

The Augsburg Confession of 1530

Article XX: Good Works

Article XX: Good Works

❖¹ Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding good works. ² Their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and other similar writings, bear witness that they have usefully taught about all estates and duties of life. They have taught well what is pleasing to God in every station and vocation in life. ...

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❖³ ... Before now, preachers taught very little about these things. They encouraged only childish and needless works, such as particular holy days, particular fasts, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, services in honor of the saints, the use of rosaries, monasticism, and such things. ⁴ Since our adversaries have been admonished about these things, they are now unlearning them. They do not preach these unhelpful works as much as they used to....

The RC Rosary

- * The Fátima Prayers are five Catholic prayers that originate from the Marian apparitions at Fátima, Portugal, in 1917. The Decade Prayer, as the best known of these five prayers, is commonly added at the end of each decade of the Dominican Rosary, one of the most popular devotional practices in Roman Catholicism.



At Fatima, Our Lady asked that we pray at least 5 decades of the Rosary every day for world peace and the triumph of her Immaculate Heart.

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❖⁵ ... In the past, there was only stunning silence about faith, but now they are beginning to mention it. ⁶ They do not teach that we are justified only by works. They join faith and works together, and say that we are justified by faith and works. ⁷ This teaching is more tolerable than the former one. It can offer more consolation than their old teaching. ...

James 2:21-24

† **James 2:21-24** “Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” {Gen. 15:6} and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.”

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❖⁸ ... The doctrine about faith, which ought to be the chief doctrine in the Church, has remained unknown for so long. Everyone has to admit that there was the deepest silence in their sermons concerning the righteousness of faith. They only taught about works in the churches. This is why our teachers teach the churches about faith in this way....

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❖⁹ ... First, [our teachers] teach that our works cannot reconcile God to us or merit forgiveness of sins, grace, and justification. We obtain reconciliation only by faith when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake. He alone has been set forth as the Mediator and Atoning Sacrifice (1 Timothy 2:5), in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him.

...

1 Timothy 2:5-6

✚ 1 Timothy 2:5-6 “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men-- the testimony given in its proper time.”

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❖¹⁰ ... Therefore, whoever believes that he merits grace by works despises the merit and grace of Christ [Galatians 5:4]. In so doing, he is seeking a way to God without Christ, by human strength, although Christ Himself said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)....

Galatians 5:4-5

✚ **Galatians 5:4-5** “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”

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❖¹¹ ... This doctrine about faith is presented everywhere by Paul, “By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8)....

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❖¹² ... If anyone wants to be tricky and say that we have invented a new interpretation of Paul, this entire matter is supported by the testimony of the Fathers. ¹³ Augustine defends grace and the righteousness of faith in many volumes against the merits of works. ¹⁴ Ambrose, in his book *The Calling of the Gentiles*, and elsewhere, teaches the same thing. ...

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❖ ... In *The Calling of the Gentiles* [Augustine] says, “Redemption by Christ’s blood would be worth very little, and God’s mercy would not surpass man’s works, if justification, which is accomplished through grace, were due to prior merits. So justification would not be the free gift from a donor, but the reward due the laborer.”...

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❖¹⁵ ... Spiritually inexperienced people despise this teaching. However, God-fearing and anxious consciences find by experience that it brings the greatest consolation. Consciences cannot be set at rest through any works, but only by faith, when they take the sure ground that for Christ's sake they have a gracious God.

...

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❖¹⁶ ... As Paul teaches, “since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Romans 5:1).¹⁷ This whole doctrine must be related to the conflict of the terrified conscience. It cannot be understood apart from that conflict.¹⁸ Therefore, inexperienced and irreverent people have poor judgment in this matter because they dream that Christian righteousness is nothing but civil and philosophical righteousness. ...

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❖¹⁹ ... Until now consciences were plagued with the doctrine of works. They did not hear consolation from the Gospel. ²⁰ Some people were driven by conscience into the desert and into monasteries, hoping to merit grace by a monastic life.

Byzantine Monks of the Judean Desert (4-7th c. A.D.)



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- ❖²¹ ... Some people came up with other works to merit grace and make satisfaction for sins.
- ²² That is why the need was so great for teaching and renewing the doctrine of faith in Christ, so that anxious consciences would not be without consolation but would know that grace, forgiveness of sins, and justification are received by faith in Christ. ...

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❖²³ People are also warned that the term *faith* does not mean simply a knowledge of a history, such as the ungodly and devil have [James 2:19].

James 2:19

✚ **James 2:19** “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.”

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❖ ... Rather, [the term *faith*] means a faith that believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history. In other words, it believes this article: the forgiveness of sins. We have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins through Christ. ...

John 8:24

† **John 8:24** “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I Am, you will indeed die in your sins.”

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*²⁴ ... The person who knows that he has a Father who is gracious to him through Christ truly knows God [John 14:7]. He also knows that God cares for him [1 Peter 5:7], and he calls upon God [Romans 10:13]. ...

John 14:7, 1 Peter 5:7, Romans 10:13

- ✚ **John 14:7** “If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.”
- ✚ **1 Peter 5:7** “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”
- ✚ **Romans 10:13** “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” {Joel 2:32}

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* ... In a word, he is not without God, as are the heathen. ²⁵ For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article: the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy [Romans 8:7] and do not call Him [Romans 3:11–12] and expect no good from Him. ...

Romans 8:7, Romans 3:11-12

- † **Romans 8:7** “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”
- † **Romans 3:11-12** “There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” {Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20}

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*²⁶ ... Augustine also warns his readers about the word *faith* and teaches that the term is used in the Scriptures, not for the knowledge that is in the ungodly, but for the confidence that consoles and encourages the terrified mind. ...

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*²⁷ ... Furthermore, we teach that it is necessary to do good works. This does not mean that we merit grace by doing good works, but because it is God's will [Ephesians 2:10]. ...

Ephesians 2:10

✝ Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

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* ²⁸ ... It is only by faith, and nothing else, that forgiveness of sins is apprehended. ²⁹ The Holy Spirit is received through faith, hearts are renewed and given new affections, and then they are able to bring forth good works. ³⁰ Ambrose says: “Faith is the mother of a good will and doing what is right....”

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*31 ... Without the Holy Spirit people are full of ungodly desires. They are too weak to do works that are good in God's sight [John 15:5]. ...



John 15:5

✝ **John 15:5** "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."

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❖ ... “Besides, they are in the power of the devil, who pushes human beings into various sins, ungodly opinions, and open crimes. We see this in the philosophers, who, although they tried to live an honest life could not succeed, but were defiled with many open crimes....”

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❖ ... “Such is human weakness, without faith and without the Holy Spirit, when governed only by human strength.”...

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- ❖ ... “Therefore, it is easy to see that this doctrine is not to be accused of banning good works. Instead, it is to be commended all the more because it shows how we are enabled to do good works. For without faith, human nature cannot, in any way, do the works of the First or Second Commandment [1 Corinthians 2:14]....

I Corinthians 2:14

✚ 1 Corinthians 2:14 “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

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❖ ...“Without faith, human nature does not call upon God, nor expect anything from Him, nor bear the cross [Matthew 16:24]. Instead, human nature seeks and trusts in human help....”

Matthew 16:24

† Matthew 16:24 “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.”

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❖ ... “So when there is no faith and trust in God, all kinds of lusts and human intentions rule in the heart [Genesis 6:5]....”

Genesis 6:5

† **Genesis 6:5** “The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”

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❖ ... “This is why Christ says, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). That is why the Church sings: “Lacking Your divine favor, there is nothing in man. Nothing in him is harmless.”