

The Method and Fruits of Justification

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

“Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Galatians 4:1-7).

THIS text touches the very pith of Paul’s chief doctrine. The cause why it is well understood but by few is, not that it is so obscure and difficult, but because there is so little knowledge of faith left in the world; without which it is not possible to understand Paul, who everywhere treats of faith with such earnestness and force. I must, therefore, speak in such a manner that this text will appear plain; and that I may more conveniently illustrate it, I will speak a few words by way of preface.

First, therefore, we must understand the doctrine in which good works are set forth, far different from that which treats of justification; as there is a great difference between the substance and its working; between man and his work. Justification pertains to man, and not to works; for man is either justified and saved, or judged and condemned, and not works. Neither is it a controversy among the godly, that man is not justified by works, but righteousness must come from some other source than from his own works: for Moses, writing of Abel, says, “The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.” First, He had respect to Abel himself, then to his offering; because Abel was first counted righteous and acceptable to God, and then for his sake his offering was accepted also, and not he because of his offering. Again, God had no respect to Cain, and therefore neither to his offering: therefore thou seest that regard is had first to the worker, then to the work.

From this it is plainly gathered that no work can be acceptable to God, unless he which worketh it was first accepted by Him: and again, that no work is disallowed of Him unless the author thereof be disallowed before. I think these remarks will be sufficient concerning this matter at present, by which it is easy to understand that there are two sorts of works, those before justification and those after it; and that these last are good works indeed, but the former only appear to be good. Hereof cometh such disagreement between God and those counterfeit holy ones; for this cause nature and reason rise and rage against the Holy Ghost; this is that of which almost the whole Scripture treats. The Lord in His Word defines all works that go before justification to be evil, and of no importance, and requires that man before all things be justified.

Again, He pronounces all men which are unregenerate and have that nature which they received of their parents unchanged, to be unrighteous and wicked, according to that saying, “All men are liars,” that is, unable to perform their duty, and to do those things which they ought to do; and “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually”; whereby he is able to do nothing that is good, for the fountain of his actions, which is his heart, is corrupted. If he do works which outwardly seem good, they are no better than the offering of Cain.

Here again comes forth reason, our reverend mistress, seeming to be marvelously wise, but who indeed is unwise and blind, gainsaying her God, and reproving Him of lying; being furnished with her follies and feeble honor, to wit, the light of nature, free will, the strength of nature; also with the books of the heathen and the doctrines of men, contending that the works of a man not justified are good works, and not like those of Cain, yea, and so good that he that worketh them is justified by them; that God will have respect first to the works, then to the worker. Such doctrine now bears the sway everywhere in schools, colleges and monasteries. Now from this error comes another; they which attribute so much to works and do not

accordingly esteem the worker, and sound justification, go so far that they ascribe all merit and righteousness to works done before justification, making no account of faith, alleging that which James saith, that without works faith is dead. This sentence of the apostle they do not rightly understand; making but little account of faith, they always stick to works, whereby they think to merit exceedingly, and are persuaded that for their work's sake they shall obtain the favor of God: by this means they continually disagree with God, showing themselves to be the posterity of Cain. God hath respect unto man, then unto the works of man; God alloweth the work for the sake of him that worketh, these require that for the work's sake the worker may be crowned.

But here, perhaps, thou wilt say, what is needful to be done? By what means shall I become righteous and acceptable to God? How shall I attain to this perfect justification? Those the gospel answers teaching that it is necessary that thou hear Christ, and repose thyself wholly on Him, denying thyself and distrusting thine own strength; by this means thou shalt be changed from Cain to Abel, and being thyself acceptable, shalt offer acceptable gifts to the Lord. It is faith that justifies thee, thou being endued therewith; the Lord remitteth all thy sins by the mediation of Christ His Son, in whom this faith believeth and trusteth. Moreover, He giveth unto such a faith His Spirit, which changes the man and makes him anew, giving him another reason and another will. Such a one worketh nothing but good works. Wherefore nothing is required unto justification but to hear Jesus Christ our Savior, and to believe in Him. Howbeit these are not the works of nature, but of grace.

