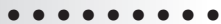




His Word Is Truth!

This article is written by Pastor Tom Eckstein of Concordia Lutheran Church in Jamestown. "His Word is Truth" will appear in this paper every 3rd Monday.



Today I will continue my series on the Apostles' Creed by examining the following words from the third section: **"...the forgiveness of sins,..."** Christians believe in the forgiveness of sins! In other words, we believe what God teaches us in **Holy Scripture** about the forgiveness of sins. *However, many people have their own wrong opinions about "the forgiveness of sins" and how it is accomplished.*

For example, some wrongly believe that God will forgive our sins as long as our good deeds

outweigh our bad deeds. For instance, a man recently made the following comment to my father about an individual who donated millions of dollars to his community: *"He will go to heaven for sure! He gave so much to our community. God will be sure to reward him and overlook any sins he may have done!"* **But this evil thinking fails to believe God's Word which teaches that our good deeds do nothing to save us from the damnation our sins deserve (see Isaiah 64:6, Luke 18:9-14 and Galatians 2:20-3:29).**

No matter how virtuous you think you are, your good works are NOT the reason God forgives your sins! For instance, an early Christian leader by the name of "Augustine" once said the following about those who trust in their good deeds as the basis for their present and eternal reward: **"The virtues of the pagans are their greatest vices!"** In other words, even

our good works are evil to God if we think our good works are the reason God will forgive us!

I once saw a person carrying a sign which read: *"Murderers will burn in hell!"* Many would be open to that point. But let's say you saw someone carrying a sign that read: *"Some who feed homeless children will burn in hell!"* Most would NOT agree with that! Why? **The reason is that we have deluded ourselves into thinking that God punishes us for our bad deeds whereas He rewards us for our good deeds.** *But Scripture teaches that even our GOOD deeds are an abomination to God if we think that such good deeds mean that we deserve God's mercy!*

With that said, another common error is that some wrongly believe that God's forgiveness is something that happens WITHOUT the suffering and death of His Son on the cross. Sadly, some liberal theologians in our

society today actually deny that Jesus had to die for our sins in order for God to forgive us. **They deny the need for Christ's atoning death -- even though Scripture clearly teaches that there is NO forgiveness of sin apart from Christ's suffering and death!** (See Isaiah 53:4-12, Matthew 20:28, Luke 24:44-48, 1st Corinthians 1:18-25, Colossians 1:19-20, Hebrews 9:11-28 and 1st Peter 2:22-25).

The forgiveness of sins would not be possible if it were not for the work of God's Son, Jesus the Christ, as described in the 2nd section of the Apostles' Creed! Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit, as described in the 3rd section of the Apostles' Creed, is to bring us to repentance and give us faith in the forgiveness of sins made possible by Jesus' atoning death for all people – *the Truth which Christians confess in the following words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in ... the*

forgiveness of sins, ..." **DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH GOD LOVES YOU? THINK ABOUT THIS: When God says that your sins are forgiven He means that He damned His own Son instead of you! Forgiveness of sin costs us NOTHING, but it cost God EVERYTHING!** *When this amazing love of God captures our hearts we are set free to turn from sin and then do good works for all the RIGHT reasons! The Spirit moves us to do good works 1) to give praise and thanks to God for His undeserved mercy in Christ, and 2) to love and serve our neighbor!* (See John 15:5, Romans 12:1-2, 1st Corinthians 9:7-15, Galatians 5:13-6:10, Ephesians 2:8-10, Philippians 3:7-4:9, Colossians 3:1-17, Titus 2:11-3:8 and 1st Peter 4:7-11)

One last thing! The "forgiveness of sins" that we have NOW through faith in Christ also assures us that we

will receive something else in the FUTURE. The "forgiveness of sins" means that we can look forward to "the resurrection of the body" and "the life everlasting." **But you will have to read my future articles to learn about these wonderful gifts of God!**



Please read the next "His Word is Truth" on Monday, October 15th!

Pastor Eckstein will continue his series on the Apostles' Creed with the following part of the 3rd article: *"...the resurrection of the body,..."*

For more resources about Christian teaching and issues, go to Concordia Lutheran's webpage: www.concordiajt.org

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