian experience is fine, and we do well to express our joy, share our faith, tell others of our hope and demonstrate our love. But observe the proper order: word at center, simple trust which looks to the word alone, then experience which flows from faith.

This is vital especially for the time of trial, when all we experience is not the faith that moves mountains, but the hand of God laying heavy upon us. We look for faith, and we do not find it. We look for joy and feel gray despair. We look for some sign of God's love in any life experience, but life seems to shout back nothing but the wrath and anger of God. If you've built your life on your feelings of faith, those feelings will burn up in that fire. Then the Word alone speaks of love, pardon and forgiveness. By that Word alone we live. It is true, no matter what I feel, or what I experience. This is living by the gospel.

Putting the word at the center means seeing all life through the prism of God's pardoning love. That prism converts the dull white light of common human experience into a rainbow of God's grace in Christ and of opportunities to grow in that grace. We evaluate times of trial according to the Word as well, and understand that while the temptation which has seized us may be common, there is nothing common about the love of God. The Word says any trial is just another opportunity for God to demonstrate his most uncommon love in us, and provide us with an exodus, no less (1 Co 10:13).

By this same Word, then, suffering becomes a source of joy. We know by the Word that suffering is working God's good purpose in our lives, especially in our struggle with sin. Faith believes this, though it seems unreasonable, even foolish. We reason with the heavenly logic of faith; the logic of faith reasons only from the Word. We say, "if God be for us, who can be against us? If He gave His Son to me, can He mean to harm me in this present trial? Never!" We then see how tribulation makes us patient, as we cling to the Word which alone lights up whatever night we find ourselves in. This patient holding to the word gives birth to a hope which cannot be disappointed, since unlike earthly hopes it is not based on the fading glories of a passing age, but on the life hid with Christ in God. (Romans 5:3-5 and Romans 8:28 ff.) The Christian lives from the Gospel and evaluates all experience on the basis of the gospel.

C. The Christian uses law and gospel together in a proper encouragement to holy living

The law is here being used in a way distinct from the ways we spoke of it using before. Before, we talked about using it to expose and root out sin in our life. Here we use it to help us see the direction in which God wants our new life to go. I let Koehler speak once again:

The encouragement to sanctification deals with just those things that are spoken of in God's condemning law... But what a change in the manner of speaking of it! There the words are pitted against human self-will; here they presuppose the willingness of the child of God... There the preaching knows nothing of the gospel; here it is always intimately connected with the gospel.¹³

Christians long to be taught God's will. We prize that will since it is the will of our dear Father. And we know we need to be taught. We deeply mistrust our own thoughts—infected as they are by the old Adam. We know how easy it would be to construct a tower of our own plan and purpose and imagine that it leads to heaven.¹⁴

This is a key point to remember here: it is impossible to conceive of a Christian who does not want to be instructed as to God's will for him. Of course we do! And since we do, we want to begin living according to that resurrection righteousness right now. Want to? The Savior's troops are willingness itself, according to Psalm 110. Because this is true, when we use the law to instruct people, we can "presuppose their willingness" as Koehler says. We speak not as to *unwilling*: to club them. But as to *willing*: to encourage, strengthen and direct them in expressing their love.

However we don't presuppose the willingness in the sense that we take the gospel for granted and never more speak of it again. The gospel permeates this kind of encouragement through and through. The gospel remains the beating heart, the heart set free.

We see examples of this kind of speech often in Scripture. To me, Paul's instructions in Ephesians 5 come to mind, particularly when he speaks to husbands and wives. Read your average marriage manual. Replete with how to's and tools for self-analysis, aren't they? Good tools they may well be. They provide help in analyzing what the particular problem may be, and in providing suggestions for how to solve it. But as a man who once coached at Northwestern College used to say, "Ya gotta wanna." And all the analysis and helpful suggestions in the world won't provide the "wanna."

