

HOW TO ENJOY BEING A CHRISTIAN

Ephesians 5:8-21

This sermon was preached at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Cherry Log, Georgia on Sunday, February 19, 2012 by Pastor Paul Mims

On the website, "Let's talk Bible" he said, "I have a question. What do I do about this? To be blunt I really don't like being a Christian. There are too many things that I have to do that I don't want to do and too many things that I'm not supposed to do that I want to do. I often just want to renounce being a Christian. Well, not that I entirely believe that I am a Christian anyway, or have been, so I guess that I really don't have to renounce being something that I never was anyway. I'm in a scary place, spiritually. I know if I'm going back into the world I will end up in hell when I die, but to be honest I really have no desire to be a Christian anymore. It's like I'm in limbo."

There were several posts offering help to this person. One said, "I am not really qualified for giving advice and certainly not counseling, but what struck me in reading your post is that maybe you are trying to be a Christian in the flesh (of your own ability). What I mean is, in a nutshell, in your mind Christianity is a set of rules you are trying to keep, thus you are missing the things you want to do that the 'rules' forbid. Christianity is not a set of rules, which is a good thing, because I think the majority of us would not be able to keep the rules if that was all there was to it. I remember years ago, I saw God just as that, a set of rules that I knew that I could not keep. So in my mind, it was Jesus who kept me from getting in trouble because I could not keep the rules. I wanted to be good, but at the same time there was that ever present list of things I wanted to do that were not according to the rules. I finally came to understand, as life went on, that God was not rules, God truly is love. He loves us and desires our love more than anything. We can keep all the rules we want, maybe all of them, but without love that is not what he wants from us. We don't keep rules in order to be loved; we keep rules because we are loved. Satan will definitely mess with ya...well all the time...but especially when he knows you are struggling with these things."

The response was, "Well, that all sounds good and everything. I really don't have a relationship with God. I follow Him, the best I can, anyway, out of a sense of obligation, not love. I really don't love God. Maybe there's somewhat of a sense of "respect," but definitely not love. That's too foreign of a concept to me."

The man further indicated that he had once felt like God had used him and because of some sin in his life, he was tossed aside. Now, he was bitter and resentful toward God.

What do you think about this? Was he just a "cultural" Christian because he had never been saved in the first place, or was he a believer who had allowed sin to destroy his joy? It is likely that he was brought up in a Christian home but had never embraced faith in Christ for himself.

There may be those sitting in worship today in both categories. Perhaps you were brought up in a home where your parents and siblings were believers and you never wanted it like your family did. You have tried to give lip service to the faith but it has no power in your life. Or, you may have become a believer in Christ and some past sin which is not repented of and turned from has driven a wedge between you and God. And you have become resentful toward God and want to run from him.

The teaching in this scripture is on the theme, "How to Enjoy Being A Christian." The Apostle Paul offers three broad guidelines for enjoying the faith to the fullest.

OUR OUTWARD WALK MUST CORRESPOND TO OUR INWARD LIGHT (V 8) "Live as children of light."

In verse 8 he begins a discourse on light and darkness. He does not say that unbelievers are in darkness, but that they are darkness. Believers are not just in the light, they are light. We are to walk as

children of light. Our outward walk must correspond to our inward light. The outward walk of an unbeliever corresponds to his inward darkness.

It is a blessed fact that when we come to faith in Christ our darkness turns to light. The glorious light of salvation shines in our hearts. Perhaps Paul was thinking of the light from above that shined down upon him when he was on the road to Damascus to persecute the Christians before he became a Christian. His inner being was changed from darkness to light. He then began to walk in the light he was given and he became light to others rather than the darkness he had been before his conversion.

If a person has the inner spiritual light given by Christ, there is no way to be happy than to allow the outward walk to be in harmony with what is felt and known in the inner being. The fruit that light produces is goodness, righteousness, and truth. Just as the apple trees have to have light to produce, so does the believer.

“Goodness” is an all - inclusive term for moral excellence. But what about the desires to do things that we know are not pleasing to God? Do believers still have them? Yes, we are still tempted, but we find that our “want to” is not as strong as it once was. The more we grow in Christ our “want to” for the things of God increase and we learn to abhor the things that are not pleasing to him for we have learned to want the things that please him.

“Righteousness” means integrity with all our dealings with both God and man. A good motto is in any situation, “Always do the right thing.”

