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Sure Grace.

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Here is sure grace. Is. 55, 3. Not in the doctrine of gradual forgiveness. For what guarantee have I that the little grain of forgiveness which happens to be in my possession at this time is really sufficient for my salvation? Not in the doctrine of a justification through a heavenly voice which comes but once in a lifetime. For the remembrance of the voice heard at that time is effaced by time; and even if time would spare it, what good would that do you? It would no more assure you of your being in a state of grace than the certainty of your birthday gives you the assurance that you are alive now. The assurance of your salvation rather rests on the fact that you are a sinner, but that the blood of Christ which perpetually makes intercession for you is standing between the fierce wrath of Almighty God and you. And as you have the certainty of life in every breath which you take and by means of which you drink the life-sustaining air, so you have sure forgiveness in every grasp of your faith by which you apprehend Christ.

True. But does this also give me the assurance that I will *finally* be saved? Most certainly! For God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. And furthermore, God's Word says: "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." Is. 43, 1. And: "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Is. 54, 10. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors and lay thy foundation with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates and thy gates of carbuncles and all thy borders of pleasant stones." Is. 54, 11, 12.

Men are liars; but "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it, or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Num. 23, 19. No, "for the Word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth." Ps. 63, 4; 19, 7; Jer. 42, 5; Titus 1, 9; Rev. 21, 5. Yes, He has even sworn: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death." John 8, 51. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." John 5, 24. "Men, verily, swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 6, 16—20. And is God not mighty enough to keep His promise? Is He not greater than our heart, yea, greater than all? 1 John 3, 20. "I give unto them eternal life," says Christ, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." John 10, 28, 29. On this rock stands the house of our salvation. And did He not give us the holy Sacraments: Baptism, Gal. 3, 27, Absolution,¹⁾ Matt. 18, 18; John 20, 23, and the Holy Supper, as His seals?²⁾ What is the purpose of the seal on the letter? To protect it against unauthorized intruders and to confirm its authenticity. So the Sacraments protect us against doubt and testify unto us the true and perpetual grace. And is not the Holy Spirit "the earnest of our inheritance"? Eph. 1, 14; 2 Cor. 1, 22. For we "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the

1) Apology. *Trigl.*, 261 f. 309; Large Catechism. *Trigl.*, 751. [In strict parlance absolution would not be classed as a Sacrament.—Ed.]

2) As He gave circumcision to Abraham. Rom. 4, 11.

children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. 8, 15—17. And in spite of this we should still doubt? Is not the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of Truth," John 15, 26, yes, Truth itself? 1 John 5, 6. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." 1 John 5, 9—11. Furthermore, we know that every prayer which is offered up in the name of Jesus is heard, John 16, 23; 1 John 5, 14, 15, therefore especially the prayer, "Forgive!" and, "Lead us not into temptation," and, "Deliver us from evil." Matt. 6, 9, 12, 13. Yes, faith, from which such prayers flow, is nothing else than "the substance ³⁾ (ὕπόστασις) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11, 1. Therefore we say confidently with St. Paul: "I am persuaded (πέπεισμαι) that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Rom. 8, 38, 39.

But is it not written: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. 10, 12; and: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. 2, 12; and: "Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear," Rom. 11, 20; and: "Pass the time of your sojourn here in fear," 1 Pet. 1, 17; and: "Happy is the man that feareth alway," Prov. 28, 14? Do such admonitions not clearly conflict with the assurance of grace? Foolish thought! Who is to fear? Why, the old man is to fear; and just he is the fiercest enemy of perpetual and sure forgiveness. Therefore God's Word chastises him, not in order to *diminish* the assurance of grace, but to *strengthen* it. If anything is to be diminished, it is our carnal sense of *security*. Security and assurance agree like fire and water: the more security, the less assurance, and *vice versa*. For assurance comes from God, reposes in the Spirit, and anchors in the Word; security, on the other hand, comes from hell, reposes in the flesh, and anchors in nothing (הַבֶּל). Ps. 39, 5. And as surely as the flesh and the Spirit are contrary the one to the other, Gal. 5, 17, just so surely assurance and security are contrary the one to the other. The assurance of grace dispels security as the sun dispels the night. And despite this truth, people would twist these texts

3) [Marginal reading: *confidence, assurance*. Luther: *gewisse Zuversicht*.]

which reprove security in order to safeguard assurance into arguments against their chief purpose; they would throw the walls of their own fortress into its moats! The fear which the Scriptures recommend does not conflict with the assurance of grace, but with the security of the flesh. David says: "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee." Ps. 56, 3. Yes, out of perpetual fear flows perpetual faith. Our heart is so hard that it will not believe unless it is first made to tremble; only the afflicted give heed to the Word. Therefore they are blessed, that is, in God's perpetual grace, "that fear alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief (לִבּוֹ תִקְשֶׁה)." Prov. 28, 14; cp. Heb. 4, 1.

So, then, we shall pass the remainder of the time of our pilgrimage in perpetually endeavoring to get away from trusting in ourselves; for "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Prov. 28, 26. But "the Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Ps. 27, 1. Not to fear and to fear seems to be a contradiction, but it is not; for we are dual beings, with our feet on earth and our hands in heaven. Our feet tremble, but our hands hold the crown of righteousness in the City of God, with its streets of gold, which is above. Rev. 3, 11. From the beginning of the world God has dealt with His children in this way: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles; . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11, 8—10. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promise offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called, accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Heb. 11, 17—19. Likewise Moses, though trembling, yet full of confidence, "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Heb. 11, 27. Thus they "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight," in spite of "mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover in bonds and imprisonment." Heb. 11, 36. And the dear apostles also had tribulation, and yet in Christ they were of good cheer, John 16, 33; they feared and feared not, 2 Cor. 4, 7, 9; they were sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. 2 Cor. 6, 10. So well do fear and

assurance agree. Yes, we shall rejoice with Paul: "I have the assurance of grace," Rom. 8, 38. 39, only as long as we complain with him: "Without fightings, within fears (*ἔξωθεν μάχαι, ἔσωθεν φόβοι*)." ⁴⁾ 2 Cor. 7, 5. That is also the doctrine of the Fathers.⁵⁾

(To be continued.)
