

Essay #3:  
**God Guides Us—  
His Law in the Bible Guides Us in Godly Living**

Brester Msowoya  
Malawi

**The Identity of a Christian**

The theme of this convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) is *We Are God's Workmanship—Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works*. When I read this theme, I thought of an identity that every true Christian should seek. What distinguishing marks or characteristics will show that a Christian is totally different from the rest of the people in society? What can I do to show the people of the world that I am a Christian? In his Word, God has given us direction for our Christian life. The Ten Commandments are God's standard of what I should do and how I should live as a child of God. If I follow God's commands, people will be able to identify me as a Christian.

In Malawi, we have many different tribes that speak many different languages. Each tribe has its own unique culture, and this culture makes each group different from the others. For example, the Ngoni tribe has some traditional dances which are very different from the dances of the Chewa tribe. The traditional clothing that they wear is also very different. By looking at a person's costume and traditions, we can identify him as either Chewa or Ngoni.

If even the unchurched people of the world are looking for identity and recognition in society, how much more should Christians seek to establish their identity? Establishing our Christian identity will benefit not only us but even the whole world. And the benefits that come from it are not only temporal and worldly, but spiritual and eternal.

**God Created Mankind for a Purpose**

What does it mean that we are "God's workmanship?" It means that God created mankind for a purpose. And what is that pur-

pose? The apostle Paul said, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*” (Ephesians 2:10).<sup>1</sup>

It isn’t only Christians who want to do good works. Even worldly people do good because they want to look good in the eyes of other people. They do not want their names and reputations to be tarnished because they have done some shameful things. In short, people of this world do good works because they want others to regard them as good people.

On other occasions, people do good to others in the hope that they will be rewarded. In Malawi, there is a saying: *Mbale ya therere, imakoma n’kuyenderana* (“It is good to exchange a plate of okra”), meaning that when one has done good to you, you in turn should also do good to him.

These are some of the reasons why the people of this world do good works. Yet these good works are only acts of civic righteousness. People do them only to benefit themselves and to please others.

But believers do good works for a very different reason. Believers do not do good works to benefit themselves. They do everything for God. Even when they are working for the benefit of their fellow men, it is always God who moves and motivates them to do good works.

### **Reasons for Doing Good**

The main reason why Christians do good is that God has justified us by his grace in Christ. He has set us free from our eternal punishment in hell. John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This is how God the Father showed his love for us: he did not spare his one and only Son, but gave him to the world to redeem it through his death as a sacrifice for sin. The apostle Paul said, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Paul also said, “Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the NIV1984.

of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men” (Romans 5:18). With these words Paul means that God the Father has declared the world not guilty of sin by his grace, by sending his Son Jesus Christ to die for us. God did all this. We did nothing good to please him, so that he should declare us to be not guilty. No, it is by grace, by the undeserved love and mercy of our God! Although we are all sinners, God did not want us to perish, but to have eternal life.

God’s gracious gift of justification becomes my own through faith. Paul said, “‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ . . . The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Romans 4:3,23,24). God credits the righteousness of Christ to everyone who trusts in him. This was God’s plan of salvation right from the very beginning with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law” (Romans 3:28).

My point in all of this is not only to explain how one is saved. But in everything we do, there must be some reason or incentive or motive behind it. When believers do good works, the reason, motive and incentive is that God has justified them freely by his grace. The good works that they do are not to earn or merit God’s forgiveness, but only to show their thanks and gratitude for all that God has done.

It was by this work of justification that God created us anew in order that we might do good works. Going back again to Ephesians 2:10, the apostle Paul said, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” God has done the work in us. “In Christ Jesus” he has created a new person in us, one who loves God and wants to obey his commands. God did this so that we serve him and other people with good works. And so St. Paul said to Timothy: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15). With these words Paul encourages us to do good and godly work. Yes, it is true that God accepts all works that are done in faith, but let us “do our best” to produce good works of the highest quality.

## **Christians are “New Creations”**

In what way is every Christian a “new creation?” When God first created mankind in the Garden of Eden, he made him to be perfect. The Scripture says, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). And again in chapter 2 it says, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden’” (Genesis 2:15,16). These verses show that life was good before the fall. Adam and Eve were at peace with God. God would visit them and talk to them face to face in a perfect world, a world without sin. Adam and Eve did not lack anything. The whole world belonged to them.