“Truth” is honesty, equity, and reality. When a Christian’s inner being combines all three of these fruits he is able to shine the Christ-light into the lives of others.

WE MUST ACCOMPLISH OUR PURPOSE IN LIVING (V.16) “...making the best use of the time because the days are evil.”

To know God’s purpose in giving us life and accomplishing it is the basis of true happiness. We are allotted just a brief amount of time to make a purposeful life. When I think back over my life and ministry, I realize just how brief it has been. As I read the Bible, I have a sense that I may never have the time to preach on that passage again, or preach through that book again, or cover that theological truth again. Time is running out for all of us and this causes an urgency to do what we can for Christ now. We must have a passion to reach the lost for Christ while there is opportunity. Psalm 39:4, 5 says, “Show me O Lord, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath.”

Our time is short and the times are evil. It appears that Satan is winning the battle for the hearts of men. We are reminded that God will not always strive with man. The day of grace will one day be over. The opportunities for worship and witness and service on earth will soon be forever ended. This is why we must understand what the will of the Lord is. If we don’t, all we are doing amounts wasted energy. It is possible to carry on the work of the Lord in our own will and in our own energy and completely out of the will of the Lord.

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12. The root meaning of the word translated number in “teach us to number our days” is “to weigh” or “to measure.” We are to place each day in the balance and make it tip the scales in a way that will bring glory to God and blessing to the lives of others.

When the great artist Raphael died at the early age of 37, friends and relatives carried his marvelous but unfinished painting, “The Transfiguration” in the funeral procession. His family felt that because of the limited time he was allotted to use his creative genius, the painting was an appropriate symbol of his unfulfilled earthly aspirations.

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour. --Anon.

WE MUST LIVE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (V.18) "Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit."

The scriptures do not condemn the use of wine, but they do condemn the abuse of it to the extent that it takes over a person's life and has him or her under its influence. This is when it becomes habit forming, or offends the weak conscience of another, or hurts one's testimony. We all know that alcohol is our nation's number one drug. Just this week we have seen how it was a powerful influence along with other drugs in the life of singer Whitney Houston. She was more under its influence than she was under the Holy Spirit. She was raised in a Baptist Church and developed her talent singing in the choir.

Paul is saying that both wine and the Spirit can have a powerful influence over us but not at the same time. His guidance is to choose the Spirit to be our powerful influence. In both situations a person is under a power outside of himself or herself, both are intense, and both affects a person's walk and behavior.

But under the influence of the Spirit life is different. Under his influence a person wants to partake and share with others psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. There is a song in the heart singing and making melody to the Lord. There is gratitude to the Lord for all of his blessings. There is a boldness in witness, power for service, generosity toward others, and a desire to exalt Christ.

The following incident is taken from an experience of Charles H. Spurgeon with an atheist. Spurgeon was a Baptist Preacher in London.

There was an atheist in the vicinity of Mr. Spurgeon's home and he was very ugly to anyone who believed the Bible. Mr. Spurgeon asked the Lord to direct him in what he should read for morning devotions. Then he seemed strongly impressed to read the book of Joel in its entirety. When he came to the third chapter of Joel, he read the third verse: "And sold the girl for wine." Whereupon, Mr. Spurgeon checked his concordance to see how many times the word "girl" occurred in the Bible. To his great surprise, he found the word only occurred once.

A little later he thought he would take a walk. About a block and a half away he looked up and there was the atheist's house. He went up and knocked. The atheist growled, "Well, what do you want?" "I would like to read the Bible to you," Spurgeon replied. "The atheist began his usual abuse, then suddenly stopped and said, "Will you tell me how often the word 'girl' is in the Bible?" Mr. Spurgeon answered, "Once. "The atheist then said, "Tell me where it is found and I will let you in. "Spurgeon replied, ""Joel 3:3" The atheist then said, "Tell me before I let you in, how did you know it?" Mr. Spurgeon answered, "I haven't known it two hours. In my morning devotions I read the book of Joel." Then Mr. Spurgeon stepped in, and in half an hour the atheist was on his knees asking God to forgive his sins.

When our spirits are open to The Holy Spirit of God he will direct us in specific ways that will have an impact for the gospel of Christ. This causes us to enjoy being a Christian.

Praise Be To His Name!