

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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In the modern world in which we live there are numerous people who claim to be Christians, and yet the manner in which professed Christians conduct themselves varies widely. Some professed Christians simply go along with the crowd and live exactly as the wicked world lives, except on those Sunday mornings when they make an appearance at some sort of church service; others are quite vocal as they repeatedly use the expression “praise the Lord” while also attempting to follow a long list of man-made rules and regulations which usually include self-devised dress codes and total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages and tobacco products; some folks adhere to man-made strict dietary rules coupled with performing so-called “acts of penance” prescribed by their priests; and, a few folks simply and quietly live life in daily repentance and strive to show their love and thanks to God for His grace and mercy shown to them in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the question that will be addressed in this month’s Topical Bulletin is: ***What does the Holy Bible teach concerning how Christians are to conduct themselves while sojourning in this world?***

Our time in this world is known as temporal life and is actually quite temporary, “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Hebrews 13:14; Philippians 3:20-21 KJV)

Comment: We Christians are just passing through this vale of tears on our way to heaven, which is our home, thanks to the grace of God shown to us in Christ Jesus, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9 KJV) Indeed, God-given faith in Christ personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation.

It is important we Christians continually remember we are saved by God’s grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, and we are NOT saved by our own works, even in part, for the Holy Bible informs us that “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:23-28; Romans 5:1-2 KJV)

Comment: Let us hold fast to the truth that God does the saving, all of it; therefore, neither works based on God's Law nor those works devised by men can save or contribute anything toward salvation. Beware of those who would trick you into trusting in your own deeds even in part! Holy Scripture warns against man-made rules and regulations as a way of salvation: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." (Colossians 2:20-23 KJV) A show without real Scriptural substance does NOT impress the Lord or make any points with Him, but rather offends Him.

Now, once we possess God-given faith in Christ and we are thereby justified – declared righteous by God – we are immediately enabled by God to gratefully serve Him by holy living, also known as sanctification of life, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10 KJV)

Comment: Observe the Holy Bible teaches that we Christians are to conduct ourselves in a God-pleasing manner while sojourning in this world by doing good works as God has ordained. Hence, note well that GOOD WORKS are fruits of a true living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, only a Christian can actually do works that are good in God's sight, for "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6 KJV) Good works are only those works done in full accord with God's Word, the Holy Bible, and cannot be done without God's enabling us Christians to do them, as is evident from the following words of Holy Scripture: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21 KJV)

Never forget that we need to have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ if we would enter heaven when we depart this life, for Holy Writ plainly declares: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14 KJV) Therefore, we must fight against temptations to sin and strive to avoid faith-destroying sins lest we fall from faith, for the Holy Bible warns: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12 KJV) With the help of Christ Jesus we must cling to Him in humble heart-deep living faith since He says: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5 KJV)

Comment: Note well that we can do nothing right, good, and pleasing to God without Jesus Christ. We cannot reach heaven without Jesus Christ and a living faith in Him.

Some people who claim to be Christians say they are free to live any way they please because Jesus will simply forgive them again when they sin; in other words, such folks hold that it is permissible to deliberately and wilfully sin without even first attempting to resist the temptation to sin.

Comment: True Christians DO NOT hold that it is permissible to deliberately and wilfully sin, for true Christians know that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold,

all things are become new. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:17 KJV) Indeed, for the Apostle Paul writes by inspiration of God: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Romans 6:1-6 KJV) *Therefore, let us Christians strive to serve our Savior rather than serving sin!*

Accordingly, we Christians are to endeavor to make progress in sanctification of life, for Holy Writ reports: “as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. [And] this is the will of God, *even your sanctification*, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” (James 2:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 KJV)

*Comment: Note well that holy living – sanctification of life – is NOT merely optional behavior but is required behavior for true Christians since a living faith in the Lord Jesus will be fruitful in good works as expressed by endeavoring to live in a holy manner, for our Lord Jesus says: “every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Matthew 7:17-19 KJV)*

As mentioned earlier, good works are only those works done in full accord with God’s Word, the Holy Bible, and that is a fact because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ plainly states: “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.” (John 14:23-24 KJV)

*Comment: When professed Christians deliberately follow their sinful flesh and do-their-own-thing in wilful opposition to the dictates of the Holy Bible they show themselves either ignorant of the truth or decidedly against God’s will and without love for the Lord Jesus. In either case, there is no excuse for such sinful behavior since the Holy Bible is available for ALL to read and study, and Jesus says: “If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.” (John 8:31-32, 47 KJV) To those who follow man-made rules and regulations thinking they thereby live in a holy manner, a sanctified life, Jesus says, as He did to the scribes and Pharisees of old, “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:7-9 KJV)*

Fellow Christians, “let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18 KJV) Let us honestly confess to the Lord: “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:103-105 KJV)

However, in honesty we Christians must all admit that even our best and finest works are in themselves tainted with sin since we who do the works dwell in sinful flesh, for Holy Writ reports: “we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6 KJV) Nevertheless, the good news is that Jesus cleanses the filthiness from our works which are done as fruits of faith in accord with God’s Word, for the Holy Bible informs us that our good works – our fruits of faith – are “spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5 KJV) Praise and thanks be to Jesus Christ!

Therefore, in answer to the question: ***What does the Holy Bible teach concerning how Christians are to conduct themselves while sojourning in this world?*** Let us never forget that Christian conduct while sojourning in this world definitely includes DAILY SINCERE REPENTANCE, for “if we walk in the light, as [God] is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:7-10 KJV) Additionally, Christian conduct while sojourning in this world includes remembering to “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17 KJV)

We need our Lord and Savior every minute of every day! Let us cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith; and, let us strive to show our thanks to Jesus for all that He has done and still does for us; yes, let us strive to behave “holily and justly and unblameably” as did the Apostle Paul among the Thessalonians. (1 Thessalonians 2:10 KJV) Let us with the help of God endeavor to increase in sanctification of life – holy living – while sojourning in this world, thereby demonstrating to Jesus that “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19 KJV)

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