

Good Works

Flame

Man I love how Luther emphasized that God doesn't need our good works
But our neighbor does
I mean that's so weighty when you think about it because all our good deeds
Our sanctification, our skill-sets, our responsibilities, and various roles
Are for the benefit of those around us
Our families, society, our neighbor, right?
But what makes us right with God, Paul says, is our faith
That's how we are made righteous
And how we remain righteous, in Christ
But when you blur those lines
And start looking at your sanctification for assurance
That you're right with God
A bunch of problems arise
First off, we end up filled with discouragement
From constantly missing the mark
We can also end up filled with self-doubt
From constantly applying subjective and arbitrary measures
To assess our level of sanctification
In order to determine whether or not we are justified
Or on the flip side
We could be filled with self-righteousness
As a result of fulfilling some criteria we created
And then in turn
Cast judgement on others who don't check our specific boxes
This is a common experience
Especially among Calvinists
Because it flows from functionally placing sanctification above justification
This stems from the fact that, in general, for Calvinists
There is a primary emphasis on God with obedience to the law

Which perpetuates this inward focus
Luther on the other hand
Places the perfect work of God in justification
Over the incomplete process of sanctification
We are to look Extra Nos, or outside of ourselves
Towards the righteousness of faith
Which is our justification for assurance
This is where we find identity, stability, objectivity, and security
Luther is committed to justification truly being Sola Fide
Meaning by faith alone
His primary emphasis is on serving your neighbor through your vocation
This emphasis helps to maintain the clear distinction
Between our identity being found in our righteousness of faith
Which we receive from God, aka passive righteousness
Versus our performance or our active righteousness
Which is righteousness we live out for the benefit of our neighbor
As Christians, we should see both kinds of righteousness
But the different purposes
We should guard our good works becoming the basis for our righteousness before God
And we should guard against our righteousness of faith
Being used to eliminate the need for good works
Our good works have value here on earth, Coram Mundo
But it does not justify us before God, Coram Deo
It is vital that we keep these separate