



Reflections on Luther's Catechism

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By R. Z. Meyer

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Introduction

As Lutheran youth most of you are well acquainted with Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism. It, along with the Bible, has been the basic text for your public confirmation of the Christian faith. Most of you have memorized these chief parts of the faith and, as a result, they have become the way you think and express your understanding of the truths in God's Word.

The reflections in this book have been based on the Small Catechism. The purpose has been to remind you what you have been taught and at the same time to make every part of the faith relevant and vital to your daily life. Since the source of all teaching in the Lutheran church is the Bible, each reflection has one to three short studies in the Holy Scriptures. These studies develop the thought of the reflection, leading you into the Word itself. It is in the Word of God that true and lasting growth comes.

This book is designed to be a private devotional for your life. The reflections have not been designed for rapid reading. Allow yourself plenty of time. First read the devotional thoughts on one of the chief parts of the faith, then open up your Bible and study the thoughts of the reflection. Since it is only in the atmosphere of prayer that any fruitful growth can come, each reflection should be begun in the holy name of the Triune God and ended in serious and thought-filled prayer.



from people alone. When people have power, it is something given to them by God.

Read the second chapter of Hebrews. See the perfect identification of Jesus with mankind. Jesus took His place not apart or outside of our human race, but at its very center, so that the burden of the world's guilt would gather up and roll upon Him. Jesus became one with Judas and Pilate; one with Caiaphas and the spitting soldiers; one with Caesar and Hitler; one with you and me. But in what sense? Memorize Hebrews 2:14–15.

“I believe in Jesus Christ . . . crucified!”

The cross of Jesus is the symbol of our holy faith. By means of this cross God actually reconciled the world unto Himself again. The fact of the cross tells us clearly this is God's way of bringing us back into the sphere of life again. The cross is like a key, unlocking both the mind and the heart of God. It unlocks the mind of the Almighty One, unleashing His piercing thoughts on our sin. God hates sin! But it also unlocks the heart of the Almighty One, revealing a love that surpasses our highest thoughts. God loves us!

It was not the nails that held Jesus on that first Good Friday; nor was it the hatred of the mobs or Pilate's order. They all thought they held Him. What really bound Jesus? Love for you. Love for me. This is what bound Him to be sacrificed as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. It was not the power of men that bound Jesus to that cross. It was the eternal and seeking love of God.

As you repeat these words, repeat them slowly and somberly, “I believe in Jesus Christ . . . crucified.” Naked as He had come from God He went to God, taking nothing with Him that was human but only the load of humanity’s sin. Look at your Savior fastened to a tree of your making. See His sacred hands nailed to the crossbeam: hands of the Carpenter; hands hardened with toil; hands that healed the sick and blessed the children; hands that held five small loaves and multiplied them for the 5,000; saving hands that reached out to Peter sinking in the sea; holy hands that were constantly lifted up to the Father in prayer that His holy will might be done. Now they are bleeding hands, pierced through with the sins of men and held outstretched with the unbelief of the world. Their outstretched position still signals all men to come into the kingdom of heaven, and the dripping blood still cleanses us from all our sin.

Tell me in what else can you find glory except in the cross of Christ, your Lord? Where else can you find the forgiveness of sins and the everlasting peace of God for your soul? Now look at your own hands—your feet, your tongue as well. Your hands that perform so much evil, yet which you wish would perform nothing but good. In Christ crucified there is the strength to work for those things that are good. He cleanses and makes all things like new.

Reflections

Study I Corinthians 1:18–31. God chose the preaching of the Cross as His means of saving people. This message to some is an absurdity; but to others it is the power of God. Why is the message of the Cross an absurdity to some?





Because it strips them of their wisdom, their own righteousness, and their pride of power. It demands a contrite heart, a repentant mind, and a surrendered soul. Perhaps this illustration will help you grasp the meaning of this Bible study. Recall the story of the great ship Titanic. It sailed on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic with the title “The Unsinkable.” Not heeding the iceberg warnings, it plowed into one which led to its destruction. The captain and the designer awoke to the unbelievable fact that the ship would sink and ordered the lifeboats to be lowered right away. But many of the people refused to get into the lifeboats, for they felt more secure on their “unsinkable” ship than in such flimsy craft. As a result many perished as the “unsinkable” sank. The point of this illustration lies in the lifeboats. To those who were perishing, they were utter folly. But to those who were being saved, they were the method for their salvation. So, too, to those who are on the road to destruction, the Cross is utter foolishness, but to those who are being saved, it manifests the real power and the true wisdom of God.

Read Isaiah 53. Someone has said that the prophet was closer to the cross on that first Good Friday than any of the evangelists. It is a wonder that a man like Isaiah living many centuries before Christ could paint such an intimate and personal picture of the crucifixion. As you read this chapter, in place of the “He” put “Jesus,” and in place of the plural “our” and “we” put your own name. See how closely Christ’s death becomes your death. See how real and personal His atoning death is for you. Read Romans 6:1–11 and see how through Jesus’ death on the cross you can (by faith) be dead to sin and be alive to God!