Justification and Evangelicalism
What are the characteristic features of evangelicalism?

- Are there different kinds of evangelicals?
- If so, what do they have in common?
How evangelicals describe themselves:

- “Conversionism: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a ‘born-again’ experience and a life-long process of following Jesus.”
- “Activism: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts.”
- “Biblicism: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority.”
- “Crucicentrism: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.”
How others see evangelicals:

I. Holy Scripture is the supreme authority …

II. The main theme of Scripture is God’s saving work. God sent His Son, who bore the sins of the world on the cross and made redemption possible …

III. Eternal salvation comes only through personal faith in Christ, which God gives. Yet since God leaves room for freedom of decision, the experience of becoming and being a Christian assumes great importance …

IV. For this reason evangelism and mission tend to take precedence over social action …

V. Ethics is developed, not out of the situation, but out of God’s law and ordinances …

VI. Christ’s return is expected literally.
Is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod evangelical?

What speaks in favor of it?

A common emphasis on many basic Christian teachings (the Bible’s full authority, the Trinity, Christ’s two natures, His atoning death, salvation by grace through faith, the importance of evangelism, etc.).

What speaks against it?

- Evangelicalism is a movement in many denominations vs. Lutheranism as a distinct church or denomination.
- Unity in doctrine vs. diversity in matters like infant/adult Baptism.
- Sacraments as God’s Means of Grace vs. symbols.
The Common Ground on Justification between Evangelicals and Lutherans

- The centrality of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead as the foundation of man’s justification
- Justification by faith, not by works
The Differences Between Evangelicals and Lutherans Concerning Justification

- Making a decision for Jesus – Justification and Baptism
- Conversionism: “the belief that lives need to be transformed through a born-again experience and a life-long process of following Jesus.”
- Read John 3:3–5.
- “How can water do such great things? – Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: ‘He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying’ (Titus 3:5-8).”
“Making a Decision” and Baptism

• What do you think about the emphasis on a born-again experience? Do you think that such an experience is necessary for every Christian? How does such an experience relate to Baptism?

• “What benefit does Baptism give? — It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.”

• The Christian life starts with God’s promise given to me and consists in believing this promise, not in a special experience.
Conversionism and Free Will

• “Making a decision for Jesus” – What do you think of it?

• “Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.” (https://crustore.org/fourlawseng.htm)

• Read Revelation 3:20.

• Faith and confession go together, but does that mean that a decision makes me a Christian?
Conversionism and Free Will

- What does the fact that we are “by nature sinful and unclean” mean for our ability to choose?
- Read Revelation 3:20. How can a spiritually dead person “open the door?”
- “The words of Christ ‘Repent, and believe in the gospel’ (Mark 1:15) do not prove that people are able to do this by their own powers. Lazarus could not raise himself from the dead. Christ commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave (John 11:43-44). In the same way unconverted people who are dead in sins cannot raise themselves spiritually. They are raised and converted by the power of God through the Word (Psalm 19:7) Jesus says, ‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him’ (John 6:44).” (Edward W.A. Koehler, A Summary of Christian Doctrine, 3rd rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 180.)
Conversionism and Free Will

- God’s grace + our decision = Becoming a Christian=Justification (Wrong!)
- God’s grace in the Gospel (Word and Sacrament) + God’s gift of faith = Becoming a Christian (Right!)
- Arminianism teaches free will in matters of salvation.
- Synergism teaches that man cooperates in salvation.
- Lutheranism teaches that we are by nature dead in sin and that God revives us. Therefore, God alone saves us.