

**“Hence the Glorifying of All the Saints in Their God”**  
(Martin Luther’s *On the Bondage of the Will: A Reflection*)  
By Tami Jelinek

## **Introduction**

In Part I of Martin Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio*, published in response to Erasmus’ *De Libero Arbitrio*, he effectually denies even the existence of “free choice,” defined by Erasmus as “a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them.”<sup>1</sup> Particularly strong is Luther’s appeal to God’s immutable foreknowledge as that which makes free choice for human beings impossible (BW: I, 4).<sup>2</sup> Then finally, in Part VI, *A Display of the Forces on Luther’s Side*, he essentially talks back to “free choice,” granting its existence for the sake of discussion, but proving it over and over to be ineffectual toward righteousness, thus exposing a “choice” that is in no way “free” to exercise itself toward the goal of salvation; in fact, it is bound toward the opposite direction. So-called “free choice” is thereby revealed as a virtual oxymoron enunciated by his introductory question, “What is ineffective power but no power at all” (BW: I, 7)?<sup>3</sup> Luther’s “display of forces” includes arguments built upon seven distinct, yet interrelated and over-lapping premises or assertions postulated against the efficacy of the will or efforts of us human beings toward the goal of our own salvation. This paper will focus primarily on the second of those seven assertions: *Free Choice May Do the Works of the Law But Not Fulfill the Law*.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Gordon Rupp & Philip S. Watson (editors), *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation (Library of Christian Classics, Icthus Edition)* (New York, NY: Westminster Press, 1976), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 119.

<sup>3</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 141.

### **An Analysis of Luther's Argument Based upon the Assertion:**

*Free Choice May Do the Works of the Law But Not Fulfill the Law* (BW: VI, 2)

Luther begins his argument here by quoting Paul: "No human being will be justified in his sight by the works of the law" (Romans 3:20).<sup>4</sup> In conclusion of the previous section (*St. Paul: Universal Sinfulness Nullifies Free Choice*) where he has shown that according to Paul, "All have turned aside, the whole world is guilty, there is none righteous;" he relays the astonishing observation that even in the face of such "thunderings and lightnings," because of the hardness of our hearts we have "set up and extolled free choice and its powers," fulfilling the saying from Malachi 1:4: "They build, but I will tear down" (BW: VI, 1).<sup>5</sup> Thus Luther introduces his forthcoming argument against the works of the law, no doubt foreshadowed by the picture of the "building" of self-righteous men and women God has promised to destroy.

Next, Luther rightly observes that when Paul states no one will be justified by the works of the law (Romans 3:20), it is the law itself he is deeming powerless and ineffectual toward justification, and not merely the will or efforts of human beings to keep the law. Therefore, even the "best and noblest that were zealous for the law and its works," with the "best and noblest parts of themselves, namely their reason and will," who "exerted themselves" with the "utmost zeal" toward the law--even these would remain condemned because the law itself is powerless to justify anyone, no matter what of themselves they may bring to it, or how perfectly they may keep it. (Just in case anyone was so "noble" as to be left out of the "whole world" that was already shown to be guilty in the previous section.)<sup>6</sup>

Luther now lays a foundation for the distinction between "flesh" and "spirit" when he addresses "two [seemingly] contrary statements" from Paul, who quotes Moses:

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<sup>4</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 302.

<sup>5</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 301.

<sup>6</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 302.

All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, “cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them” (Galatians 3:10).

Paul can make these contrary statements, argues Luther,

...because the fact is that in the sight of God those who are most devoted to the works of the law are farthest from fulfilling the law, because they lack the Spirit that is the true fulfiller of the law, and while they may attempt it by their own powers, they achieve nothing. So both statements are true and both types are accursed—those who do not abide by the law, as Moses puts it, and those who rely on the works of the law, as Paul puts it; for they each lack the Spirit, without whom the works of the law, no matter how much they are done, do not justify.<sup>7</sup>

Luther will build upon this distinction between “flesh” and “spirit” in his subsequent arguments, and specifically in support of his fifth assertion based on the apostle John’s writings, *Free Choice is of “the World,” “the Flesh”*; *Grace Is of Christ By Faith. The Two Are Opposites* (BW: VI, 5).<sup>8</sup> But here in this section, he continues by bringing his argument--that “everything that is not of the Spirit is of the flesh, no matter how splendid, holy and exalted it may be, even including the very finest works of God’s law, no matter with what powers they may be performed”<sup>9</sup>--full circle, back to his primary refutation of Erasmus, whom he addresses as

Diatribes:

And one of the things without the Spirit is the very power of free choice—for this is the matter at issue--which is held to be the most outstanding thing a man has. Now, nothing more excellent can be said of a man than that he is engaged in works of the law... If, therefore, free choice, assisted by the law and occupying all its powers with the law, is of no avail and does not justify, but remains in the ungodliness of the flesh, what may we suppose it is able to do by itself, without the law?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 304.

