

Concord

## THE EVANGELICAL WAY

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Introductory: This subject is Scripturally and theologically valid and critically vital for every era in the life of the Christian church.

It is a timely and urgent subject in our secular culture when the church on every hand is being challenged for reformation and renewal to justify its existence and its claim on the hearts and lives of men.

Uniquely for Lutherans, this subject is a call to self-understanding, identity, and mission.

It is a subject that is directly involved in Christian living and in all areas of church life.

### I.

#### On Being Evangelical - In General

A. What does evangelical mean?

1. In Lutheran theology and in protestant terminology.
2. The antithesis to evangelicalism is legalism. *Legalism negates the Gospel.*

B. What makes being evangelical difficult?

1. By nature we are legalistic.
2. The legalistic way is more impressive.
3. The legalist frequently is regarded as the "savior of orthodoxy" in the church. *Evangelical man may appear liberal.*

C. Why is the evangelical way the better way?

1. It is Scriptural. *Gal. 1:6-9 negates legalism.*
2. It alone can bring Christ's full blessing to man. *Gospel brings full blessing to man.*
3. It alone can enable the church to fulfill her ministry. - *come for a ministry to save the world, not condemn the world*

## II.

The Evangelical Way for The Christian Believer

- A. This is living in the Gospel of forgiveness.
  - 1. Good conscience, no burden of guilt; peace, joy.
  - 2. Confidence, security - no fear.
  - 3. A doxological life.
- B. This is living under grace, not under the Law.
  - 1. The Gospel motivation in Christian living.
  - 2. God's Law and the evangelical way.
  - 3. Is there a "new morality" for the Christian believer? *3rd use of the Law*
- C. This is living in radical freedom. *against old legalism - however, new morality, but permeated with love and grace - There is new morality for new men in Christ.*
  - 1. No longer under the dominion of sin.
  - 2. Free to live for God in joyous response to Christ's salvatory death and resurrection and to be slaves to righteousness.
- D. This is living in transformed relationships.
  - 1. With God as His children. Luther - "as little children ask their dear father".
  - 2. With people: acceptance, love, compassion, forgiveness.
  - 3. With fellow believers.
- E. This living a strong, victorious life.
  - 1. It is by faith.
  - 2. It lifts above life's situations of trials and sorrows.

## III.

The Evangelical Way for the Christian Congregation and for the Church

- A. In preaching and teaching.
  - 1. Recognition of Christ and the Gospel as the center of God's revelation to men in the Holy Scriptures.
  - 2. Understanding of Law and Gospel - proper distinction - relationship of one to the other - right use of the Law.

3. Proper proclamation of justification and sanctification.
- B. In structure and order.
  1. In the local congregation.
  2. In association of congregations as Synod or denomination.
  3. In inter-denominational organizations on the local, national, and international levels.
  4. In special ministries. *A freedom to be innovative, to structure local synods helpful in ministry.*
- C. In the stewardship life and in promotion of churchly endeavors.
  1. Teaching the Christian stewardship responsibilities.
  2. Directing Christians in a local congregation in the responsibilities of stewardship life. *Church should be unapologetic about stewardship needs.*
  3. Promotion of Synodical projects and programs.
- D. In ministry to God's saints who still sin - simul justus et peccator.
  1. God's people - brethren in Christ.
  2. A ministry of Law and Gospel for edification.
  3. A Gospel-oriented and directed discipline in the local parish and in the Synod.
- E. In practical issues of church life.
  1. Liturgical practices.
  2. Communion registration and "close" communion.
  3. Qualifications for church membership: confirmation instruction - practice regarding un-Christian and anti-Christian associations - reception ceremony of transferred members.
  4. Fiscal matters - pledges, envelopes, reports.
  5. Sponsors or god parents at infant baptism.
  6. Baptisms, marriages, funerals.
  7. Membership in auxiliary organizations.
  8. Public examination of catechumens.
  9. Ministry to divorced people.

10. Participation in civil responsibilities.
- F. In ecumenical endeavors and relationships.
1. Scriptural and confessional requirements for unity.
  2. Christian attitudes and yearning for fellowship with all Christians.
  3. Where relationships are fragmented because of theological conflict or disturbing diversities in practice, remember "the church is Christ's mission to the church".
  4. Legalistic requirements for church fellowship. *- His stance on "right faith" is legalistic*
- G. In theological tasks and responsibilities.
1. When a theologian is evangelical. *- Gospel-centered in their life & tasks*
  2. When the church's expectation of the theologian is evangelical. *Church expects theologians to bring everything under captivity to Christ*
- H. In mission to the whole world.
1. In proclamation.
  2. In compassionate service.

Conclusion: The evangelical way is not just another gimmick. It is the heart-beat of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It truly is the only power for renewal and reformation and for the continuation of the Christian church in mission in God's world. Only by living in the evangelical way can the individual Christian, the Christian congregation, and the church truly come alive to the glory of our great God and for the redemption of all people.

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