

This special faith (by which an individual believes that for Christ's sake his sins are forgiven him, and that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and sees us favorably) gains forgiveness of sins and justifies us. In repentance, namely, in terrors, this faith comforts and encourages hearts. It regenerates us and brings the Holy Spirit so that we may be able to fulfill God's Law: to love God, truly fear God, truly be confident that God hears prayer, and obey God in all afflictions. This faith puts to death concupiscence and the like. So faith freely receives forgiveness of sins. It sets Christ, the Mediator and Atoning Sacrifice, against God's wrath. It does not present our merits or our love. This faith is the true knowledge of Christ and helps itself to the benefits of Christ. This faith regenerates hearts and comes before the fulfilling of the Law.

Apology to the Augsburg Confession, IV.45-46

The Augsburg Confession isn't so concerned with your personal self-esteem.

It's a confession of who Jesus Christ is for you.

So, when it talks about faith, it isn't talking about something you do.

"Faith," today, often means something *I* do, or *I* believe, or *I* have.

While this isn't *wrong*; it's not entirely right either!

When "faith" becomes something that *I* control,

Then it becomes something *I* can boast in or brag about, as if *I* caused it.

But that's not what faith is—

Faith is a gift (Eph 2:8-9).

And so, when the Apology to the Augsburg Confession speaks of 'faith,'

it speaks not about you, but about Christ and what He does for you.

Christ is the one who gives you faith, and He gives it freely as a gift.

This *faith* does it all.

Luther has said elsewhere:

Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good. Likewise, faith does not ask if good works are to be done, but before one can ask, faith has already done them and is constantly active.¹

All this is to say, "faith" delivers all that Christ does for us, on behalf, and to us—

it receives everything from Him as a gift,

and then does everything we ought to do in thanksgiving.

By faith we're saved, not because of what *we* do, what *we* have, or what *we* control—

but because it "freely receives forgiveness of sins and helps itself to the benefits of Christ."

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¹ Martin Luther, *Preface to Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, LW 35:380.