<sup>8</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 319-327.

<sup>9</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 304.

<sup>10</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 305.

If no one can be justified by keeping the law, what purpose then does the law serve? Paul answers succinctly: “Through the law comes the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). Luther expounds:

He shows here how much and how far the law helps. In other words, he shows that free choice by itself is so blind that it is not even aware of sin, but has need of the law to teach it...With this text, therefore, Paul stops the mouth of free choice when he teaches that through the law sin is revealed to it as to someone ignorant of his sin. That is how far he is from conceding to [free choice] any power of striving after the good.<sup>11</sup>

Luther now takes full advantage of this opportunity to confront Diatribe, and render one of her objections moot:

Here we have also the answer to that question which Diatribe so often repeats throughout her book: “If we cannot do anything, what is the point of so many laws, so many precepts, so many threatenings and promises?” Paul here replies, “Through the law comes knowledge of sin.” He replies to this question very differently from the way man or free choice thinks. He denies that free choice is proved by the law and cooperates with it to produce righteousness; for what comes from the law is knowledge of sin.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, “the way man or free choice thinks”—the way he or she approaches the law, whether it be the Old Testament law of Moses, or any law one may set up in one’s own mind as that standard by which she supposes she may achieve righteousness by her own efforts—is to use law to “glory in the flesh.” But God has decreed his law with an entirely opposite purpose: “so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God” (Romans 3:19); and so that “no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). As Paul also says, “for it is we who are the circumcision [as opposed to those who’s confidence is in physical circumcision under the law] who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence [i.e., no glory] in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

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<sup>11</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 305.

<sup>12</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 304.

Luther now proceeds to contrast the two lights of the law and the Gospel, and most eloquently:

It is the task, function, and effect of the law to be a light to the ignorant and blind, but such a light as reveals sickness, sin, evil, death, hell, the wrath of God, though it affords no help and brings no deliverance from these, but is content to have revealed them. Then, when a man becomes aware of the disease of sin, he is troubled, distressed, even in despair. The law is no help, much less can he help himself. There is need of another light to reveal the remedy. This is the voice of the gospel, revealing Christ as the deliverer from all these things. It is not reason or free choice that reveals Christ; how should it when it is itself darkness and needs the light of the law to reveal its disease, which by its own light it does not see, but believes to be health?<sup>13</sup>

This recalls the words of the apostle: “if then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness” (Matthew 6:23). David Whitford summarizes the distinction between Erasmus and Luther on the purpose of the law, and affirms through the words of Luther the comforting hope of the Gospel:

For Erasmus, the law demonstrates for us how we ought to live so that we might be saved. For Luther, it plays a much different role in a person’s life. It is a gift from God that destroys our naïve self-deception in our own ability to save ourselves...For Luther, following the law cannot save us because that is not the role of law. The law shows us how helpless we truly are. Fortunately, according to Luther, we are not abandoned in this despair. God offers a remedy for people caught in sin, “This is the voice of the gospel, revealing Christ as the deliverer.”<sup>14</sup>

Now that Luther has established the purpose of the law as that which makes “complete and utter nonsense of that wretched thing, free choice,”<sup>15</sup> he again quotes Paul:

But now the righteousness of God is manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it; the righteousness of God, I say, through faith in Jesus Christ for all and upon all who believe in him. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood (Romans 3:21-25).

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<sup>13</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 306.

<sup>14</sup> David M. Whitford, *Luther: a Guide For the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark Int'l, 2011), 90-91.

<sup>15</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 306-307.