Now read what Paul says about husbands and wives. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:22-25). He's talking about an earthly relationship. Yet he refers to Christ no less than seven times in four short verses. He's definitely providing guidance for those who are married. Yet one might almost suppose he's talking more about Christ, or about our personal relationship to Christ than about the marriage relationship. He just can't keep Jesus out of it. Nor can we when we reflect on any human relationship. We know—all Christians know—that Christ is both the source of our love and the model for the way we express it. Scripture is simply full of examples of guidance like this.

We see this same kind of evangelical language in Luther's discussion of our vocations or callings in life. Notice how both law and gospel work together so beautifully in this lovely encouragement to sanctified living. He is commenting on the passage, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Mt 5:8), and he says:

Now you have the meaning of "pure heart": it is one that functions completely on the basis of the pure Word of God. What is their reward, what does He promise to them? It is this: "They shall see God." A wonderful title and an excellent treasure! But what does it mean to "see God"?... If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then you see immediately that you have a gracious God. For faith leads you up and opens up the heart and will of God for you. There you see sheer, superabundant grace and love... But in Scriptural language "to see His face" means to

recognize Him correctly as a gracious and faithful Father, on whom you can depend for every good thing. This happens only through faith in Christ.

Therefore, if according to God's Word and command you live in your station with your husband, wife, child, neighbor, or friend, you can see God's intention in these things; and you can come to the conclusion that they please Him, since this is not your own dream, but His Word and command, which never deludes or deceives us. It is a wonderful thing, a treasure beyond every thought or wish, to know that you are standing and living in the right relation to God. In this way not only can your heart take comfort and pride in the assurance of His grace, but you can know that your outward conduct and behavior is pleasing to Him. From this it follows that cheerfully and heartily you can do and suffer anything, without letting it make you fearful or despondent. None of this is possible for those who lack this faith and pure heart, guided only by God's Word.

Until now we have all been groping in such blindness as this. We performed many works, contributed, fasted, prayed our rosaries; and yet we never dared to say: "This work is pleasing to God; of this I am sure, and I would be willing to die for it." Hence no one can boast that in all his life and activity he has ever seen God. Or if in his pride someone glorifies such works and thinks that God must be well disposed to them and reward him for them, he is not seeing God but the devil in place of God. There is no word of God to support him; it is all the invention of men, grown up in their own hearts. That is why it can never assure or pacify any heart, but remain hidden by pride until it comes to its final gasps, when it all disappears and brings on despair, so that one never gets around to seeing the face of God. But anyone who takes hold of the Word of God and who remains in faith can take his stand before God and look at Him as his gracious Father. He does not have to be afraid that He is standing behind him with a club, and he is sure that He is looking at him and smiling graciously, together with all the angels and saints in heaven.¹⁵

Notice how, in Luther's preaching, both the Word as command and the Word as promise each contribute their own kind of certainty to the believer. –Because of his promise, I am certain that he loves me, that my whole being is pleasing to him through "his superabundant grace and love." Because of his command the fact that he has attached his Word to my neighbors—I am certain that I am doing his will when I serve them in love. "We have to learn to recognize good works from the commandments of God, and not from the appearance of the works themselves, nor from the opinion of men or of human law and custom."¹⁶

Finally, notice how Luther says that a Christian, when his heart is fortified in this way by both the God's Word of promise and his command, "is able do and suffer anything, without letting it make [him] fearful or despondent." This is Luther's way of referring to the cross that each Christian bears, particularly in connection with his vocation or calling. True mortification of the flesh happens not so much when we impose all sorts of rigors and disciplines upon ourselves, but when we "exercise faith" in the Word and carry on in our callings, despite all the difficulties and problems that attend them. As Luther further explains elsewhere:

Let everyone become a falcon [by faith grasping the Word, Luther means—PoW] and soar above distress. Let everyone know most assuredly and not doubt that God does not send him this distress to destroy him... [God] wants to drive him to pray, to implore, to fight, to exercise his faith, to learn another aspect of God's person than before, to accustom himself to do battle even with the devil and with sin, and by the grace of God to be victorious. Without this experience we could never learn the meaning of faith, the Word, Spirit, grace, sin, death, or the devil. Were there only peace and no trials, we would never learn to know God Himself. In short, we could never be or remain true Christians. Trouble and distress constrain us and keep us within

Christendom. Crosses and troubles, therefore, are as necessary for us as life itself, and much more necessary and useful than all the possessions and honor in the world.¹⁷

God gives us his best gifts when he doesn't appear to be giving us anything at all!

