

FAITH ALONE / GOOD WORKS

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

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

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

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

The Augsburg Confession: Article XX: Of Good Works. “Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works . . . Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good

works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.”

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

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

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

This was sent with the Concord Ministry letter
to inmates and families.

Stephen H. Funck