

A sinner cannot come to know or believe in God by his own free will any more than a deaf man can will himself to hear. And just as Jesus used His fingers and saliva to open up a deaf man's ears and loose his tongue, so He uses earthly means of the preached Word and Sacraments to open up dead hearts and loose tongues to confess sins and faith.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF CONCORD
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
EPITOME of the FORMULA OF CONCORD:
II. FREE WILL

The Pure Doctrine concerning This Article, according to God's Word.

2] 1. Concerning this subject, our doctrine, faith, and confession is, that in spiritual things the understanding and reason of man are [altogether] blind, and by their own powers understand nothing, . . .

3] 2. Likewise we believe, teach, and confess that the unregenerate will of man is not only turned away from God, but also has become an enemy of God, so that it only has an inclination and desire for that which is evil and contrary to God, as it is written Gen. 8:21: The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Also Rom. 8:7: The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be. Yea, as little as a dead body can quicken itself to bodily, earthly life, so little can man, who by sin is spiritually dead, raise himself to spiritual life, as it is written Eph. 2:5: Even when we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ; 2 Cor. 3:5: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything good as of ourselves, but that we are sufficient is of God.

4] 3. God the Holy Ghost, however, does not effect conversion without means, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word, as it is written Rom. 1:16: The Gospel is the power of God 5] unto salvation to every one that believeth. Also Rom. 10:17: Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God. And it is God's will that His Word should be heard, and that man's ears should not be closed. Ps. 95:8. With this Word the Holy Ghost is present, and opens hearts, so that they, as Lydia in Acts 16:14, are attentive to it, and are thus converted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, whose 6] work alone the conversion of man is. For without His grace, and if He do not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, all are nothing, as Christ says John 15:5: Without Me ye can do nothing. With these brief words He denies to the free will its powers, and ascribes everything to God's grace, in order that no one may boast before God. 1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:5; Jer. 9:23.

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