He, therefore, that endeavors to attain to these things by works shutteth the way to the gospel, to faith, grace, Christ, God, and all things that help unto salvation. Again, nothing is necessary in order to accomplish good works, but justification; and he that hath attained it performs good works, and not any other. Hereof it sufficiently appears that the beginning, the things following, and the order of man's salvation are after this sort; first of all it is required that thou hear the Word of God; next that thou believe; then that thou work; and so at last become saved and happy. He that changes this order, without doubt is not of God. Paul also describes this, saying "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and, how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and, how shall they hear without a preacher? and, how shall they preach except they be sent?"

Christ teaches us to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest; that is, sincere preachers. When we hear these preach the true Word of God, we may believe; which faith justifies a man, and makes him godly indeed, so that he now calls upon God in the spirit of holiness, and works nothing but that which is good, and thus becomes a saved man. Thus he that believeth shall be saved; but he that worketh without faith is condemned as Christ saith, he that doth not believe shall be condemned, from which no works shall deliver him. Some say, I will now endeavor to become honest. It is meet surely that we study to lead an honest life, and to do good works. But if one ask them how we may apply ourselves unto honesty, and by what means we may attain it, they answer, that we must fast, pray, frequent temples, avoid sins, etc. Whereby one becomes a Carthusian monk, another chooses some other order of monks, and another is consecrated a priest; some torment their flesh by wearing hair-cloth, others scourge their bodies with whips, others afflict themselves in a different manner; but these are of Cain's progeny, and their works are no better than his; for they continue the same that they were before, ungodly, and without justification: there is a change made of outward works only, of apparel, of place, etc.

They scarce think of faith; they presume only on such works as seem good to themselves, thinking by them to get to heaven. But Christ said, "Enter in at the strait gate, for I say unto you, many seek to enter in, and can not." Why is this? because they know not what this narrow gate is; for it is FAITH, which altogether annihilates or makes a man appear as nothing in his own eyes, and requires him not to trust in his own works, but to depend upon the grace of God, and be prepared to leave and suffer all things. Those holy ones of Cain's progeny think their good works are the narrow gate; and are not, therefore, extenuated or made less, whereby they might enter.

When we begin to preach of faith to those that believe altogether in works, they laugh and hiss at us, and say, "Dost thou count us as Turks and heathens, whom it behooves now first to learn faith? is there such a company of priests, monks, and nuns, and is not faith known? who knoweth not what he ought to believe? even sinners know that." Being after this sort animated and stirred up, they think themselves abundantly endued with faith, and that the rest is now to be finished and made perfect by works. They make so small and slender account of faith, because they are ignorant of what faith is, and that it alone doth justify. They call it faith, believing those things which they have heard of Christ, this kind of faith the devils also have and yet they are not justified. But this ought rather to be called an opinion of men. To believe those things to be true which are preached of Christ is not sufficient to constitute thee a Christian, but thou must not doubt that thou art of the number of them whom all the benefits of Christ are given and exhibited; which he that believes must plainly confess, that he is holy, godly, righteous, the son of God, and certain of salvation; and that by no merit of his own, but by the mere mercy of God poured forth upon him for Christ's sake; which he believes to be so rich and plentiful, as indeed it is, that although he be as it were drowned in sin, he is notwithstanding made holy, and become the son of God.

Wherefore, take heed that thou nothing doubt that thou art the son of God, and therefore made righteous by His grace; let all fear and care be done away. However, thou must fear and tremble that thou mayest persevere in this way unto the end; but thou must not do this as tho it consisted in thy own strength, for righteousness and salvation are of grace, whereunto only thou must trust. But when thou knowest that it is of grace alone, and that thy faith also is the gift of God, thou shalt have cause to fear, lest some temptation violently move thee from this faith.

Every one by faith is certain of this salvation; but we ought to have care and fear that we stand and persevere, trusting in the Lord, and not in our own strength. When those of the race of Cain hear faith treated of in this manner, they marvel at our madness, as it seems to them. God turn us from this way, say they, that we should affirm ourselves holy and godly; far be this arrogance and rashness from us; we are miserable sinners; we should be mad, if we should arrogate holiness to ourselves. Thus they mock at true faith, and count such doctrine as this execrable error; and thus try to extinguish the Gospel. These are they that deny the faith of Christ, and persecute it throughout the whole world; of whom Paul speaks: "In the latter times many shall depart from the faith," etc., for we see by these means that true faith lies everywhere oppressed; it is not preached, but commonly disallowed and condemned.

