

**10/6/17**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

During the rest of October I will be using devotions that were written for Reformation 2017 for Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN. The devotional booklet is entitled: *"I Shall Not Die, But Live."*

*"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me." (John 5:39)*

What do you think? Do you have eternal life?

It is an important question. It was an important question in Jesus' day. It was an important question in Luther's day. And it is still an important question in our day. The people in our text to whom Jesus was speaking thought that they had eternal life. They were Jewish leaders, the religious experts of the day. In fact, in our text Jesus noted that they studied the Scriptures diligently. And why did they do that? Because they thought that the Scriptures were the source of eternal life for them.

But the Scriptures *are* the source of eternal life, aren't they?

Yes, they are!

They are the source of eternal life because they testify about Jesus. The Old Testament Scriptures again and again, through prophecies and types and sacrifices, pointed to Jesus, the one who came and fulfilled all those prophecies and types and then sacrificed himself on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Yet the religious leaders to whom Jesus was speaking did not have eternal life. Why not? They failed to understand the purpose of the Scriptures. The Jewish leaders thought the Scriptures were a rule book they had to follow to gain eternal life, rather than a book God in grace had given to show the Savior who had gained eternal life for them. They thought the Savior promised in the Old Testament was going to be a political savior from Rome, rather than a spiritual savior from sin.

Many people today also misunderstand the purpose of the Scriptures. They see the Ten Commandments not as the just demands of a Holy God that show them the need for a Savior, but as the moral ideas of an ancient civilization that need to be adjusted for today's world. They see Jesus not as the needed Savior from sin, but as a moral leader whose ideas about love and compassion are acceptable, but whose ideas about sin and judgment certainly are not. What a blessing it is that our Lord used the work of Martin Luther to restore the basic truth of the Scriptures, that we are saved not by keeping a set of rules but by trusting in Jesus, the one whose life, death, and resurrection won forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

So what do you think? By God's grace we not only *think*, but through Spirit-worked faith we *know* and *trust* that we have eternal life, through the efforts not of ourselves but of our Savior Jesus, the one about whom the Scriptures testify.

***Prayer:*** *Thank you, Holy Spirit, for working in our hearts through the Scriptures to assure us that those very Scriptures testify about our Savior Jesus in whom we have eternal life. Amen.*

*By Rev. John Schmidt (NWC '70, WLS '74) serves Martin Luther College as a professor of Greek.*

...See you in church.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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