**By Faith Alone:** Week Sixty: Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luther gives some counsel on how to fight against sin. He begins with this from Galatians 5:17 – “What your spiritual nature wants is contrary to what your corrupt nature wants. They are opposed to each other.” He goes on to write:

“Believers can be deeply comforted by Paul’s teaching. They have both the corrupt nature and the Spirit in the same body in such a way that the Spirit reigns and the corrupt nature is subordinate. Righteousness rules, and sin serves. Not everyone is familiar with this teaching. If you think that believers must be completely flawless, and yet you feel deeply flawed, then you will be consumed by sorrow and will despair. Whoever recognizes and makes use of this teaching will discover that even the worst will work out for the best. For when your corrupt nature entices you to sin, you will be motivated to seek forgiveness of sins through Christ. You will want to grasp the righteousness of faith, which you wouldn’t normally regard or desire.

Meanwhile, Christians should keep the wickedness of their corrupt nature in mind so that they are encouraged and motivated to believe and call on Christ. At such an opportunity, Christians become skillful artists and wonderful creators. They can create joy from sorrow, comfort from fear, righteousness from sin, and life from death when they restrain their corrupt nature in this way, make it their servant, and subject it to the Spirit.

If you are aware of the desires of the corrupt nature, you shouldn’t despair of your salvation. Though you will be aware of these desires, you must not give into them. The more you grow in Christ, the more you will sense this conflict. Anger or sexual desire may still be stirred up in you, but you must not allow them to rule. Sin may arouse these desires, but you must not give in to them.”

**By Faith Alone:** Week Sixty: Day Two

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The title of today’s devotion is “God Wants Your Heart.” Luther then talks about the love God has for us – the love He has shown to us through Jesus Christ, His Son. He begins with this familiar passage from John 3:16 – “God loved the world this way: He gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.”

He goes on to write: “To whom does God give his beloved Son? God gives him to the world – the lost multitude who never deserved it. They could only expect to remain lost and condemned without him. God gave his Son to the lost so that they might be saved. Then, what should you do for this loving God in return? Nothing! Don’t go on pilgrimages. Don’t do this or that good work. Instead, simply believe in Christ alone. Then you will be able to get rid of your old nature and cling to him. Your faith, of course, should be the kind that produces good works.

You cannot take hold of this gift – the Son of God – with your hand. The Son of God cannot be contained in a jar. He is only grasped with the heart and by faith. When this gift comes into your heart, when you believe in Christ with your whole heart, then you won’t be the same person. Even if you once were a thief, an adulterer or a murderer, you will become a new person, for you have the Light in your heart.

What the Lord Christ wants first and foremost is your heart – a heart that believes in him alone. God wants your best, not your mouth or your hand, but your heart. He wants you to be righteous on the inside. When you believe in Christ, your heart becomes clean. Peter says that faith cleanses hearts (Acts 15:9). That same faith doesn’t permit you to be arrogant or proud. For when the heart is cleansed, the hands, eyes, feet, and all other members are also cleansed. You will act differently than before. Faith won’t permit you to be a sinner, fornicator, or adulterer any longer. So your entire life will reflect what’s in your heart.”

**By Faith Alone:** Week Sixty: Day Three

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today Luther talks about faith – what it looks like and how it impacts our relationship with this material world. He begins with this from Genesis 12:1 – “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Leave your land, your relatives, and your father’s home. Go to the land that I will show you.’”

He goes on to write: “We ought to admire Abraham because he allowed God to reprimand him. Even though he was afraid of God’s anger, he admitted that he had been worshiping idols and had not trusted God. Then he started a journey without knowing where he was going. Abraham left his familiar homeland to look for an unfamiliar foreign country. While faith convinced him that he would get there, outward appearances made this seem uncertain. As a matter of fact, according to the Bible, he never had a permanent place to live after that. Even David praises this lifestyle, using it as an example when he says, ‘I am a foreign resident with you, a stranger like all my ancestors’ (Psalm 39:12).

Someone might say, ‘What? Wasn’t David a king? Wasn’t Abraham a very wealthy man, even though he moved from place to place?’ Although all of this is true, David and Abraham didn’t have much because they treated their possessions as if they didn’t belong to them. As Paul said, ‘Those who use the things in this world should do so but not depend on them’ (1 Corinthians 7:31).

Faithful people have always lived this way. They take care of their home and family, participate in society and government, raise children, and have occupations in agriculture, commerce, and industry. All the while, they realize that they, like their ancestors, are temporary residents of a foreign land. This world is merely a hotel hat they will have to soon leave. Because they know this, they don’t allow themselves to become too attached to the things of this world. They take care of their physical needs with their left hand while raising their right hand toward their eternal home.”

**By Faith Alone:** Week Sixty: Day Four

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today Luther talks about prayer and why we are able to pray with confidence. He focuses on the promises of God attached to prayer and God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises. Luther begins with this from Luke 11:9 – “So I tell you to ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you.”

He goes on to write: “A good prayer that is heard by God has two prerequisites. First, we must consider God’s promise that he will hear us. By reminding him of his promise, we can dare to pray confidently. For if God hadn’t asked us to pray and hadn’t promised to hear us, then all people praying their requests together wouldn’t be able to receive even the smallest item.

So no one receives anything from God because of the quality of the prayer, but only because of God’s goodness. God anticipates all of our requests and desires. With his promise, he prompts us to pray and desire these things so that we will learn how much eh cares for us. He cares for us so much that he is prepared to give us even more than we are ready to receive or to ask for. Because he is offering us so much, we can pray with confidence.

Second, we must not doubt what the true and faithful God promises to do. He promises to hear our prayers – yes, he even commands us to pray. He promises this so that we might firmly believe that our prayers will be answered. As Christ says, ‘That’s why I tell you to have faith that you have already received whatever you pray for, and it will be yours’ (Mark 11:24; Matthew 21:22). Christ also says, ‘So I tell you to ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. Everyone who asks will receive. The one who searches will find, and for the person who knocks, the door will be opened’ (Luke 11:9). By trusting in these promises and obeying these commands, we can pray with confidence.

**By Faith Alone:** Week Sixty: Day Five

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today Luther writes about letting go – letting go of those things that you have no control over (no matter how good and right the motivation might be to try to control the evil that is at work in the world). He begins with this from Ecclesiastes 4:4 – “Then I saw all hard work and skillful effort come from rivalry. Even this is pointless. It’s like trying to catch the wind.”

He goes on to write: “In this passage, the writer of Ecclesiastes is saying, ‘I saw people who were extremely capable at their jobs, but they didn’t accomplish anything the way they wanted to because it was not within their power. Their hostile neighbors hindered their efforts.’

It’s biblical and comforting to know that we shouldn’t worry about all the problems in the world. Human concerns and trouble are everywhere. When I was a new preacher, I tried to solve everyone’s problems. But people rightfully told me, ‘You’re too inexperienced to reform rascals.’ The same advice could be given in any job situation. Every occupation has its own problems. Therefore, you should live in the present, enjoy what you have, and just let all the evil flow past you. This is how to defy the world.

In short, if you want to live peacefully, remember that much of what happens in this world will seem pointless. Don’t be sad when something bad happens in your life. Instead, enjoy the blessings you still have. If you have been officially given the responsibility for making something better, then do what you can and leave the rest up to God. But if you want to voluntarily take on more responsibility, trying to straighten out everything that is crooked, cure every evil, and throw the devil out of this world, then you’ll only cause yourself a lot of pain and sorrow. It’s like trying to stop the flow of a swift river. You can’t control what people do in this world. Rather, the one who created all things is the one who controls them.”