The pope, bishops, colleges, monasteries, and universities have more than five hundred years persecuted it with one mind and consent most obstinately, which has been the means of driving many to hell. If any object against the admiration, or rather the mad senselessness of these men, if we count ourselves even holy, trusting the goodness of God to justify us, or as David prayed, "Preserve Thou me, O Lord, for I am holy," or as Paul saith, "the Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God"; they answer that the prophet and apostle would not teach us in these words, or give us an example which we should follow, but that they, being particularly and specially enlightened, received such revelation of themselves. In this way they misrepresent the Scripture, which affirms that they are holy, saying that such doctrine is not written for us, but that it is rather peculiar miracles, which do not belong to all. This forged imagination we account of as having come from their sickly mind. Again, they believe that they shall be made righteous and holy by their own works, and that because of them God will give them salvation and eternal blessedness.

In the opinion of these men it is a Christian duty to think that we shall be righteous and sacred because of our works; but to believe that these things are given by the grace of God, they condemn as heretical; attributing that to their own works which they do not attribute to the grace of God. They that are endued with true faith, and rest upon the grace of the Lord, rejoice with holy joy, and apply themselves with pleasure to good works, not such as those of Cain's progeny do, as feigned prayers, fasting, base and filthy apparel, and such like trifles, but to true and good works whereby their neighbors are profited.

Perhaps some godly man may think, if the matter be so, and our work do not save us, to what end are so many precepts given us, and why doth God require that they be obeyed? The present text of the apostle will give a solution of this question, and upon this occasion we will give an exposition thereof. The Galatians being taught of Paul the faith of Christ, but afterward seduced by false apostles, thought that our salvation must be finished and made perfect by the works of the law; and that faith alone doth not suffice. These Paul calls back again from works unto faith with great diligence; plainly proving that the works of the law, which go before faith, make us only servants and are of no importance toward godliness and salvation; but that faith makes us the sons of God, and from thence good works without constraint forthwith plentifully flow.

But here we must observe the words of the apostle; he calls him a servant that is occupied in works without faith, of which we have already treated at large; but he calls him a son which is righteous by faith alone. The reason is this, although the servant applies himself to good works, yet he does it not with the same mind as doth the son; that is, with a mind free, willing, and certain that the inheritance and all the good things of the Father are his; but does it as he that is hired in another man's house, who hopes not that the inheritance shall come to him. The works indeed of the son and the servant are alike; and almost the same in outward appearance; but their minds differ exceedingly as Christ saith, "the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth ever."

Those of Cain's progeny want the faith of sons, which they confess themselves; for they think it most absurd, and wicked arrogance to affirm themselves to be the sons of God, and holy; therefore as they believe even so are they counted before God; they neither become holy nor the sons of God, nevertheless are they exercised with the works of the law; wherefore they are and remain servants forever. They receive no reward except temporal things; such as quietness of life, abundance of goods, dignity, honor, etc., which we see to be common among the followers of popish religion. But this is their reward, for they are servants, and not sons; wherefore in death they shall be separated from all good things, neither shall any portion of the eternal inheritance be theirs, who in this life would believe nothing thereof. We perceive, therefore, that servants and sons are not unlike in works, but in mind and faith they have no resemblance.

The apostle endeavors here to prove that the law with all the works thereof makes us but mere servants, if we have not faith in Christ; for this alone makes us sons of God. It is the word of grace followed by the Holy Ghost as is shown in many places, where we read of the Holy Ghost falling on Cornelius and his family while hearing the preaching of Peter. Paul teaches that no man is justified before God by the works of the law; for sin only cometh by the law. He that trusts in works condemns faith as the most pernicious arrogance and error of all others. Here thou seest plainly that such a man is not righteous, being destitute of that faith and belief which is necessary to make him acceptable before God and His Son; yea, he is an enemy to this faith, and therefore to righteousness also. Thus it is easy to understand that which Paul saith, that no man is justified before God by the works of the law.