Mankind’s perfect relationship with God was destroyed when Adam and Eve sinned. “God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid’” (Genesis 3:9,10). Sin brought fear and shame into Adam’s heart. It destroyed his good relationship with God. From that time forward, life would no longer be easy. There would be pain and suffering. Human beings would have to sweat to find their food (Genesis 3:19).

But God restored the good relationship between himself and human beings through the promise of the Messiah. In Genesis 3:15, God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Adam and Eve believed these words about the coming Messiah. And when they believed, “God credited it to them as righteousness.” That was their spiritual creation, their spiritual rebirth.

In the same way, every Christian is made to be a new creation through faith in the gospel. The apostle Paul said, “Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). Jesus also said to Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). This is the spiritual creation, the spiritual rebirth, that takes place when the gospel in Word and sacrament does its work of conversion inside the heart of man.

## **Expectations**

Now what do the Lord's people do after this spiritual transformation? They live according to God's will by leading a sanctified life. They do good works of faith. This is the reason why Timothy could be "approved" as a workman (2 Timothy 2:15). God approved of Timothy because God himself had made Timothy to be a new creation. Now what are these good works that the Lord expects Timothy and us to do?

The apostle Paul said, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11,12). This is what the Lord our God does in us and for his church. He chooses men, justifies them, sanctifies them, and appoints them to serve as called workers in his church. The public ministry is just one of the good works of faith by which we respond to God's love. We share the gospel in Word and sacraments as public ministers. That is what most of us in this room are doing.

## **Challenges**

Is this easy? Not at all! In your home country, how might people respond when God calls them into the public ministry? In my country—Malawi—people might hesitate. They hesitate because when they look at the work of the ministry, they see a lot of problems. Pastors need to work with people who have very different backgrounds and very different ways of thinking. There will be financial challenges. Even compared to other "civil servants," a pastor will probably receive a very low salary. In some cases his salary may be less than 30 dollars in a month, about one dollar every day. It is very little compared to the standard of living in that country. Brothers, it is probably the same in your home country, too. From my observations, we all experience similar challenges, and yet we are committed to God's work. We know that it is the Almighty God himself who has called us to this work. He is the one who controls all of the challenges that we go through for the betterment of his people. May his name be praised as he continues to provide for us and sustain our lives as we do his work! All this requires faith and trust.

St. Paul says that God gave all these different public ministries “to prepare God’s people for works of service” (Ephesians 4:12). What are these works of service? Psalm 100 says, “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.” These are some of the works of service that Paul referred to in . Pastors are called to prepare God’s people to praise the Lord God and sing joyful songs for him in God’s sanctuaries.

## **Culture**

Culture is another big challenge in Africa, particularly in Malawi.

The word sanctification can be used in two ways:

- 1) Sanctification in the *wide sense* refers to the whole work of the Holy Spirit. Through this work, the Spirit creates faith in our hearts and forgives our sin through the Word of God and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Paul refers to sanctification in the wide sense when he says, “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
- 2) Sanctification in the *narrow sense* refers to the Holy Spirit’s work of motivating, empowering, and guiding his people to live according to God’s will.

In my culture, people have some confusion about the first point, about purification and cleansing from sin. This confusion leads to problems in the second point, in how they live their lives.

Most tribes in Malawi practice customs of cleansing and purification as a way to please their ancestral spirits. People believe that if you do not perform this cleansing, then something bad will happen to you because of the evil you have done. These things happen from the time a person is born until the time he dies. For example, there are a lot of taboos that are observed when a child is born, which are connected to purification (“sanctification”). They call it cleansing.

When a baby is born, both the mother and the child are considered to be unclean until a ceremony of cleansing has been performed. No one is allowed to touch the baby until the cleansing is done. People think that if anyone touches the baby before the cleansing is finished, the baby will die. Two or three old ladies come with herbs. They take the child to a place in the village where rubbish is burned, because people think that the spirits live in that place. They put the baby on a mortar that is used for grinding grain. Then they bathe the child with African herbs. Only after this is done can people touch the baby.

