



Lutheran orthodox theology says you are either alive in Christ or you are dead in your sins. The Pietist movement emerged in the seventeenth century Germany saying that instead of the objective redemption of Christ for the believer's sin that salvation was focused on emotion and response allowing for incomplete salvation state called being "awakened" not fully "converted". The Pietists erred in thinking that sinners come to Christ in stages, through their own anguished struggles. Satan whispers in our ears "Surely such a difficult thing should be a process and take some time and effort to attain." But that is not how God works salvation. Read 1 Corinthians 5:17. There is no "in between state of salvation". This creates doubt and despair, causing people to fret their salvation and put pressure on them to perform (behavior). The focus is on emotion and response. Earlier I talked about the feelings we have in response to hearing the gospel- joy or relief; and how the law weighs us down with guilt or anxiety, despair and grief. These feelings help us distinguish law from gospel. This is not what the Pietists were focusing on. They were saying that if you did not attain a certain level of emotion you salvation was not certain. They allowed for mildly joyous awakened people to be close to being saved. But God does not deal in fractions. He can act on us without us cooperating in any way. That is what "being almighty" is about for God. He doesn't need us to cooperate in our salvation. He did it all completely. While the Pietists were from within Lutheranism in the seventeenth century, their thoughts and teachings are prevalent in Christianity in America today. In my humble opinion, Piety is a greater challenge today than it was in Walther's day.

Walther also rejects the Calvinistic teaching of double predestination. Lutherans say indeed God has elected all people to be saved See John 3:16. But God cannot condemn mankind to eternal damnation or even to allow some to get an incomplete salvation through faulty workmanship. The Gospel is wholly effective 100% in the blood of Jesus Christ. All are predestined in love none are predestined to hell on some flaw of God's nature.

Finally Walther comforts Christians when it comes to the sin against the Holy Spirit. The sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable not because it is too great for Calvary but because the person who commits this sin refuses the gift of forgiveness of sins. Sometimes Christians are vexed with evil thoughts that lead them to worry that they have committed the unforgivable sin. No sin is too big for Calvary, and no sinner is beyond the embrace of Jesus Christ.

1. Read Ephesians 2: 4-6 Ephesians 5:14; and Colossians 2:11-14. How do these texts support Walther's assertion that there are only two classes of people spiritually?
2. What evidence of Pietism do you see in contemporary church life? What are the spiritual dangers of Pietism?
3. The Formula of Concord sees the doctrine of election as part of the gospel. "This doctrine also gives us wonderful comfort in crosses and trials, that in his counsel before time began God determined and decreed that he would stand by us in every trouble, grant us patience, give us comfort, create hope, and provide a way out of all things so that we may be saved (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13" (Solid Declaration XI, 48). See also Ephesians 1:3-14 and Romans 8:28-30. How does Walther use this doctrine evangelically, that is, according to the Gospel? See p 125.
4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 18-21 What is the scope of Christ's atonement? How is universal atonement the basis for the speaking of absolution? How does synergism (the belief that man cooperates with God in his salvation) give a false security? What is the role of the "monster of uncertainty" (that Pastor Golter often refers) in creating weak (even non saving) faith?
5. Read Matthew 12:30-32. What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Why is this sin unforgivable? Also see 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism.

Our prayer: LSB 746 **Through Jesus' Blood and Merit** verses 1 & 4

Through Jesus' blood and merit I am at peace with God.
 What then can daunt my spirit, However dark my road?
 My courage shall not fail me, For God is on my side;
 Through hell itself assail me, Its rage I may deride.

Nor any creature ever Shall from the love of God
 This ransomed sinner sever; For in my Savior's blood
 This love has its foundation; God hears my faithful prayer
 And long before creation Named me His child and heir.