The worker must be justified before God before he can work any good thing. Men judge the worker by the works; God judges the works by the worker. The first precept requires us to acknowledge and worship one God, that is, to trust Him alone, which is the true faith whereby we become the sons of God. Thou canst not be delivered from the evil of unbelief by thine own power, nor by the power of the law; wherefore all thy works which thou doest to satisfy the law can be nothing but works of the law; of far less importance than to be able to justify thee before God, who counteth them righteous only who truly believe in Him; for they that acknowledge Him the true God are His sons, and do truly fulfill the law. If thou shouldst even kill thyself by working, thy heart can not obtain this faith thereby, for thy works are even a hindrance to it, and cause thee to persecute it.

He that studieth to fulfill the law without faith is afflicted for the devil's sake; and continues a persecutor both of faith and the law, until he come to himself, and cease to trust in his own works; he then gives glory to God, who justifies the ungodly, and acknowledges himself to be nothing, and sighs for the grace of God, of which he knows that he has need. Faith and grace now fill his empty mind, and satisfy his hunger; then

follow works which are truly good; neither are they works of the law, but of the spirit, of faith and grace; they are called in the Scripture the works of God, which He worketh in us.

Whatsoever we do of our own power and strength, that which is not wrought in us by His grace, without doubt is a work of the law, and avails nothing toward justification; but is displeasing to God, because of the unbelief wherein it is done. He that trusts in works does nothing freely and with a willing mind; he would do no good work at all if he were not compelled by the fear of hell, or allured by the hope of present good. Whereby it is plainly seen that they strive only for gain, or are moved with fear, showing that they rather hate the law from their hearts, and had rather there were no law at all. An evil heart can do nothing that is good. This evil heart can do nothing that is good. This evil propensity of the heart, and unwillingness to do good, the law betrays when it teaches that God does not esteem the works of the hand, but those of the heart.

Thus sin is known by the law, as Paul teaches; for we learn thereby that our affections are not placed on that which is good. This ought to teach us not to trust in ourselves, but to long after the grace of God, whereby the evil of the heart may be taken away, and we become ready to do good works, and love the law voluntarily; not for fear of any punishment, but for the love of righteousness. By this means one is made of a servant, a son; of a slave an heir.

We shall now come to treat more particularly of the text:

Verse 1. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." We see that the children unto whom their parents have left some substance are brought up no otherwise than if they were servants. They are fed and clothed with their goods, but they are not permitted to do with them, nor use them according to their own minds, but are ruled with fear and discipline of manners, so that even in their own inheritance they live no otherwise than as servants. After the same sort it is in spiritual things. God made with His people a covenant, when He promised that in the seed of Abraham, that is in Christ, all nations of the earth should be blest. That covenant was afterward confirmed by the death of Christ, and revealed and published abroad by the preaching gospel. For the gospel is an open and general preaching of this grace, that in Christ is laid up a blessing for all men that believe.

Before this covenant is truly opened and made manifest to men, the sons of God live after the manner of servants under the law; and are exercised with the works of the law, although they can not be justified by them; they are true heirs of heavenly things, of this blessing and grace of the covenant; although they do not as yet know or enjoy it. Those that are justified by grace cease from the works of the law, and come unto the inheritance of justification; they then freely work those things that are good, to the glory of God and benefit of their neighbors. For they have possessed it by the covenant of the Father, confirmed by Christ, revealed, published, and as it were delivered into their hands by the gospel, through the grace and mercy of God.

This covenant Abraham, and all the fathers which were endued with true faith, had no otherwise than we have; although before Christ was glorified this grace was not openly preached and published; they lived in like faith, and therefore obtained the like good things. They had the same grace, blessing, and covenant that we have; for there is one Father and God over all. Thou seest that Paul here, as in almost all other places, treats much of faith; that we are not justified by works, but by faith alone. There is no good thing which is not contained in this covenant of God; it gives righteousness, salvation, and peace. By faith the whole inheritance of God is at once received. From thence good works come; not meritorious, whereby thou mayest seek salvation, but which with a mind already possessing righteousness thou must do with great pleasure to the profit of thy neighbors.