The baby's mother is asked to stay away from other people for 30 days after the child is born. During this time, she is not allowed to cook any kind of food for her family, or even to put salt in it. She can cook only for herself. Until the 30 days are finished, the mother is not allowed to change her clothes. She must continue to wear the same clothes that she wore when the baby was born. She will not receive the Lord's Supper during this time of purification, not because anyone has forbidden her to do so, but because the woman considers herself to be unclean. When the 30 days have passed, the women shave the mother's hair and she takes a bath with traditional herbs. The clothes that she had worn during the 30 days are given to an old lady who represents the spirits of her dead ancestors. Then the mother is asked to cook food for all the people who are present on that day. That marks the end of the cleansing ceremony.

People in Malawi are confused by this. In their minds, the work of the Holy Spirit by which he purifies and cleanses us from sin (that is, Christian sanctification) is just the same as the traditional cleansing rituals that purify a mother after childbirth. They think, "If God demands that his people be sanctified or purified of their sins through the work of the Holy Spirit, then it cannot be wrong to perform traditional cleansing rituals to please the ancestral spirits."

What does this mean, especially to my brothers who serve people who are already full of these traditions? It means that it will take a lot of explanation and patience to differentiate between the traditional cleansing and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit from our sins.

## **False Teaching—Other Denominations**

Another challenge that we face in Southern Africa comes from the false teachings of other denominations, especially the teachings of the Pentecostal churches. They teach that the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies us from sin, but that he also gives us power to heal and cast out demons. They think that if a believer does not experience these things, then it means the Holy Spirit has not sanctified him. But the one who has the Holy Spirit must speak in tongues, have visions and dreams, and perform healings.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul did not say that all believers would receive these gifts from the Spirit. He says,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10).

Here the apostle does not say that everyone who has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit will automatically have all these spiritual gifts. Quite the opposite! He says: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (v. 11). I am not trying to limit the Spirit’s power in the lives of his believers, but we need to warn our people not to be enticed by these false prophets, who deceive people by talking about healings, prophesies, and tongues that are not really true at all.

## **Death**

Another major cultural challenge in one area of my country when trying to bring this teaching of sanctification comes when a husband dies.

In Malawi, some people believe that one does not actually die until some rituals have been performed. These rituals are thought to remove the spirit of the dead person from his home and place it into the world of the spirits, which many believe is the graveyard.

For example, when a husband dies, many people believe that the spirit of the dead man is still in control of the bereaved wife until the act of cleansing is done. In other words, the act of cleansing removes the spirit of the dead man from the widow. The widow is to sleep with the dead husband before the dead body is taken for burial. But since at that time the woman becomes weak, sad, and helpless, this will not happen until later. A man from the village who is not related to the family comes at night and sleeps with the widow. This is supposed to chase the spirit of the deceased man away from the widow. This also is called cleansing. People believe that if this is not done, the spirit of the dead man will be unhappy and the whole village will die. The sad thing is that this is even practiced among believers, secretly at night. People do these things because they are afraid of death.

When people live such sinful lives, we need to preach God's law to them. We need to show our people from the Scriptures that this is not the cleansing of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies them and makes them holy. This is sinful and evil. Paul says, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). This is what we need to teach our people who continue to practice such wicked acts as a part of their African traditional religion.

But more than that, when people are ignorant of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work through faith in Jesus Christ, we need to preach the gospel to them. We need to tell them that "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). And when they are afraid of death, we need to remind them that Jesus has won the victory over death. Paul said, "'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your

sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

This good news is not only for people who practice African traditional religion at funerals because they are afraid of death. It is for all of us who are afraid of death because of our sins. Scripture says that Christ has paid for our sins. Salvation is ours. Believe it!

### **God Guides Us**

We have said many things about being God’s workmanship created in Jesus Christ to do good works. We have tried to explain in different ways what this means and how one is spiritually created. We have also suggested how one could live a sanctified life through works of faith even though there are countless challenges and difficulties.

Even in worldly matters, if a person is going to do good, he needs to be guided, controlled, and even motivated. For example: every state has its own rules and laws that help to govern the country. These laws tell people which actions are acceptable and which actions are not acceptable. If people do right according to the law, the government will protect them. If they do wrong according to the law, the government will punish them.