Luther identifies in this passage two “thunderbolts against free choice”: the first, that “the righteousness of God is manifested apart from the law,” and the second, “that the righteousness of God is revealed and avails for all and upon all who believe in Christ, and that there is no distinction.”<sup>16</sup> In support of the first, Luther again connects the works of the law and free choice, as dual recipients of his deathblow:

...it is very clearly evident that all the devoted endeavors of free choice are worth absolutely nothing. For if the righteousness of God exists apart from the law and the works of the law, must it not much more exist apart from free choice? Especially as the highest aspiration of free choice is to practice moral righteousness, or the works of the law, with the help afforded by the law to its own blindness and ignorance. This expression “apart from” excludes morally good works; it excludes moral righteousness; it excludes preparations for grace.<sup>17</sup>

The second thunderbolt’s potency lies in the phrase “there is no distinction,” argues Luther, because “in the plainest of terms [Paul] divides the entire race of men into two, giving the righteousness of God to believers and denying it to unbelievers.”<sup>19</sup> He has already extensively argued in the previous section (BW: VI, 1)<sup>20</sup> for the universal sinfulness of humankind, both Jew and Gentile, as that which nullifies free choice, and here he continues to build on that already solid assertion. Luther adds, “It is also no small thunderbolt when he says: ‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ and ‘There is no distinction’ (Romans 3:23,22). I ask you, could he put it more plainly? Show me a worker of free choice, and tell me whether in that enterprise of his he also sins.”<sup>21</sup> Finally, Luther concludes his exposition of Paul’s argument in Romans 3 by identifying “the glory of God” as that which results from the certainty that one is pleasing to God, a certainty which can never be experienced in the conscience of one who is trusting in free

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<sup>16</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 307-308.

<sup>17</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 307.

<sup>18</sup> With this last statement, “it excludes preparations for grace,” Luther is leading into his next section where he addresses the erroneous concepts of “congruous and “condign” merit (BW: VI, 3).

<sup>19</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 308.

<sup>20</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 293-301.

<sup>21</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 308.

choice (or in the works of the law). “We thus convict them on the evidence of their own conscience that free choice, when it is devoid of the glory of God, is perpetually guilty of the sin of unbelief, together with all its powers, efforts and enterprises.”<sup>22</sup> Thus Luther ends his argument affirming his assertion, *Free Choice May Do the Works of the Law But Not Fulfill the Law*.

As noted in the introduction, there is interplay and overlap between Luther’s seven premises or assertions, and their supporting arguments. There is also a chronological progression that enhances the strength of each argument, and thereby the treatise as a whole. It has already been demonstrated how the second assertion analyzed here, *Free Choice May Do the Works of the Law But Not Fulfill the Law*, has been primed by Luther’s beginning assertion that *Universal Sinfulness Nullifies Free Choice*; and also how it leads into the third section refuting “*Congruous*” and “*Condign*” Merit. In the fourth section, *The Righteousness of Works and of Faith; and a Summary of St. Paul’s Testimony Against Free Choice*, Luther brings other passages to bear upon what has already been established in section two as the purpose of the law, and the righteousness of God which is apart from the law:

So also faith will mean nothing—although Abraham was justified by it before the law was given—if works count for anything. Again, since the law is the power of sin (1 Cor. 15:56) in that it serves only to reveal and not to remove sin, it makes the conscience guilty before God, and threatens it with wrath. That is what Paul means when he says: “The law brings wrath” (Romans 4:15). How then, could there be any possibility of attaining righteousness through the law?<sup>23</sup>

In section five, *St. John: Free Choice Is of “the World,” “the Flesh”*; *Grace Is of Christ, by Faith. The Two Are Opposites*; the distinction between “flesh” and “spirit” is further elucidated, as already noted in the analysis above. Also, John’s use of the terms “will of the flesh,” and

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<sup>22</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 309.

<sup>23</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 314.

“blood” in the context of John 1:12<sup>24</sup> is explicated, building upon the significance of the phrase “no distinction” highlighted in the first two sections. In section six, *The Two Kingdoms, of Christ and of Satan. The Assurance of Faith*; Luther builds on the previous theme of the futility of striving under law.<sup>25</sup> It is also notable that in the last two sections, and perhaps even beginning with section five, Luther’s tone becomes more pastoral, as he moves from a harsh refutation of free will and a condemnation of works righteousness, toward a focus on the promises of God in Christ, to which we are assured that He is faithful.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Luther’s Argument Based upon the Assertion:  
*Free Choice May Do the Works of the Law But Not Fulfill the Law* (BW: VI, 2)**

When Luther addresses those who would attempt to “get around Paul” by saying “what he calls the works of the law are the ceremonial works” only,<sup>26</sup> he is somewhat difficult to follow. While his conclusion against this is correct (there is no distinction between ceremonial and moral aspects of the law in Scripture, and certainly no indication that the ceremonial parts had passed away, while other parts, such as the Decalogue, remained); his vague and passing references to Jerome and Augustine in this section (particularly as he pauses to take a pot shot at Jerome<sup>27</sup>) are distracting and do little to support his point that Paul is not speaking merely of ceremonial works when he denies the salvific efficacy of the “works of the law.” Luther is likewise vague when he denies that the law (in whole or in part) had been “abrogated” for Christians yet in the first century. It is unclear whether he believes it had yet been abrogated in the sixteenth, but the implication is that he believes it is still “valid and authoritative.”<sup>28</sup> But this begs the question: in

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<sup>24</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 320.

