

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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A new year is upon us and many folks have made New Year's resolutions concerning various things they wish to accomplish throughout the next twelve months. Nevertheless, there are specific things that all people really should focus upon. Accordingly, this month's topic for consideration in view of Holy Scripture, as found in the King James Version Holy Bible, is: **What we need to remember as we enter a new year.**

**"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."
(Romans 13:11-14)**

Comment: Note that it is vital to be spiritually awake and alert to the fact that with each passing day we are closer to the time when we shall leave this world and stand before our Lord, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Hence, we should all work at continuing in the true faith and being more fruitful therein, striving to conduct ourselves in full accord with God's Word by avoiding all sinful behaviors and practices, thereby showing we are grateful to God for His grace and mercy He has shown to us in abundance.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

Comment: The foregoing Bible verses remind us of the realities of life in this world. Therefore, let us, with the Lord's help, endeavor to use the time He gives us wisely, for the Holy Bible states, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." (Ephesians 5:15-21) Indeed, throughout this new year, let us strive to walk wisely in accord with God's Word, not foolishly following the sinful ways and practices of the devil, the world and our own corrupt flesh. Yes, "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 97:10)

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.” (Psalm 32:1-11)

“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)” (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

Comment: Observe that it is most important that we Christians use the time we are given in this life to remain right with God— by continued repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Let us realize how blessed we are in knowing the Lord Jesus and having the forgiveness of sins and the salvation He graciously provides. Let us daily confess our sins and pray to the Lord. Let us, throughout the entire year, regularly gather with like-minded fellow Christians in public worship, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25) Indeed, with each passing day we are closer to Judgment Day— the day of Jesus Christ’s visible return to earth. Therefore, let us remember, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” (Psalm 1:1-6)

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (Galatians 4:4-7)

Comment: God’s timing is ALWAYS perfect. We recently celebrated Christmas; so, we recall that when the time was just right, God the Father sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus took upon Himself a real human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary in order that He might keep God’s Holy Law perfectly for us as our Substitute; and, in order that He might shed His holy and precious blood to pay for all the sins of all people in full, because it is written, “almost all things are by the law purged

with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:22, 24-28) *Let us thank and praise the Lord Jesus every day throughout every year God gives us on earth.*

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:9-18)

Comment: The Lord is so very gracious and merciful in giving people time to repent and come to faith in Christ. And yet, Judgment Day is coming. The Lord will indeed visibly return in glory to judge ALL people when the time is just right as He has determined, despite the jokes being made by unbelievers and people of science-falsely-so-called. Scripture is being fulfilled right now, for we read: “...there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:3-7) Yes, a very immense global-warming is coming. We need to be ready and expecting Judgment Day, for Jesus says, “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (Mark 13:33-37) So, we must remain alert and steadfast in the true faith unto life everlasting.

We must beware of the wicked folks who pervert the Holy Scriptures, twisting and changing God's Word and/or taking portions out-of-context in order to teach things the Holy Bible actually does NOT teach. Such people who pervert and/or misuse the Holy Scriptures are certainly on the increase in these last days. Therefore, let us remember the words of encouragement and warning which the Apostle Paul penned by inspiration of God to the young pastor Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:1-4)

*Fellow Christians, may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that we avoid spiritual slumber by tenaciously clinging to Him and His true Holy Word, for that is surely: **What we need to remember as we enter a new year.** Indeed, it is so, for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ promises to each and every one of us Christians: "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)*

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