### **The Law as a Guide**

God uses his law in similar ways. Through the law, he shows us what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. If we can live according to God’s law, God will bless us. But he threatens the punishments of death and hell on everyone who breaks his law.

Article VI of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord says the law has been given for three reasons:

- 1) “That thereby outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men,”
- 2) “That men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins,” and

- 3) “That after they are regenerate . . . they might on this account have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life.”<sup>2</sup>

Let’s focus on number 3 above. After a man has been converted to faith through the gospel in Word and sacraments, the law serves to guide him in living a sanctified life.

We need to remember that even after a man is converted to faith and has been born again, the sinful nature still remains in him. Therefore, even a Christian still needs the law of God to guide him. The Psalmist said, “Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD” (Psalm 119:1). But this has brought confusion to many people. Some say, “Yes, we believers still need the law in order to guide our day to day lives.” Others say, “No, we don’t need the law because we are now children of the light.”

Let me remind you that even Adam and Eve, who were perfect and who were living in a perfect world before the fall, still needed the law. God gave them one law: “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). If God gave the law to Adam and Eve who had no sin, who are we to say that we don’t need the law? I don’t think we need someone with a doctorate degree to convince us that we still need the law to guide us in our everyday life. God’s Word is “a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). Because we are still in this sinful flesh, we need the law to guide us so that we can live a life that pleases God. And we live this God-pleasing life, not to win God’s favor, but because God has already rescued us from sin and death through his Son Jesus Christ. The fact that we often fail to obey the will of

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<sup>2</sup>All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions are from *Concordia Triglotta*, Concordia, 1921. The full quote here is: “Since the Law was given to men for three reasons: first, that thereby outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men [and that wild and intractable men might be restrained, as though by certain bars]; secondly, that men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins; thirdly, that after they are regenerate and [much of] the flesh notwithstanding cleaves to them, they might on this account have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life, a dissension has occurred between some few theologians concerning the third use of the Law, namely, whether it is to be urged or not upon regenerate Christians. The one side has said, Yea; the other, Nay” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article VI:1).

God is a clear sign that we are not perfect. We need Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and we need God's law to guide us how to live a godly life.

### **Gospel Motivation and Empowerment**

The law can guide us in a Christian life, but the law itself cannot motivate or empower us to live according to God's will. The Formula of Concord says, "But we must also explain distinctively what the Gospel does, produces, and works towards the new obedience of believers. . . For the Law says indeed that it is God's will and command that we should walk in a new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin and do it; but the Holy Ghost, who is given and received, not through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel, Gal. 3,14, renews the heart" (Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Article VI:10,11). This means that the law on its own without the gospel is powerless to produce good works of obedience. It is only through the gospel of Jesus Christ that the law can be fulfilled in us. Only the gospel can motivate and empower people to do what the law requires.

The apostle Paul said to the Galatians, "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? . . . He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:2,14). It is through the gospel that we receive power from the Spirit to do what is required by the law.

### **Adiaphora and Christian Freedom**

Through the law, God gives us very specific rules about what we must or must not do. But everyone can see that there are many things God has neither commanded nor forbidden. We call these things *adiaphora*. Because God does not command or forbid these things, Christians are free to do as they please in these areas.

Unfortunately, there are many people who do not understand Christian freedom. Some people take the Old Testament ceremonial laws—which are not binding for New Testament Christians—and try to impose them on the people. Although these things are *adiaphora*, they have turned them into rules that people must do in order to please God.

Other people set up and command their own rules or standards to please God. For example, some insist that you must not shave your hair. Others shave their hair and leave only their beards long. Some have forced people not to consume certain kinds of food and drink. Some have forbidden people to seek medication from hospitals when they are sick. Some have refused any sort of pleasure in this life. They are forbidden to watch televisions, or forbidden to exercise their right to vote for the leaders of their countries during the time of elections.

None of these things would be wrong if they were done as adiaphora in Christian liberty. But they become wrong if they are being forced on people as a way to earn God's favor and salvation. Whenever such things are commanded, two Bible principles are being violated: First, the principle that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus, and second, that Christians are not bound by man-made laws, but are free to exercise their Christian liberty.

