

Lutheran Confessions

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Article IV, Justification

249] But the adversaries urge that it is the prerogative of good works to merit eternal life, because Paul says, Rom. 2, 6: *Who will render to every one according to his works.* Likewise 2, 10: *Glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good.* John 5, 29: *They that have done good [shall come forth] unto the resurrection of life.* Matt. 25, 35: *I was hungry and ye gave Me meat,* etc. **250]** In these and all similar passages in which works are praised in the Scriptures, it is necessary to understand not only outward works, but also the faith of the heart, because **Scripture does not speak of hypocrisy, but of the righteousness of the heart with its fruits.** **251]** Moreover, as often as mention is made of the Law and of works, we must know that Christ as Mediator is not to be excluded. For He is the end of the Law, and He Himself says, John 15, 5: *Without Me ye can do nothing.* According to this rule we have said above that all passages concerning works can be judged. **Wherefore, when eternal life is granted to works, it is granted to those who have been justified, because no men except justified men, who are led by the Spirit of Christ, can do good works; and without faith and Christ, as Mediator, good works do not please,** according to Heb. 11, 6: *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* **252]** When Paul says: *He will render to every one according to his works,* not only the outward work ought to be understood, but all righteousness or unrighteousness. So: *Glory to him that worketh good, i.e., to the righteous. Ye gave Me meat,* is cited as the fruit and witness of the righteousness of the heart and of faith, and therefore eternal life is rendered **253]** to righteousness. [There it must certainly be acknowledged that Christ means not only the works, but that He desires to have the heart, which He wishes to esteem God aright, and to believe correctly concerning Him, namely, that it is through mercy that it is pleasing to God. Therefore Christ teaches that everlasting life will be given the righteous, as Christ says: *The righteous shall go into everlasting life.*] **In this way Scripture, at the same time with the fruits, embraces the righteousness of the heart. And it often names the fruits, in order that it may be better understood by the inexperienced, and to signify that a new life and regeneration, and not hypocrisy, are required. But regeneration occurs, by faith, in repentance.**

(Bente, F., *Concordia Triglotta*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997).

Put it into Practice

These questions have been put together to help you as you extend and apply tonight's Scripture to your life.

Prayer

O Lord, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Your just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with You forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN** (*Collect for 2nd Last Sunday*)

Word of God: Matthew 25:31-46 (on back)

Questions to Ponder in Prayer

- Intro.--With Matthew 25:31f, Jesus begins once again with His Second Coming as explained in Matthew 24:30-31, but immediately follows it up with the teaching of the final judgment.
1. How is the Second Coming of the Son of Man unlike the first coming? Compare Phil 2:6-8 with Phil 2:9-11. Who is the "King" sitting on his glory-throne?
 2. Do the words "all the nations" exclude anyone? (Mt 24:14, 28:19)
 3. Who are the sheep (John 10) and who are the goats (Ez 34:17-19)?
 4. The Final Judgment (Mt 25:34-46) is based on good works. Is it held in order to determine who is a sheep and who is a goat or before the judgement of works ever begins? (See v. 32-33)
 5. The sheep are called "blessed by my Father." How did they get blessed?
 6. In verse 37 the sheep are called "righteous." How did they get righteous?
 7. What do the sheep receive? (Rev 20:4, 3:21, 2 Tim 4:8, James 1:12)
 8. What is noticeably absent is any mention of the sins of the sheep. Didn't they sin? (Eph 5:25-27)
 9. Do believers do good works? (James 2:17-18, Galatians 5:6, 1 Ths 1:3)
 10. Why don't the sheep remember the good works they did for the disciples? (Acts 16:30-31)
 11. Before the judgment, the goats are called "you who are cursed." Why?
 12. What is noticeably absent is any mention of any good works by the goats. Didn't they do good works? (Mt 7:17, Heb 11:6, John 15:5)
 13. If Jesus already knows the identity of the sheep and goats, what is the purpose of this Final Judgment? (2 Cor 3:3, 2 Cor 8:24)
 14. Explain how the Final Judgement can be based on works (2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.") and yet we are saved by faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.")?
 15. Thus it is true that all men including Christians will be judged (Rom 14:10) and yet it is also true that believers are not judged/condemned (Jn 3:18). Explain.

6:30 PM "Learn by Heart"

Through simple repetition those present will inwardly digest...

Hymn #177, stanza 2
Lord's Prayer, 3rd Petition and
Meaning, p.302
2 Corinthians 5:10

7:00 PM "Catechesis"

+ Opening Verses
"O Lord, open my lips..." p.224

+ Ascription of Praise
"Praise to you, O Christ. Alleluia." p.225

Reading
St. Matthew 25:31-46 (back)

Hymn
"Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying" #177

Catechesis on... (back)
St. Matthew 25:31-46
Liturgy
Catechism

--prayer based on reading
+ Recite Word by Word insert
Ten Commandments
Lord's Prayer
Apostles' Creed
Sacrament of Holy Baptism
Matthew 28:19
Mark 16:16
Confession & Absolution
John 20:22-23
Sacrament of the Altar
Words of Institution

Collect of the Day
--prayer based on reading
R. AMEN
Benediction
R. AMEN

Catechesis on St. Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33“And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35‘for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36‘I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ 37“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38‘When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ 41“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42‘for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43‘I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ 44“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ 45“Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (NKJV)

Judgment Day (based on works)

Immediately after the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, the Final Judgment will follow. That judgment will be based upon works. 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in

the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

“At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies and will give an account of their own works. And they that have done good will go into life everlasting and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire” (Athanasian Creed).