In rounding out this section, permit me not only to speak about this kind of encouragement or to refer to its use by others. Let me practice it myself. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you—richly, devotionally and prayerfully. If there is any area where I think we Lutherans can grow, it is in the devotional and prayerful use of Scripture. The formal occasion we are good at. The personal devotion, not so good. I do not have to look any further than myself to discover this weakness. No doubt it stems from our reaction to Pietism in all its forms. But an overreaction to Pietism can lead us to stifle true piety.

I urge you to set goals for yourself and practice self-discipline in carrying them out. I want to be careful here not to prescribe those goals for you: time and circumstance and personal preference vary widely among us. So there are legitimate differences in our practice.¹⁸ But there can be no doubt that hearing and studying the word regularly is the will of God for us. And as Luther loved to point out, God has commanded us to pray, and has promised to hear us. So an active prayer life is the will of God for our lives as well. As for motivation, well: God is our Father and He speaks to us in Scripture; and He invites us to speak with Him in prayer.

As a model, I offer a prayer book I have found very helpful. It is called, simply, *Luther's Prayers*, edited by Herbert F. Brokering. It is available through Northwestern Publishing House. I especially like the way Luther uses the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments, and weaves prayers around them. He speaks in introducing them:

It is well that prayer should be made the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, and that we guard against the false and deceitful thoughts which suggest: Wait a while, I will pray an hour later, I must first do this and that. With such thoughts a person drifts from prayer into occupations which surround and hold him until the prayer of the day is omitted. If I have the time and strength before the Lord's prayer, I meditate on the Ten Commandments. . .and I make a four strand wreath of every Commandment. . .(considering each in turn as) 1) a command, which it is in itself, and I take to heart what our Lord so earnestly requires of me; 2) an occasion for thanksgiving; 3) A confession 4) A prayer (for grace to improve my life according to it).¹⁹

Yet Luther had a heart set free and so offers this method to be freely used and adapted according to the guiding of the Spirit of Christ. That much is clear from the following remark:

I do not confine myself to these words and phrases, but today I speak the words one way, tomorrow another... Nevertheless I stick as closely as I can to the same thought and meaning... However it frequently happens that in one petition (of the Lord's prayer), I wander into such rich thoughts that I let the remaining six petitions go. When such rich, good thoughts come, the other petitions should be omitted to give place to them, and we should listen in silence and by no means interrupt them. For it is then that the Holy Spirit himself preaches, and one word of his preaching is better than a thousand of our prayers... Therefore it is of utmost importance that the heart becomes free and eager to pray.²⁰

It might be of interest to know that Luther addressed this book. not to theologians, but to his barber.

Concluding Remarks

Enough is enough. You probably have no desire to stand up on your chair now and shout, "I am God's child by grace." But that's okay. We're not in a sales meeting. It's not a product we're selling, nor a dream we're trying to fire ourselves up into believing. Just the plain and simple truth of the gospel: "Son, take heart. Your

sins are forgiven." That's the truth by which God sets us free from the guilt of sin and the curse of the law. That's the truth by which God takes out our stony heart and gives us a heart of flesh. That's the truth by which we form "a good purpose against sin"²¹ and run willingly the way of God's commandments. It is my sincere prayer that God would keep us in that truth. And so He will produce true gospel life and genuine spiritual growth among us!

