**By Faith Alone:**Week Fifty-eight: Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Today Luther gives advice for dealing with both good times and the bad.  He begins with this from Ecclesiastes 7:14 – “When times are good, be happy.  But when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one time as well as the other so that mortals cannot predict their future.”
He goes on to write: “When you are given a good day, here’s what you should do: be happy.  In other words, enjoy the present.  Forget your troubles.  Lay your plans aside.  But keep your emotions in check.  Let your wisdom come from God.  Commit to him both your past and your future.
So be happy in the present, but do so in a way that you don’t forget about the bad times.  In other words, you should be ready for times of sorrow.  Enjoy the present, but don’t start thinking that life will always stay that way.  Beware of becoming overconfident.  Don’t look forward exclusively to good things.  You also need to be prepare for bad times.  Always try to remain even-tempered and open to whatever happens.  In contrast, foolish people cling to the joys of the moment.  They become completely absorbed in them as if these good times were going to last forever.  Then, God uses bad times to remove their improper attitudes and arrogance.
So, we should be happy in such a way that we don’t immerse ourselves in the present.  We should always keep a part of our heart reserved for God, for he is the one who will help us get through the bad times.  Then, when trouble comes, we will be less bothered because we have anticipated it.”

**By Faith Alone:**Week Fifty-eight: Day Two

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Luther begins with a familiar verse from John 14:5-6 – “Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you’re going.  So how can we know the way?’  Jesus answered him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”  He goes on to write:
“Thomas thought it was strange that Christ was saying, ‘You know the way to the place where I am going’ when Jesus had said nothing about where he was going.  Thomas was thinking in simple and concrete terms.  He was envisioning a road that a person takes from one city to another or a path that a person walks on.  The disciples were saying, ‘We don’t know the way.  We don’t even know through which city gate you’re planning to leave.  How can we know the way?’
Christ replied to their worldly thoughts, ‘Here’s what I mean: You know the way.  In other words, you know the person who is the way – me.  For you see me and know that I am the Christ, your Lord and Savior.  You are my disciples, for you have heard my message and have seen my miracles.  Since you know me, you also know the way and everything else you need to know.’
This is remarkable.  All our teaching and faith should center and depend on Christ.  Setting aside all of our wisdom and skill, we should know nothing except the crucified Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2).  From God’s perspective, the highest wisdom and knowledge above all other knowledge and wisdom is to truly know this person Christ.  We come to God through Christ alone.”

**By Faith Alone:**Week Fifty-eight Three

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Today Luther writes about continuing to trust in God – to trust His promises – in the midst of trials or misunderstandings or confusion.  He begins with this from Genesis 43:18 – “[Joseph’s brothers] were frightened, because they had been brought to Joseph’s house.  They thought, ‘. . . They’re going to attack us, overpower us, take our donkeys, and make us slaves.’”
He goes on to write: “Joseph’s brothers didn’t know what was going to happen to them.  They certainly didn’t expect this ruler of Egypt, who was actually their brother Joseph, to be kind and sympathetic to them.  They didn’t expect this man to make them rich and promote them to positions of honor.  It wasn’t time for them to recognize the wonderful things God was doing for them.
In the meantime, they were sleeping and snoring, paying no attention to God’s promise.  They thought they were going to be severely punished.  Yet, everything they thought, said, and did was happening as if they were in a dream.  Later on, when Joseph told them, ‘I am Joseph, the brother you sold’ (Genesis 45:4), they would wake up and see that everything they were so afraid of was nothing but a dream.
We, too, live as if we were sleepwalking.  No one can tell that we’re asleep by looking at us.  But we aren’t awake.  If we truly believe God’s Word, a time will come when we will finally wake up and open our eyes.  But when facing difficult situations, our hearts might not be able to be as strong and confident as God’s Word requires.  Then, at the very least, we should keep on believing in a weak sort of way, as Joseph’s brothers did here.  We shouldn’t start complaining against God or grow tired of praying and calling out to him.  In difficult times, we may not be able to believe God as strongly, praise him as wholeheartedly, and pray to him as sincerely as we do in good times.  But at least we should believe and pray as much as we are able.”

**By Faith Alone:**Week Fifty-eight: Day Four

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Today writes about loving our neighbors and hard that is.  He starts with this from Galatians 5:14 – “All of Moses’ Teachings are summarized in a single statement, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’”  The intent of the Ten Commandments is to focus our eyes on the needs of our neighbor.  Keeping the law is not a self-centered pursuit.  Jesus took care of that for us by living a perfect life of obedience in our place.  He has set us free to see the Ten Commandments as a guide to teach us how to love our neighbor as we have been loved by God.
“Luther writes: “After having heard and accepted the true teaching about faith, the apostle Paul seriously admonishes Christians to practice genuine good works.  This is because these remnants of sin remain in those who are justified.  These remnants resist faith and divert us from doing true good works.  Human reason and the corrupt nature resist the Spirit in believers and control unbelievers.  Reason is naturally inclined towards hypocritical superstition.  It wants to measure God according to its own thoughts rather than choosing more enthusiastically than the ones God commanded.  That’s why faithful teachers must teach and impress on people true love and truly good works just as much as they teach faith.
No one should think he fully understands this command: ‘Love your neighbor.’  Certainly this is very short and very easy as far as the words are concerned.  But where are the teachers and learners who actually practice this in life?  These words, ‘Through love serve one another’ and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ are eternal words.  No one can think about, urge, and practice them enough.
It’s remarkable that believers will immediately have a troubled conscience if they fail to do something trivial.  But these same people feel nothing at all when they neglect love and when their heart isn’t sincere and brotherly toward their neighbor.  Unfortunately, this happens every day.  For they don’t regard God’s command to love as highly as their own superstitions.”

**By Faith Alone:**Week Fifty-seven: Day Five

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Today Luther talks about the difference between physical and spiritual life.  He begins with this from John 3:6 – “Flesh and blood give birth to flesh and blood, but the Spirit gives birth to things that are spiritual.”  He goes on to write:
“We can’t feel the new birth or the spiritual life with our five senses.  We can’t see it.  The spiritual life will endure, while the physical life will one day end.  Our lives on earth will eventually become like dust, which is blown away and never seen or felt again.  Then, only the spiritual life will remain.  WE will come alive once again and will be raised from the dead.
We can’t see or understand this spiritual birth.  We must simply believe it.  What is born of the Spirit is spiritual, and the primary benefit of this new birth is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.  Nevertheless, Christians still have an external existence.  While they live here on earth, they are nurtured by a mother and father, eat and drink, wear clothes and shoes, have a house and garden, and own money and property.  They view all of this as if they were guests who were traveling through this land to another city – their true destination.  Whey they arrive there, they will no longer care about the places where they stayed along the way.  During the journey, they were always thinking, ‘Today, I am a guest.  Tomorrow, I will continue my trip.’  In the same way, a Christian also thinks, ‘Today, I am guest on this earth.  I eat and drink here.  I live honorably and modestly in this life.  But tomorrow, I’ll proceed on my way to an eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, where I am a citizen.’  So Christians also journey through this life.  When they come to the end of this life, they will let go of everything physical and enter a spiritual life that will never end.”