Verse 2. "But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father." Tutors and governors are they which bring up the heir, and so rule him and order his goods that he neither waste his inheritance by riotous living, nor his goods perish or be otherwise consumed. They permit him not to use his goods at his own will or pleasure, but suffer him to enjoy them as they shall be needful and profitable to him. They keep him at home, and instruct him whereby he may long and comfortably enjoy his inheritance; but as soon as he

arrives to the years of discretion and judgment, it can not but be grievous to him to live in subjection to the commands and will of another.

In the same manner stands the case of the children of God, which are brought up and instructed under the law, as under a master in the liberty of sons. The law profits them in this, that by the fear of it and the punishment which it threatens, they are driven from sin, at least from the outward work; by it they are brought to a knowledge of themselves, and that they do no good at all with a willing and ready mind as becomes sons; whereby they may easily see what is the root of this evil, and what is especially needful unto salvation; to wit, a new and living spirit to that which is good: which neither the law nor the works of the law is able to give; yea, the more they apply themselves to it, the more unwilling they find themselves to work those things which are good.

Here they learn that they do not satisfy the law, although outwardly they live according to its precepts. They pretend to obey it in works, although in mind they hate it; they pretend themselves righteous, but they remain sinners. These are like unto those of Cain's progeny, and hypocrites; whose hands are compelled to do good, but their hearts consent unto sin and are subject thereto. To know this concerning one's self is not the lowest degree toward salvation. Paul calls such constrained works the works of the law; for they flow not from a ready and willing heart; howbeit the law does not require works alone, but the heart itself; wherefore it is said in the first psalm of the blest man: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord: and in His law doth he meditate day and night." Such a mind the law requires, but it gives it not; neither can it of its own nature: whereby it comes to pass that while the law continues to exact it of a man, and condemns him as long as he hath such a mind, as being disobedient to God, he is in anguish on every side; his conscience being grievously terrified.

Then, indeed, is he most ready to receive the grace of God; this being the time appointed by the Father when his servitude shall end, and he enter into the liberty of the sons of God. For being thus in distress, and terrified, seeing that by no other means he can avoid the condemnation of the law, he prays to the Father for grace; he acknowledges his frailty, he confesses his sin, he ceases to trust in works, and humbles himself, perceiving that between him and a manifest sinner there is no difference at all except of works, that he hath a wicked heart, even as every other sinner hath. The condition of man's nature is such that it is able to give to the law works only, and not the heart; and unequal division, truly, to dedicate the heart, which, comparably excels all other things, to sin, and the hand to the law: which is offering chaff to the law, and the wheat to sin; the shell to God, and the kernel to Satan; whose ungodliness if one reprove, they become enraged, and would even take the life of innocent Abel, and persecute all those that follow the truth.

Those that trust in works seem to defend them to obtain righteousness; they promise to themselves a great reward for this, by persecuting heretics and blasphemers, as they say, who seduce with error, and entice many from good works. But those that God hath chosen, learn by the law how unwilling the heart is to conform to the works of the law; they fall from their arrogance, and are by this knowledge of themselves brought to see their own unworthiness. Hereby they receive that covenant of the eternal blessing and the Holy Ghost which renews the heart: whereby they are delighted with the law, and hate sin; and are willing and ready to do those things which are good. This is the time appointed by the Father, when the heir must no longer remain a servant, but a son, being led by a free spirit, he is no more kept in subjection under tutors and governors after the manner of a servant; which is even that which Paul teaches in the following:

Verse 3. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the word." By the word elements thou mayest here understand the first principles or law written; which is as it were the first exercises and instructions of holy learning; as it is said: "As concerning the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world." "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage."

Here Paul calls the law rudiments; because it is not able to perform that righteousness which it requires. For whereas it earnestly requires a heart and mind given to godliness, nature is not able to satisfy it: herein it makes a man feel his poverty, and acknowledge his infirmity: it requires that of him by right which he has not, neither is able to have. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Paul calls them the rudiments of the world, which, not being renewed by the Spirit, only perform worldly things; to wit, in places, times, apparel, persons, vessels, and such like. But faith rests not in worldly things, but in the grace, word, and mercy of God: counting alike, days, meats, persons, apparel, and all things of this world.