<sup>25</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 329.

<sup>26</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 302-304.

<sup>27</sup> Regarding the “ignorant error of Jerome” (that of separating out the ceremonial works of the law), Luther writes, “Jerome has merited hell rather than heaven for it.” Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 302-303.

<sup>28</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 303.



*what way* is the law “valid and authoritative” for us *today* as Christians? Presumably Luther is referring to Old Testament law with his mention of the Decalogue and his allusion to Moses in this section. We know how some among the reconstructionists and theologians of our time, who would seek to impose Old Testament law on society, might answer this question. However, Luther seems to leave it unanswered.

Luther’s argument that when Paul “condemns the works of the law themselves and makes them impious in the sight of God, it is clear that he is condemning all those whose strength lay in their zeal for the law and its works”<sup>29</sup> is logically and exegetically sound. But in his subsequent division of “men as doers of the law into two classes, putting those who work according to the Spirit in one, and those who work according to the flesh in the other,”<sup>30</sup> he may be leaving the door open for the Christian’s pursuit of an ongoing justification by works (or what is known in some theological circles as “progressive sanctification”<sup>31</sup>). Luther continues in this vein:

For this is what he says: “No flesh will be justified by the works of the law” (Romans 3:20); and what else does this mean but that those of whom he is speaking do the works of the law without the Spirit, because they are “flesh,” or ungodly and ignorant of God, and that these works are of no help to them at all.<sup>32</sup>

While Luther goes on to affirm “man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Romans 3:28), someone may still be left with the opportunity to infer from his “two classes” that there are those who, subsequent to being saved by grace, “work according to the Spirit,” and that although works of the law done *without* the Spirit are “of no help;” these same works done *with* the Spirit are in some way meritorious. First of all, as Luther will go on to explain very well, the purpose of the law was to convict our conscience of sin. What place then do the works of this

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<sup>29</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 302.

<sup>30</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 304.

<sup>31</sup> It is my position that justification and sanctification are inseparable and are in no way “progressive” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:11).

<sup>32</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 304.

law (to which we have died, and from which we have been discharged, cf. Romans 7:4-6) have in the life of a *believer* whose conscience has been “purged of [these same] dead works?” (Cf. Hebrews 9:14). And setting the old dead law aside, even regarding the “good works” we have been “created [i.e., regenerated] to do in Christ” in the New Covenant (cf. Ephesians 2:10), further clarification from Paul would have been helpful here. For once justified by faith, we “no longer walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,” and the “righteous requirement of the law has been [past tense] fulfilled in us” (cf. Romans 8:4). As a result, we do not work, but rather “it is God who is at work in [us], both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). And the prophet confirms, “You have done all our works in us” (Isaiah 26:12). However, even if Luther has left the door open to either a “congruous” or a “condign” merit in this section, he does proceed in the next section to refute both of these (BW: VI, 3).<sup>33</sup>

As already highlighted in the above analysis, Luther is forcefully effective toward his goal of nullifying free choice through his discussion of the purpose of the law. He successfully shows that contrary to Erasmus’ assertion that the law affirms free choice; by trusting in free choice—and specifically free choice’s ability to keep the law and be saved by keeping it—one merely proves that she remains in darkness and blindness, without even the light of the law. For what the law reveals to free choice is that her perceived health is actually sickness, for which the law provides no remedy.<sup>34</sup> But where else is free choice looking for a remedy but within the law? The law is her vindication, even her salvation, according to Erasmus.<sup>35</sup> But as Luther rightly concludes, again, with brilliant force:

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<sup>33</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 309-310

<sup>34</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 306.

<sup>35</sup> “For Erasmus, the law demonstrates for us how we ought to live so that we might be saved.” Whitford, *Luther: A Guide*, 90-91.