However, we are not saved by our works, but we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Faith cannot be seen, but works can. **It is our good works which are the proof of faith in Christ.**

Matthew 25 teaches many important things:

1. **The purpose of Judgment Day is not to determine who is saved and who isn't.** Even before the judgment begins the sheep(believers) are already separated from the goats(unbelievers).
2. All who are believers are declared to be sheep and placed on the right hand before the judgment of works ever begins. Faith in Christ saves!

Are Believers Judged or Not?

Yes, and no. On the one hand, it is true that all people will be judged(Rom 14:10). On that day, believers will receive the words, “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34)

On the other hand, when the Scripture says that believers will not be judged(Jn 3:18, 5:24), it refers to the fact that none of the sins of believers(sheep) are ever considered on Judgment Day. With their sins forgiven, only their good works are mentioned. Believers will not be judged(in the sense of “condemned”). They are spared that kind of judgment.

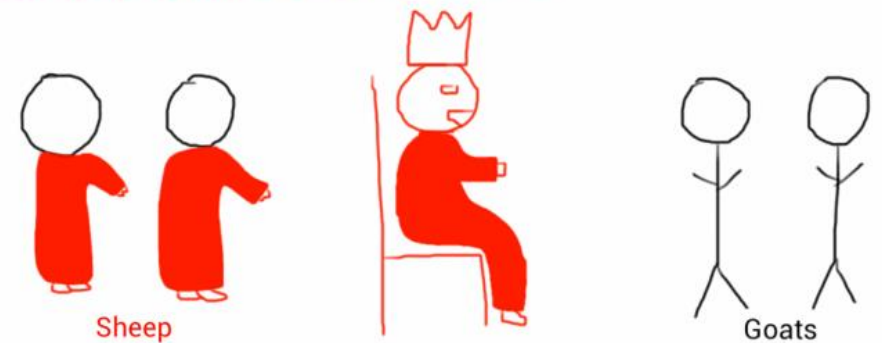
Without faith in Christ, unbelievers have no good works to consider(Heb 11:6). Thus, the sins of unbelievers will damn them to hell for eternity.

Matthew 12:36, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” (unbelievers)

Luke 21:28, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” (believers)

CATECHESIS ON ST. MATTHEW 25:31-46

The separation of sheep (believers) and goats (unbelievers) before the judgment is based on faith in Christ



Judgment Day publicly reveals who believed by their works.

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The Lord's Prayer, Third Petition

“Thus far we have prayed that God’s name be honored by us, and that His kingdom prevail among us; in which two points is comprehended all that pertains to the honor of God and to our salvation, that we receive as our own God and all His riches. **But now a need just as great arises, namely, that we firmly keep them, and do not suffer ourselves to be torn therefrom**” (LC III 60).

The Will of the Devil (and men)

“However, the beginning and cause of evil is not God’s foreknowledge (for God does not create and effect [or work] evil, neither does He help or promote it); but **the wicked, perverse will of the devil and of men** [is the cause of evil], as it is written Hos. 13, 9: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help.* Also: *Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.* Ps. 5, 4 (FC II XI 7).

John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Romans 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”

1 John 3:8a, “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning....”

The Will of God(toward us)

“Therefore God, out of His immense goodness and mercy, has His divine eternal Law and His wonderful plan concerning our redemption, namely, the holy, alone-saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, publicly preached; and by this [preaching] collects an eternal Church for Himself from the human race, and works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins, and true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And by this means, and in no other way, namely, through His holy Word, when men hear it preached or read it, and the holy Sacraments when they are used according to His Word, **God desires to call men to eternal salvation, draw them to Himself, and convert, regenerate, and sanctify them**” (FC SD II 50).

“Of the Use of the Sacraments they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather **to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us**, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe **the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments** (AC XIII 1-2).

John 6:40, “And this is **the will of Him who sent Me**, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

1 Timothy 2:1-4, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and

reverence. **3For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

The Will of God(for/in us)

“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**” (AC XX 27).

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6, “**For this is the will of God, your sanctification**: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.”

The Church Militant, the Battle

“Dear Father, Thy will be done, not the will of the devil and of our enemies, nor of anything that would persecute and suppress Thy holy Word or hinder Thy kingdom; **and grant that we may bear with patience and overcome whatever is to be endured on that account, lest our poor flesh yield or fall away from weakness or sluggishness**” (LC III 67).

“If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and reckon upon having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies who will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where the Word of God is preached, accepted, or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be wanting. **And let no one think that he shall have peace; but he must risk whatever he has upon earth—possessions, honor, house and estate, wife and children, body and life**” (LC III 65).

1 John 3:8b, “...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, **that He might destroy the works of the devil.**”

1 Peter 5:8-9, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

2 Timothy 1:8, “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God...”