None of these by themselves either help or hinder godliness or salvation. With those of Cain's progeny, faith neither agrees in name or anything else; one of them eats flesh, another abstains from it; one wears black apparel, another white; one keeps this day holy, and another that; every one has his rudiments, under which he is in bondage; all of them are addicted to the things of the world, which are frail and perishable. Against these Paul speaks, "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances: touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh."

By this and other places above mentioned, it is evident that monasteries and colleges, whereby we measure the state of spiritual men as we call them, plainly disagree with the Gospel and Christian liberty: and therefore it is much more dangerous to live in this kind of life than among the most profane men. All their works are nothing but rudiments and ordinances of the world; neither are they Christians but in name, wherefore all their life and holiness are sinful and most detestable hypocrisy. The fair show of feigned holiness which is in those ordinances does, in a marvelous and secret manner, withdraw from faith more than those manifest and gross sins of which open sinners are guilty. Now this false and servile opinion faith alone takes away, and teaches us to trust in, and rest upon, the grace of God, whereby is given freely that which is needful to work all things.

Verses 4,5. "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." After Paul had taught us that righteousness and faith can not come to us by the law, neither can we deserve it by nature, he shows us by whom we obtain it; and who is the author of our justification. The apostle saith, "When the fullness of the time was come"; here Paul speaks of the time which was appointed by the Father to the Son, wherein He should live under tutors, etc. This time being come to the Jews, and ended, Christ came in the flesh; so it is daily fulfilled to others, when they come to the knowledge of Christ, and change the servitude of the law, for the faith of sons. Christ for this cause came unto us that believing in Him we may be restored to true liberty; by which faith they of ancient times also obtained the liberty of the Spirit.

As soon as thou believest in Christ, He comes to thee, a deliverer and Savior; and now the time of bondage is ended; as the apostle saith the fullness thereof is come.

Verse 6. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Here we see plainly that the Holy Ghost cometh to the saints, not by works, but by faith alone. Sons believe, while servants only work; sons are free from the law, servants are held under the law, as appears by those things that have been before spoken. But how comes it to pass that he saith "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit," etc., seeing it as before said that by the coming of the Spirit we are changed from servants to sons: but here, as though we could be sons before the coming of the Spirit, he saith "because ye are sons," etc. To this question we must answer, that Paul speaks here in the same manner that he did before, that is, before the fullness of the time came, we were in bondage under the rudiments of the world: all that shall become sons are counted in the place of sons with God: therefore he saith rightly, "because ye are sons," that is, because the state of sons is appointed to you from everlasting, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son," to wit, that He might finish it in you, and make you such as He hath long since of His goodness determined that He would make you.

Now if the Father give unto us His Spirit, He will make us His true sons and heirs, that we may with confidence cry with Christ, Abba, Father; being His brethren and fellow heirs. The apostle has well set forth the goodness of God which makes us partakers with Christ, and causes us to have all things common with Him, so that we live and are led by the same Spirit. These words of the apostle show that the Holy Ghost proceeds from Christ, as he calls Him His Spirit. So God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son, that is, of Christ, for He is the Spirit of God, and comes from God to us, and not ours, unless one will say after this manner, “my Holy Spirit,” as we say, “my God,” “my Lord,” etc. As He is said to be the Holy Spirit of Christ, it proves Him to be God of whom that Spirit is sent, therefore it is counted His Spirit.

Christians may perceive by this whether they have in themselves the Holy Ghost, to wit, the Spirit of sons; whether they hear His voice in their hearts; for Paul saith He crieth in the hearts which He possesseth, Abba, Father; he saith also, “We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Thou hearest this voice when thou findest so much faith in thyself that thou dost assuredly, without doubting, presume that not only thy sins are forgiven thee, but also that thou art the beloved Son of God, who, being certain of eternal salvation, durst both call Him Father, and be delighted in Him with a joyful and confident heart. To doubt these things brings a reproach upon the death of Christ, as though He had not obtained all things for us.

