

How To LIVE A CHRISTIAN LIFE

For Ron and Loraine Hodel

How To LIVE A CHRISTIAN LIFE

FROM MARTIN LUTHER'S
ON CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

Revised & Expanded
2nd Edition

Adapted by
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FOREWORD

Christian bookstores nowadays are full of books written about the Christian life. Such books try to explain how to “live like a Christian” by answering questions such as: How can I increase my faith? How can I live my life in the world as a Christian? How can I be a Christian employee? How can I know God’s will for my life? How can I have a Christian marriage? How can I love my spouse? How can I raise my children to be Christians? How can I talk to people who are not Christians? How can I have true inner peace? All of these questions are certainly important and are asked by those who, having come to faith in Jesus Christ, basically wonder: Now what?

In the short work that follows, the great Reformer Martin Luther answers this “Now what?” by heading to the writings of Apostle Paul and pointing out that the Christian, having come to faith in Christ, is a lot like Jesus Christ Himself. As Christ has two natures, a divine and human, so too the Christian has two natures: An old and a new. It is because of this situation that a Christian can frequently have a hard time answering the multitude of questions posed above. The old nature of the Christian constantly tugs at the new and the result can frequently be nothing but confusion. What is to be

done?

Luther sorts out this mess by taking two seemingly contradictory statements from the Apostle Paul and in the process of harmonizing them, not only answers the basic question of “Now what?”, but also helps to explain how the basic aspects of the life of the Christian (the Bible, the 10 Commandments, the Gospel, faith, love, good works, pastors, sermons, church services) can all be clearly and simply understood. In so doing, Luther constructs a small Christian dogmatics of sorts, and describes the essence of the Christian life.

1

CHRISTIAN FAITH

Many people think Christian faith is no more than a good attitude. Such people haven't really experienced Christian faith. They don't know how it works.

No one can write about Christian faith or know if others have written correctly about it unless he himself has been comforted by it. Whoever has been comforted by Christian faith in even the smallest way cannot cease to write, speak, think, or hear about it! This is why Christ calls faith "a spring of water welling up to eternal life"(John 4:14).

Admittedly my faith is weak. I've been tormented by

many temptations. Even with such a weak faith, however, I will try to write something about it. If what follows is not well written, I hope it is easy to understand.

The faith of a Christian can be summarized with two statements:

**A Christian is the most liberated master of everyone,
and subject to no one.**

**A Christian is the most dutiful servant of everyone,
and subject to everyone.**

These statements seem contradictory, but they are not. They actually are in harmony. Both statements are from the Apostle Paul who wrote “For though I am free from all, I made myself a servant to all” (1 Corinthians 9:19) as well as “Owe no one anything, except to love each other” (Romans 13:8). To serve and obey whatever it loves is the very nature of love.

Christ was therefore free and enslaved. He was in the form of God¹ and the form of a servant.² Christ was Lord of all, but born of a woman, and born under the law.³

A Christian finds himself in much the same situation. A Christian has two natures: A spiritual nature and a bodily nature. When referring to the spiritual nature (which is also called the soul) a Christian is called the spiritual, the inner, or the new man. When referring to the bodily nature (which is also called the flesh) a Christian is called the body, the outer, or the old man.

The Apostle Paul refers to this two-fold nature of the Christian when he says: “Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The reason why seemingly contradictory statements are often made in the Bible about Christians is due to the Christian’s two-fold nature. The simple fact is that within each Christian two natures constantly oppose each other. “The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit wars against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17).

¹Cf. Philippians 2:6.

²Cf. Philippians 2:7.

³Cf. Galatians 4:4.

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1. What two statements does Luther use to summarize *1 Corinthians 9:19-23* and *Romans 13:8-10*?
 2. How does Jesus describe faith in *John 4:13-14*?
 3. According to *John 8:31,32*, how is a Christian truly liberated?
 4. Whom ought the Christian’s life be lived like (*1 Corinthians 9:19*)?
 5. What is the very nature of love (*1 Corinthians 13:4-7*)?
 6. We know the difference between the non-Christian life (*Ephesians 2:12*) and the Christian life (*Ephesians 2:13, 19-22*). But what goes on *within* the Christian (*Galatians 5:13-26*)?