Where sins are unrecognized, there is no room for a remedy and no hope of a cure, because men will not submit to the touch of a healer, when they imagine themselves well and in no need of a physician. Therefore, the law is necessary to make sin known so that when its gravity and magnitude are recognized, man in his pride who imagines himself well [i.e., imagines himself in possession of “free choice”] may be humbled and may sigh and gasp for the grace that is offered in Christ.<sup>36</sup>

### **A Theological Reflection on Martin Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio***

As is no doubt evident from the above exegesis of Luther’s argument, and from what I noted as its “strengths and weaknesses,” I side with the “display of forces” on the side of Luther at nearly every turn. Specifically, I do not see such a thing as “free choice” in Scripture, certainly not as defined by Erasmus here:

By free choice in this place we mean the power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things that lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them.<sup>37</sup>

As Whitford observes, “While Erasmus has not stated in this quote that this is a natural ability in human beings outside of God’s grace, that is what he intends.”<sup>38</sup>

Luther’s discussion of the purpose of the law is especially effective in destroying Erasmus’ premise that outside of God’s grace, human beings have any natural ability to “apply themselves to the things that lead to eternal salvation”—namely (although Erasmus never actually names them), repentance and faith:

Notice how simple the words are: “Through the law comes knowledge of sin”; yet they alone are powerful enough to confound and overthrow free choice. For if it is true that when left to itself it does not know what sin and evil are—as he says both here and in Rom. 7:(7): “I should not have known that covetousness is sin if the law had not said, ‘you shall not covet,’”—how can it ever know what

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<sup>36</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 306.

<sup>37</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Whitford, *Luther: A Guide*, 87.

righteousness and goodness are? And if it does not know what righteousness is, how can it strive toward it?<sup>39</sup>

So the light of the law is needed to convict the conscience of sin, leading to repentance; and the light of the Gospel is needed to reveal the righteousness of God apart from the law, through faith in Christ:

“The righteousness of God is manifested apart from the law.” This distinguished the righteousness of God from the righteousness of the law, for the righteousness of faith comes from grace apart from the law. The phrase “apart from law” cannot mean anything else but that Christian righteousness exists apart from the works of the law, in the sense that the works of the law are utterly useless and ineffective for obtaining it, as he says immediately below: “We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom. 3:28).<sup>40</sup>

That all who rely on the works of the law are condemned, and condemned alike, cannot be gainsaid. Degree doesn't matter:

For whether they have exercised themselves in the law with the utmost zeal or with only moderate zeal or with no zeal at all does not matter in the least. None of them could do anything but perform works of law, and works of law do not justify...These things are so clear that no one can utter one syllable against them.<sup>41</sup>

If anyone had reason to put confidence in the works of the law, according to the reasoning of “Diatribes,” or the self-deception of “free choice,” it was Paul (cf. Philippians 3:3-8). And yet he went so far as to say that if anyone trusts in the works of the law, or even one work of the law, Christ would be of no benefit to them. For to attempt to justify ourselves according to even one part of the law is to bring ourselves under the condemnation of the entire thing. So that “you who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (cf. Galatians 5:2-5).

Luther enunciates Paul's emphatic dichotomy this way:

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<sup>39</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 306.

<sup>40</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 307.

<sup>41</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 302.

Now, no one is crazy enough to doubt that the power or endeavor of free choice is something different from faith in Jesus Christ. But Paul denies that anything outside this faith is righteous in the sight of God; and if it is not righteous in the sight of God, it must necessarily be sin. For with God there is nothing intermediate between righteousness and sin, no neutral ground...<sup>42</sup>

That “all our righteous deeds are as filthy rags” (cf. Isaiah 64:6) in the sight of God is a difficult pill to swallow. But it is in seeing this truth, about who and what we are apart from Christ, that the light of the Gospel becomes more glorious. Our salvation: “this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23).

Finally, it is because it is the Lord’s doing, and not ours, that we have reason to rest in God’s promise to us as believers. For if we did nothing to earn our salvation, it follows that we could do nothing to lose it. This is the sublime comfort of every believer, and our glory in God, who for the glory of his name has forgiven our sins (cf. Psalm 79:9).

Pastor Martin:

For my own part, I frankly confess that even if it were possible, I should not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my own hands by which I might strive toward salvation...since even if I lived and worked to eternity, my conscience would never be assured and certain how much it ought to do to satisfy God. For whatever work might be accomplished, there would always remain an anxious doubt whether it pleased God or whether he required something more, as the experience of all self-justifiers proves...But now, since God has taken my salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work or exertion but by his grace and mercy, I am assured and certain both that he is faithful and will not lie to me...Moreover, we are also certain and sure that we please God, not by the merit of our own working, but by the favor of his mercy promised to us, and that if we do less than we should or do it badly, he does not hold this against us, but in a fatherly way pardons and corrects us. Hence the glorying of all the saints in their God.<sup>43</sup>

Amen.

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<sup>42</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 308.

<sup>43</sup> Rupp & Watson, *Luther and Erasmus*, 329.