

XV. WHAT ARE THE FRUITS OF A LIVING FAITH?

"Faith is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1); it kills the old Adam and makes altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers, and it brings with it the Holy Ghost. O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith; and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question arises, it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them. He who does not these works is a faithless man..."

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

"For through faith, a man becomes free from sin and gets pleasure in God's commandments; thus he gives to God the honor that is His and pays Him what he owes Him; but he also serves man willingly, in every manner he can, and thus pays his obligation to everyone. Nature and free will and all our powers cannot bring into existence such righteousness"

(Luther, *Preface to the Romans*, 1522, W A. Deutsche Bibel, 7, 11f.; an English translation e.g. in the Philadelphia (Holman) edition of Luther's Works, Vol. VI, 447ff., and in M.Reu's book, *Luther's German Bible*, II, 205ff.).

"The new creature, whereby the image of God is renewed (in man),...is a work of the Holy Spirit who cleanses our heart through faith (Acts 15:9) and works the fear of God, love, chastity, and other Christian virtues, and gives power to bridle the flesh, and to reject the righteousness and wisdom of the world. Here is no coloring or new outward show but a thing done indeed. Here is created another sense and another judgment, that is to say, altogether spiritual, which abhors those things that it greatly esteemed before..."

"This is the renewing of the mind through the Holy Spirit; after this follows a change of the members and senses of the whole body. For when the heart has conceived a new light, a new judgment, and new emotions through the Gospel, it comes to pass that the inward senses are also renewed; for the ears desire to hear the word of God and not the traditions and dreams of men. The mouth and tongue do not vaunt of their own works, righteousness and rules; but they set forth the mercy of God only offered to us in Christ. These changes do not consist in words but are effectual and bring a new spirit, a new will, new senses, and new operations of the body, so that the eyes, ears, mouth, and tongue do not only see, hear, and speak otherwise than they did before, but the mind also approves, loves, and follows other things than it did before. For before, being blinded with...errors and darkness, it imagined God to be a merchant who would sell unto us His grace for our works and merits; but now, in the light of the Gospel, it assures us that we are counted righteous by faith in Christ. Therefore, it now rejects all self-designed works and does the works of charity and of our vocation, commanded by God. It praises and magnifies God; it rejoices and glories in the only trust and confidence in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ. If it must suffer any trouble and affliction, it endures it cheerfully and gladly, although the flesh repine and grudge at it"

(Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, 1531-35, W A. 40, II, 178f, Gal. 6: 15).

"These works are a sure sign of faith, which in Christ receives remission of sins and the victory over death. For it is impossible for him who believes in Christ as a righteous Savior, not to love and do good. If, however, he does not do good nor love, it is sure that faith is not present. Therefore, man knows by the fruits what kind of a tree he is, and is proved by love and deed whether Christ is in him and he believes in Christ. As St. Peter says in 2 Pet. 1:10: 'wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble,' that is, if you bravely practice good works you will be sure and cannot doubt that God has called and chosen you."

"Thus, faith blots out sin in a different manner than love. Faith blots it out of itself, while love or good works prove and demonstrate that faith has done so and is present, as St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 13:2: 'And if! have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.' Why? Without doubt, because faith is not present where there is no love, they are not separate the one from the other" (Luther, *Church Postil*, 1st Sunday in Advent, Gospel sermon, W A. 10, 1, 2, 44).

"In the members and the flesh there is sin which wars against the spirit; but because the spirit wars against it, and he does not obey it, it does not harm, and God judges a (Christian) man not according to the sin which assails him in the flesh but according to the spirit which wars against sin and is thereby like the will of God which hates and fights against sin. It is one thing, then, to say that sins are forgiven, and another thing to say that there is no sin present. After baptism and repentance all sins are forgiven, but sin is still present until death, although because of forgiveness it does not prevent salvation, provided we strive against it and do not obey it."

"Sin remains but is not imputed; and that for two reasons... first, because we believe in Christ who through faith becomes our representative and covers our sin with His innocence; second, because we strive unceasingly against sin, to destroy it. Where these two reasons are not present, sin is imputed, is not forgiven, and condemns eternally."

"This is the joy, the comfort, the blessedness and salvation of the New Testament... This makes free, glad, brave Christians, whose love causes them to fight against sin, and who take pleasure in repentance"

(Luther, *Grund und Ursach*, 1521, Art. 2, WA. 7, 375; in English in the Philadelphia (Holman) ed., vol. III, 35).