For Further Reading:

I have found the following to be helpful, and in that spirit recommend them to you:

Articles

- Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, articles V and VI. (Bente's historical introduction in the Triglot is also extremely useful.)
- August Pieper, "The Differences Between the Reformed and the Lutheran Interpretation of the So-Called Third Use of the Law" *WLQ*, vol 87, No. 2 (1990). I believe you'll find this also in the "Wauwatosa Gospel" volume mentioned below.
- , "The Law is not Made for a Righteous Man," *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Volume 2, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. Pieper puts things very forcefully, and sometimes his emphasis on the complete "freedom" of the Christian from the law can be a little confusing if you don't remember he's only talking about the Christian as such, the "ideal" Christian, solely according to the new man.
- Armin Schuetze, "A Christian and the Law," *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Volume 2, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. Written with Prof. Schuetze's gift for clarity, this essay is very helpful in rounding out the picture Pieper gives of the relation of a Christian to the law.
- J.P. Koehler, "Legalism Among Us" (Gesetzlich Wesen unter uns) *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Volume 2, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. Probably the classic treatment of legalistic practice in the WELS. Koehler's English is hard, but one is grateful to the translator, since Koehler's German was undoubtedly harder. Not for the faint of heart, but a treatise worth the time and effort to read, and to meditate upon.
- Martin Luther, "The Sermon on the Mount," *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol 21. A popular yet profound teaching on the doctrine of the two kingdoms, and on a Christian's calling.
- Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Volume 44. A classic treatment of faith and its fruit.
- Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," *Luther's Works*, Vol. 14. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958. Written while Luther was in Coburg, anxiously awaiting the outcome of Diet of Augburg in 1530. For many reasons a true jewel among his devotional works, "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord."
- Carl Lawrenz in "An Analysis of HC Schwan's Propositions on Unevangelical Practice," *WLQ* Vol 50, No's 3 & 4 (1953). Schwan was one of the fathers of the Missouri Synod, known for his evangelical spirit. Here's one of the Propositions, just to wet your appetite, "It is not evangelical practice to cast pearls before swine, but much less is it evangelical practice to hide them in your pocket." These theses are all the more valuable because of the comments C. Lawrenz makes in elucidating them.
- Kenneth A. Cherney, Jr. "Hidden in Plain Sight: Luther's Doctrine of Vocation," *WLQ*, Vol. 98, No. 4 About as well-written and fine a study as you'll read anywhere summarizing a key emphasis in Luther's sanctification preaching.

Books:

- Adolph Koeberle *The Quest for Holiness*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1938.
- Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.
- Gustaf Wingren, *The Christian's Calling: Luther on Vocation*, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958.

End Notes

¹ Martin Franzmann, *Concordia Bible With Notes*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing house, 1971, p.142

² Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Volume 44, p. 26. See also LW 34,112, Theses Concerning Faith and Law, esp. Theses 51-58. Thesis 52 "For if we have Christ, we can easily establish laws and we shall judge all things rightly." Luther's words are founded on the Scripture texts: 1Corinthians 2:15-16; 1 John 2:27. Note that this is all said about the Christian according to the perfection of the new man. For a confessional statement, see FC SD VI, 6. For a further exposition of this truth, consult August Pieper's "The Differences Between the Reformed and the Lutheran Interpretation of the So-Called Third Use of the Law" *WLQ*, vol 87, No. 2 (1990), where he quotes Schneckenburger with approval "From the Lutheran standpoint, in the justified person faith, bringing with it the *unio mystica*, is such a unity of the human subject with the divine that he finds in himself the norm and stimulus for his actions."

³ For a confessional statement, see again the FC SD VI: *Hence, because of the desires of the flesh the truly believing, elect, and reborn children of God require in this life not only the daily teaching and admonition, warning and threatening of the law, but frequently the punishment of the law as well, to egg them on* [the Latin translation here has "*ut veterus illis excutiatur*—that their deathly lassitude might be shaken out of them"] *so that they follow the Spirit of God, as it is written, "It is good for me that I was afflicted that I might learn thy statutes "* (Ps. 119: 71). And again, "*I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified*" (1 Cor. 9:27). (9).

