

a necessity based on coercion. In other words, when the word necessary is used, it should be understood not as force, but only as the order of God's unchanging will, whose debtors we are. His commandment points out that the creature should be obedient to its Creator. In other places (2 Corinthians 9; Philemon 14; and 1 Peter 5) something is said to be of necessity that is wrung from a person against his will, by force or otherwise, so that he acts outwardly for the sake of appearance, but without and against his will. God does not want such hypocritical works. The people of the New Testament are to be a willing people (Psalm 110:3) and sacrifice freely (Psalm 54:6), "not reluctantly or under compulsion" (2 Corinthians 9:7). They are to be "obedient from the heart" (Romans 6:17), "for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). In this understanding, and in this sense, it is correctly said and taught that truly good works should be done willingly, or from a voluntary spirit, by those whom God's Son has made free. The dispute about the voluntary nature of good works was engaged in by some people specifically to make this point.

Here, again, it is well to note the distinction that St. Paul makes in Romans 7:22-23:

For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law [that is not only unwilling or disinclined, but also] waging war against the law of my mind.

Regarding the unwilling and rebellious flesh, Paul says, "I discipline my body and keep it under control" (1 Corinthians 9:27) and "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified [slain] the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). (See also Romans 8:13.) 20 When it is asserted and taught that good works are free to believers in the sense that they are optional for them to do or not to do, this is false, and must be rejected. It is false to say that believers might or could act against God's Law and still have faith and God's favor and grace.

Solid Declaration 11.50-52, 1v.16-20; Concordia: *The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

Out of His immense goodness and mercy, God provides for the public preaching of His divine eternal Law and His wonderful plan for our redemption, that of the holy, only saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. By this preaching He gathers an eternal Church for Himself from the human race and works in people's hearts true repentance, knowledge of sins, and true faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ. By this means, and in no other way (i.e., through His holy Word, when people hear it preached or read it, and through the holy Sacraments when they are used according to His Word), God desires to call people to eternal salvation. He desires to draw them to Himself and convert, regenerate, and sanctify them.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

[Peter] will tell you what you must do. (Acts 10:6)

So faith comes from the preaching and preaching through the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17 Luther).

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.... I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word. (John 17:17-20)

The eternal Father calls down from heaven about His dear Son and about all who preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name, "Listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5).

All who want to be saved ought to listen to this preaching. For the preaching and hearing of God's Word are the Holy Spirit's instruments. By, with, and through these instruments the Spirit desires to work effectively, to convert people to God, and to work in them both to will and to do.

In this matter the following distinction must be noted. The meaning of these expressions must be a necessity based on Christ's ordinance, command, and will and based on our obligation, but not

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