

WHAT'S IN YOUR RECORD?

Rejoice! When God looks at it, He sees the **BLOOD OF CHRIST** ... your sins are no more

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“Nobody cares about your service record more than you do.”

These were the words of advice I heard from my chaplain assistant during my first days serving as a chaplain in the military in 1998.

Back in the “Stone Age” (1998), you had to review your service records via microfiche. As we entered into the 21st century, the military started keeping service records online, which enabled service members to make sure everything was shipshape regarding their service records. If something was missing or messed up, nobody was to blame except you. You! Nobody but you are responsible for correcting any mistakes in your record.

The old Adam (think original sin) in me tends to think of my faith in a similar way. The old Adam whispers in my ear, “I am responsible for correcting my life, my mistakes, my sins — and no one else.” This notion, however, could not be further from the truth.

Some facets of our religion can tend to sound this way if taken out of context. Here is one example. Recently, we spoke the Athanasian Creed in church, confessing these words: “At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds. And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those have done evil into eternal fire” (LSB 320).

At first, we hear only, “If you have done evil, then you are facing everlasting fire.” We all know that we have sinned, that we have done evil. Not a good prospect.

Then, taking a second glance, we think perhaps that we can get around this statement by having



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“RECEIVE
the word of
forgiveness
from Christ ...

BE
CONFIDENT
that your record
with God is
without error...

BE
ASSURED
that the works
of Christ are
yours.”

God consider our good works. Somehow we should be given credit for our good intentions. I mean, at least we are not as messed up as the next guy, right?

The reality is that all mankind is jacked up, has done evil, has sinned and is, in fact, full of sin from birth. We have nothing in us about which we can brag to God. Your military service record may be spotless, but our record with God of good or evil is not something that we can brag about. In fact, we hide our record from everyone, even ourselves.

In Holy Baptism, God placed His name on you “in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” There he wiped your record clean. Your sins are not remembered. Psalm 103:12 says, “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” Daily, our Lord calls us to repentance, to live in our Baptism and to act like Christians. To act like a Christian is to imitate the lives of the saints before us who by faith are called righteous. Daily God washes us to be free from sin. We still sin, but we don’t cling to it — that is, we don’t excuse it by saying it is not a sin.

When we examine our record, the best practice is to be honest. Luther writes



ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. DANIEL LUKSAN

something like, “let your sins be real that your forgiveness can be real.” A lifetime of debt wiped clean makes a person appreciate what God has done in the death of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

So let your record stand just as it is in Christ. When God looks at your record, He sees the blood of Christ and His righteousness. Your sins are no more. Think of yourself as holy and, to the best of your Baptized ability, avoid sin. You won't be successful in living sinless. That was only possible with Christ. Better to live in Christ and quit thinking of protecting your pet sins. Call them what they are: rebellion against God. Then receive the word of forgiveness from Christ. Be confident that your record with God is without error. Be assured that the works of Christ are yours, so therefore your record is perfect, without fault, without error — all for the sake of Him who took your lifetime record of sin and wiped it clean at the cross and at the font, where it is applied to you.

Live in this forgiveness by being real about your sins and by being real about Christ's righteousness for you.

Chaplain Christensen is an LCMS pastor, combat veteran and naval officer.



The six works of God in the

Magnificat (Mary's Song)



LUKE 1:50-54

“And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.”

1 SHOWING MERCY

Mercy is God's “noblest work.” We are called to demonstrate mercy to everyone, to subordinate the self. Listen with the ears of God to those He places around you.

2 BREAKING SPIRITUAL PRIDE

As Mary sings, be on guard against assuming that rank and power comes from our hand and that it is not given to us by our gracious and loving Savior.

3 PUTTING DOWN THE MIGHTY

People of character are tied to the Word of God and to the promises of Christ. With humility and grace, they work to raise up Christ in the world around them.

4 EXALTING THE LOWLY

Learn from the lowly and how they live their lives free from pride and with meekness and kindness. See them as examples of how to submit oneself to achieve what is good for others – on your team, in your unit, in your family.

5- FILLING THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS and SENDING THE RICH AWAY EMPTY

Sending the rich away empty is a call to turn aside earthly riches that stand in the way of our relationship to God. The message of both of these works of God warns us against placing the created ahead of the Creator. The fifth and sixth works underscore that our priorities must align with God.



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troopers do: pray! After my “Amen,” I pulled my front risers. However, the parachute accelerated, turning me into a “dirt dart!” I was about to plow into the ground. Sergeant Airborne saw and shouted, “Hey, crazy! You’re pulling the wrong slip!” I immediately changed risers and had a most beautiful soft landing. I jogged off the drop zone to the assembly area. I graduated from Airborne School and eventually went on to serve in an Airborne Brigade in Alaska.

In Ephesians, Paul writes how Christ transforms us from a “nobody” into a “somebody.”

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility” (Eph. 2:13-16).

Paul talks about the redemptive, transformative change that occurs in Christ Jesus. Through the death of Jesus on the wind-swept hill of Golgotha, we are reconciled and become redeemed children of God. This sets us free from junk that holds us down. But, more importantly, through Christ alone we are changed from “nobodies” to “somebodies.” We are redeemed by the cross

and made children of God in Christ by His activity alone.

Paul in Ephesians tells us to do something with the gift of Christ, the Lord God of all. His death doesn’t just transform you; it transforms the whole world. Going from a “Nobody” to a “Somebody,” Jesus made us holy. Jesus brought us near to him ... by his coming near to us.

I mentioned the ever-present Sergeant Airborne. He did the transforming for me at Basic Airborne School. Be a Sergeant Airborne where you are — a Sergeant Airborne of faith! We have a responsibility to lovingly tell people, “Hey, crazy! You’re pulling the wrong slip.” You are drifting in a dangerous direction. The result is a disaster. Life apart from Christ is a horrible tragedy. The direction of drift may even feel enjoyable until we only end up as a “dirt dart” — all broken, even dead.

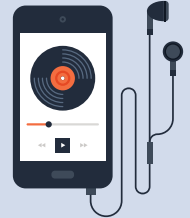
Ephesians 2 cuts both ways. The first to stay in fellowship and in Scripture. We are called to enjoy and delight and consult God’s Word, and to reflect and grow. The second is reach out to a world filled with “nobodies.” How crystal clear this is! God calls us through His Son, Jesus, to stay in community with one another. Worship regularly, all the while acknowledging we are in the mission field. Engage those who must change direction and pull a different slip. Build up the church to transform the world to bring others to the knowledge of Jesus.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHECK IT OUT!

Web Resources

Ever wonder what a pastor thinks of current movies? Check out the Rev. Ted Giese’s reviews, written from a Lutheran perspective. Visit blogs.lcms.org/category/reporter/movie-reviews



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