⁴ Expressed by the FC in this way, *Believers, furthermore, require the teaching of the law in connection with their good works, because otherwise they can easily imagine that their works and life are perfectly pure and holy. But the law of God prescribes good works for faith in such a way that . . . it shows and indicates to them that in this life our good works are imperfect and impure, so that we must say with St. Paul, "I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted "* (1 Cor. 4: 4).(VI, 21) Yet a heart that lives by this gospel also knows that God mercifully accepts our good works and counts them good by his grace alone, as the next paragraph in the Formula also makes clear (22).

⁵ The Formula of Concord expresses it with these memorable words, For the Old Adam, like an unmanageable and recalcitrant donkey, is still a part of them and must be coerced into the obedience of Christ, not only with the instruction, admonition, urging, and threatening of the law, but frequently also with the club of punishments and miseries" (FC, SD, VI, 24)

⁶ Pieper, "*The Difference Between the Reformed and the Lutheran, etc.*" *WLQ* 87: 2 (1990).

⁷ "*Gesetzlich Wesen Unter Uns*" *Proceedings Of The 35th Convention Of The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod*, 1959, pp. 152

⁸ Koehler, *ibid.*, p.141

⁹ Franz Pieper has an excellent discussion on this point when he writes, "An important rule in this warfare is to do at once the very opposite of what the flesh and the devil propose. When we are tempted to murmur against God, then the best answer is to praise God for his many mercies." (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol III, page 17ff. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.) Note also what he says in footnote # 17).

¹⁰ the former Mayor of New York

¹¹ Koehler, *ibid.* pp. 143-144

¹² *Luther's Prayers*. Herbert F. Brokering, ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967, pp. 28, 29

¹³ Koehler, *ibid.* pp. 143-144.

¹⁴ In this connection, it is self-chosen piety, more than anything, that the Formula of Concord warns believers against. *The law serves us well by clearing our mind from delusion and giving us a certainty as to what God's will for us is : Believers, furthermore, require the teaching of the law so that they will not be thrown back on their own holiness and piety and under the pretext of the Holy Spirit's guidance set up a self-elected service of God and without his Word and command.* (SD, VI, 20).

¹⁵ Martin Luther "The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat." *Luther's Works.*, vol. 21. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956, pp. 36-37

¹⁶ *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 44, p. 23 For a confessional statement, see the Augsburg Confession, Art. 27: "We read stories of men who left wives... to hide themselves away in monasteries. This they called, 'fleeing the world,' and 'seeking out a kind of life more pleasing to God.' They didn't see that God is properly served by carrying out those commands he himself has given, not in carrying out commandments which men have made up all by themselves. *The good and perfect life is that type which possesses the command of God*" (emphasis and translation, mine).

¹⁷ Martin Luther, "Psalm 118," *Luther's Works: Selected Psalms III*, vol. 14. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958, p. 60.

¹⁸ In fact, this same approach has been one of the hallmarks of the whole Spiritual Growth project. None of us wants to prescribe "the extent or manner in which saving faith is to manifest itself. As soon as we prescribe the amount and the degree of love by which faith is to work, we fall into unevangelical practice" (Carl Lawrenz in "An Analysis of HC Schwan's Propositions on Unevangelical Practice," *WLQ* Vol 50, No's 3 & 4 (1953). We trust the power of the Spirit and his calling of specific individuals to specific areas of ministry. We know that as we discuss the issues facing us as a Synod, the Lord will help us by his precious Word, to form that "good purpose against sin" which is the sure sign of spiritual growth.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 32-33; p.42

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40

²¹ Martin Luther, in his third series of Theses against Antinomianism, from thesis 9, as qtd. by Bente in his *Historical Introduction to the Book of Concord* Triglote, p. 165. Theses 9 and 10 read in their entirety: Therefore all works after justification are nothing else than a continuous repentance, or a good purpose against sin. 10. For nothing else is done than that sin, revealed by the Law and forgiven in Christ, is swept out.