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Good Works.

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Faith is a light, and good works are its rays. The Lord said to His disciples: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5, 16; cp. 1 Pet. 2, 12. Good works are testimonies for, and fruits of,¹⁾ faith. Christ says: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matt. 7, 17, 18; cp. with v. 21. And Paul calls love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, "the fruit of the Spirit." Gal. 5, 22. See also Titus 3, 14; Col. 1, 10. The fruits stand in a twofold relation to the tree: first, the tree bears them, that is, it puts forth buds and nourishes them with its sap; secondly, seeing the fruits, one can tell the species of the tree. So faith, through the Holy Spirit, brings forth good works and, *vice versa*, is known by them. Matt. 7, 20 we read: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And when the Apostle James wishes to describe "the wisdom that is from above," he says: "It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." Jas. 3, 17. Such honor is due good works. But they have nothing to do with our atonement. The tree does not draw nourishment from the soil by means of the fruits, but through the roots. So we at all times apprehend Christ, our Lord, by faith alone and receive from Him forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Therefore Luther is right when he says: "Inwardly we become godly through faith; outwardly we show our faith through works of love. For Scripture speaks of man in a twofold way, first, of the inner, secondly, of the outer man. For Scripture must needs make this distinction

1) 1 Tim. 5, 8, 10: ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυρούμενη. Titus 2, 7—10.

when speaking of man. When I am speaking of the foot, I certainly cannot speak of the nose. Therefore Scripture sometimes speaks of us as of the spirit, how it by faith must stand before God. God sends His Word and along with it His Spirit; to this we cling. Hence the tree must now be good. At other times, Scripture speaks of us as of the *outer* man, as in flesh and blood we walk with other men. For you do not know that I am godly; therefore I must do good to my neighbor in order that there be an outward sign or proof of my faith. Hence the external works are only signs of the inner faith within me." 2)

As there are two aspects to our being, so God also deals with us in a twofold manner. First, in secret. "He that believeth on Him [the Son of God] is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." John 3, 18. This no one can see, and yet it is truly so. Secondly, publicly, on the Last Day. The secret judgment takes place according to the concealed faith, the public judgment according to the works done in public.³⁾ Therefore Paul says: "After thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man *according to his deeds*" (κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ). Rom. 2, 5. 6. And John writes, Rev. 20, 12: "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν). And again, v. 13: "They [the dead] were judged every man according to their works." Yes, the Lord Himself warns us: "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his works shall be." Rev. 22, 12; cp. also John 5, 29. According to this it is certain that in the Last Judgment, since it will be public, man will be judged according to his works. For in what other way could the justice of this judgment be made visible to men and angels, who will be present? We shall be declared just *according to the works*, but not *on account of the works*; for the works are not the basis of the divine judgment, but the visible testimony that this judg-

2) Luther. St. Louis Ed., XI, 1450 f.; XIV, 99 f.; XIX, 1431 f. Formula of Concord. *Conc. Trigl.*, 927—931.

3) Causa vero, quod in die ultimo, quum salutis per fidem donatio solemniter promulgabitur, non tamen secundum fidem, sed secundum opera iudicium extremum feretur, est, quod iudicium illud sit futurum visibile et notorium, fides autem soli καρδιογνώστη sit cognita. (Henry Hoepfner, *De Justificatione*, 154.)

ment is just.⁴⁾ Therefore they are also called "the things which are written in the books" of God. Rev. 20, 12. Written documents are used in court to convict the criminal and as testimony for the truth. So the works will be used on the Last Day publicly to convict the ungodly and as a public testimony to our faith. In secret God has already judged long before. First, in time, according to faith, John 3, 18; the second time, in death, again according to faith. For when John in a rapture beheld the souls of the just before the throne of God and asked in amazement: "What are these?" he was told: "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore,*" and for no other reason, "are they before the throne of God." Rev. 7, 9—17. So the Last Day finds the great separation accomplished long before; not according to the works, but the deciding factor is whether one found forgiveness in the blood of Christ. The *purpose of the Last Day* is to make known this separation which was accomplished long before. And this is done by means of the testimony of the works. Otherwise eternal life would not be a gift of grace, but wages that are due. But St. Paul expressly calls it a gift of grace. It is remarkable that he begins Rom. 6, 23 with the words: "The wages of sin is death," but instead of proceeding: "and the wages of good works is eternal life," he says the very opposite, namely: "but eternal life is [not wages, but] the gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord." ⁵⁾

All doubt, however, is dispelled by Matt. 25, 31—36: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate

4) Non per aut propter opera [Paulus] dari vitam aeternam pronuntiat, sed secundum illa, h. e., secundum testimonium bonorum operum, prout ea de alicuius vel fide vel infidelitate perhibent testimonium. Nam quia solenne illud orbis iudicium futurum est conspicuum, ideo invisibilis et in corde latentis fidei visibiles producentur testes, opera fidei, quae in hoc mundo incurrebant in hominum oculos et sentiri palam quiverant. (Aegidius Hunnius, *De Justificatione*, 226.) — Aliud est, Deum iudicare secundum opera, quod exstat in Scripturis, aliud dare vitam aeternam propter opera, quod est figmentum papale. (B. Mentzer, *Disputationes*, 275.)

5) It is true that Scripture also speaks of a future reward, e. g., Rev. 22, 12, and in other passages; however, that is not a wage due us, but a reward of grace. Rom. 4, 4. 5; 6, 23.

them one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." First, then, a public and solemn separation will take place; the sheep are set to the right and the goats to the left. Consequently the basis of this separation is not what men have done, but what they are. Whoever *is* a sheep of Christ stands on the right; whoever is not a sheep of Christ, to the left. The question how a person *became* a sheep of Christ does here not come into consideration at all. Now, to these sheep, who are His own, who know His voice, John 10, 4, the Lord says: "Come, ye blessed of My Father." How did they become blessed? In Christ, Eph. 1, 3, through faith, Gal. 3, 9. These persons who were blessed long ago Christ calls and says: "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Therefore, they do not receive wages, but an inheritance; not because they labored, but because they are children. Rom. 8, 17 we read: "And if [we are] children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." The kingdom which was prepared for us from the foundation of the world is therefore not given us on the Last Day on account of our works, but on the basis of the blessing with which God has blessed us in Christ as an inheritance, according to the right of children.⁶⁾ In order, however, that all who are gathered around the throne may see that this is a just judgment, the Judge proceeds: "For ⁷⁾ I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came to Me." And when the saints ask in surprise when and where they served Him in that way, He replies: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matt. 25, 37—40. In this way all the world is to see that the faith by which they received

6) Therefore Rom. 3, 27 also holds good in this connection.

7) Ἐπειόσα γάρ. Matt. 25, 35. Γάρ is used as indicating basis of discernment, as in 1 Cor. 10, 5 and in other texts.

the adoption of sons, John 1, 12, was not hypocritical.⁸⁾ Then the Judge turns to those at His left and says: "And ye other ones have indeed been cursed long ago; but lest any one should imagine that this was an injustice, tell Me: Did you ever give Me meat by feeding My hungry brethren? Did you ever give Me drink or clothe Me or visit Me? This you did not do." And they go away into everlasting punishment.⁹⁾ *(To be continued.)*