The Bible is completely clear that we are saved by grace alone, not by obedience to the law. The apostle Paul said, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Again, Paul says to Titus, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (Titus 3:5). God alone did the work of salvation through his Son Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save us from our sins. This is God's grace—the undeserved love of God for mankind. As for us, we simply trust what God has done through Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John it says, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent'" (John 6:28,29). This is what we should teach our people: there is no way man can please God for salvation apart from believing in Jesus Christ.

About Christian liberty and adiaphora, the apostle Paul said, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Colossians 2:16,17). This is what the Bible says about adiaphora. Whether you do it or do not do it, there is no sin.

At the same time, however, Paul also said, “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. . . . Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way” (Romans 14:1,13). Paul also said to the believers in Corinth, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31,32). From this we learn that a Christian is free to do things that are adiaphora as an exercise of his Christian freedom. But if he sees that what he wants to do might cause his brother to stumble in faith, then the action does not glorify God and he should not do it.

These are the things that we should be teaching our people concerning adiaphora, things that the Scriptures do not command or forbid. We should never try to force any kind of adiaphora upon our fellow Christians. These things may be done in Christian freedom with a clear conscience. And if someone tries to force us to do some adiaphoron, then we can boldly stand firm in our Christian freedom. But we must explain these things clearly to those who do not understand the exercise of Christian liberty.

This is what I can say about Christian liberty and adiaphora. The specific applications may change from time to time and from one culture to another. But the principles and truths of Scripture never change.

On this issue of adiaphora, Edward Koehler said, “We cannot sin to the glory of God (Rom. 2:23,24; 6:1). But whatever otherwise we do in our several stations of life, if we do it from love of God and to the glory of God, is a service well-pleasing to him. Whenever God has placed us in life, . . . we should do our duty faithfully” (Koehler, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, p. 163). So a Christian does not need to ask, “What are the works that I’m supposed to do, that please God?” Whatever works are done out of love for God and also for God’s glory from a good will, these are the works that please God.

Our Catechism says the same thing. It asks the question, “Why do I gladly do good works?” (Kuske, *Luther’s Catechism*, 1982, p. 200). The following passages are quoted:

Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14,).

[Jesus] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:14).

From these verses, Prof. Kuske very properly concludes, "I gladly do good works to express my love and thanks to God for all his goodness to me" (Kuske, p. 200).

Furthermore, our Catechism also asks this question: "What is my guideline in doing good works?" (Kuske, p. 200). The Scriptures say:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105).

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

The law of God in the Holy Scripture guides us in living a life that pleases God, and warns us not to conform ourselves to the sinful pattern of this world.

There are a lot of challenges in trying to teach our people to do good works using the third use of the law (as a guide). One of these challenges is culture. The culture in Malawi and Zambia confuses our people a lot on this subject. People believe that everything happens for a reason—the good things and the bad things alike. Even death is considered to be something that cannot happen without a reason. When a person dies—even if he is very old—people think, "He must have been bewitched. Why did he die *now*? Somebody must be behind it." Or if a child is diagnosed with malaria, people will always ask, "Why only my child? Someone must have sent the mosquito to bite my child." These are some of the beliefs that are found amongst our people, especially those who live away from civilized life in urban areas.

Here is another challenge. People are often forced to do what others want them to do. This is a special problem when a person depends upon another for support. For example, parents might force their children to obey them, but what the parents command isn't always good. If the children do not do what the parents asked them to do, they are going to be in trouble. It is the same with wives. Women have to obey their husbands, and if they do not they are going to be in trouble. Chiefs may force their subjects to do things that the chiefs want, and if the people don't obey, they will be in trouble.

But human beings cannot decide what is good and right for us to do. Only God can, and he gives us his law to guide us in our Christian life. The gospel of forgiveness and salvation motivates us to obey that law, and to do all things to the glory of God our Savior. May God bless all believers so that this teaching from Scripture will be preserved for generations to come. Let us not forget that we are God's workmanship, created for Christ to do his work in us. Let each one of us remember to do whatever God has asked and empowered us to do for his glory.

### **Discussion Questions**

This essay gives some of the challenges that Lutheran pastors in Southern Africa experience when teaching the doctrine of sanctification. What challenges do you face in your areas when you teach sanctification to your people? In what ways is your culture similar to mine? In what ways is it different?



Brester Msowoya—Essay #3