It may be that thou shalt be so tempted as to fear and doubt, and think plainly that God is not a favorable Father, but a wrathful revenger of sins, as it happened with Job, and many other saints; but in such a conflict this trust and confidence that thou art a son ought to prevail and overcome. It is said “The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered; and that He beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” How can it therefore be that our hearts should not hear this cry and testimony of the Spirit? But if thou dost not feel this cry, take heed that thou be not slothful and secure; pray constantly, for thou art in an evil state.

Cain saith, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from Thy face shall I be hid; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me.” This is a dreadful and terrible cry, which is heard from all Cain’s progeny, all such as trust to themselves and their own works, who put not their trust in the Son of God, neither consider that He was sent from the Father, made of a woman under the law, much less that all these things were done for their salvation. And while their ungodliness is not herewith content, they begin to persecute even the sons of God, and grow so cruel that, after the example of their father Cain, they can not rest until they slay their righteous brother Abel, wherefore the blood of Christ continually cries out against them nothing but punishment and vengeance; but for the heirs of salvation it cries by the Spirit of Christ for nothing but grace and reconciliation.

The apostle here uses a Syrian and Greek word, saying, Abba, Pater. This word Abba, in the Syrian tongue, signifies a father, by which name the heads of monasteries are still called; and by the same name, hermits in times past, being holy men, called their presidents; at last, by use, it was also made a Latin word. Therefore that which Paul saith is as much as Father, Father; or if thou hadst rather, “my Father.”

Verse 7. “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” He saith, that after the coming of the Spirit, after the knowledge of Christ, “thou art not a servant.” A son is free and willing, a servant is compelled and unwilling; a son liveth and resteth in faith, a servant in works. Therefore it appears that we can not obtain salvation of God by works, but before thou workest that which is acceptable to Him, it is necessary that thou receive salvation; then good works will freely flow, to the honor of thy heavenly Father, and to the profit of thy neighbors; without any fear of punishment, or looking for reward.

If this inheritance of the Father be thine by faith, surely thou art rich in all things, before thou hast wrought any thing. It is said, “Your salvation is prepared and reserved in heaven, to be showed in the last time,” wherefore the works of a Christian ought to have no regard to merit, which is the manner of servants, but only for the use and benefit of our neighbors, whereby we may truly live to the glory of God. Lest that

any think that so great an inheritance cometh to us without cost (although it be given to us without our cost or merit), yet it cost Christ a dear price, who, that He might purchase it for us, was made under the law, and satisfied it for us, both by life and also by death.

Those benefits which from love we bestow upon our neighbor, come to him freely, without any charges or labor of his, notwithstanding they cost us something, even as Christ hath bestowed those things which are His upon us. Thus hath Paul called back the Galatians from the teachers of works, which preaching nothing but the law, perverted the Gospel of Christ. Which things are very necessary to be marked of us also: for the Pope, with his prelates and monks hath for a long time intruded, urging his laws, which are foolish and pernicious, disagreeing in every respect with the Word of God, seducing almost the whole world from the gospel of Christ, and plainly extinguishing the faith of sons, as the Scripture hath in diverse places manifestly prophesied of His kingdom. Wherefore let every one that desires salvation, diligently take heed of him and his followers, no otherwise than Satan himself.

MARTIN LUTHER, leader of the Reformation, was born at Eisleben in 1483, and died there 1546. His rugged character and powerful intellect, combined with a strong physique, made him a natural orator, so that it was said "his words were half battles."

Of his own method of preaching he once remarked: "When I ascend the pulpit I see not heads, but imagine those that are before me to be all blocks. When I preach I sink myself deeply down; I regard neither doctors nor masters, of which there are in the church above forty. But I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children, and servants, of which there are more than two thousand. I preach to them. When preaching on any article, a man must first distinguish it, then define, describe, and show what it is; fourthly, he must explain it by examples: fifthly, he must adorn it with similitudes; and lastly, he must admonish and arouse the indolent, correct the disobedient, and reprove the authors of false doctrine."