

Why Be A Christian ?

Text : II Corinthians 5: 1-11

INTRODUCTION :

A. We live in an era when Christianity is losing favor with the world.

1. Muslim radicals seek to kill Christians.
2. Our own government increasingly strives to ban Christianity from public life.
 - a. People are being arrested for giving thanks for their food in public.
 - b. A W.W. I memorial cross in the middle of the desert is boxed in.
 - c. Strong efforts are underway to revise our history to remove our religious heritage.

B. Increasingly religious people are the objects of derision and ridicule.

1. Our culture is becoming ever more carnal in nature.
 - a. The highest value in life is self-satisfaction. (**seeking pleasure**)
 - b. Moral standards are sliding ever more rapidly. (**As long as it doesn't hurt me ..**)
2. Those who practice perverse behavior are aggressively pressing their agenda.
 - a. They demand acceptance and protection under the law. (**hold positions of power**)
 - b. They have taken over the entertainment industry. (**The righteous are ridiculed.**)
3. Tolerance has become a more important value than virtue.
 - a. By law, evil is now being taught in our schools under the guise of tolerance.
 - b. Christians are becoming the only group that's not tolerated.

C. In our country, those who practice Christianity are now in the minority.

1. Our country was founded by Christians seeking religious freedom.
 - a. Those first settlers were passionate about their faith. (**Christianity was assumed.**)
 - b. In the founding documents they protected their religious freedoms.
 - c. The only restriction was the ability of the government to impose one sect on all.
2. Therefore, in the past, most people in this country went to church from time to time.
 - a. Being an atheist was not socially acceptable.
 - b. Many who went to church did not truly believe, but at least they went.
3. Today, in spite of our past, many claim to be Christian, but don't practice any religion.
 - a. On any given week, the percentage of people who attend church services is small.
 - b. 52% of the people in this city have not been in any church building in a year.

TRANSITION :

**In an atmosphere like this, why would anyone want to be a Christian ?
What advantage is being A Christian ? Actually, there are many.**

I. Christians live longer than those who do not live by faith.

A. Many studies show that those who actively practice Christianity live longer.

1. University of Texas study :
 - a. 126,000 people
 - b. Christians were 29% more likely to live longer than non-churchgoers.
 - c. Church attenders live an average of up to 7 yrs longer than those who don't.
2. Duke University study :
 - a. 2391 people who were at least 65 years old
 - b. Those who attend church and also pray daily are 40% less likely to have high blood pressure.
 - c. Elderly churchgoers had better mental health as well as better physical health.

B. The Christian lifestyle is much more healthy.

1. Abstinence from drunkenness produces longer lives.
 - a. Reduces incidences of cirrhosis of the liver and brain shrinkage.
 - b. It provides for a more stable life, more secure employment, better marriages, etc.
 - c. Sober people have fewer accidents, especially while driving. (**Injuries in fights**)
2. Christians are not as likely to be exposed to the diseases associated with vices.
 - a. They are monogamous so they are not exposed to STDs. (**Aids, herpes, etc.**)
 - b. Christians don't smoke so they aren't as likely to have lung cancer or heart disease.

C. Practicing Christians have more stable marriages. (35% less likely to divorce)

1. Love (*other people thinking*) is at the very foundation of Christianity. (**Mt. 22**)
2. Stable marriages add years to one's life.

D. People who are pro-actively Christian tend to be more financially stable.

1. Christians are more employable.
 - a. Less apt to be involved in activities that make them unemployable.
 - b. Get along better with coworkers and employers. (**work harder & miss less**)
2. They do not participate in vices. (**worldly pleasures are expensive & addictive**)

II. The Christian life is happier.

A. Overall, stable lives are more happy and less stressed.

1. People are creatures of habit.
 - a. Children do best on a regular schedule.
 - b. In old age a scheduled life is essential to survival.
2. Those who center their lives around God have stability.
 - a. The disciplined life is the most healthy. (**That's why married men live longer.**)
 - b. There is a consistent upward direction in their lives. (*a feeling of certainty*)
3. Christianity fulfills man's need for predictability.

B. Things that typically foster conflict are not part of the Christian's lifestyle.

1. The one who loves others is not in competition with others. (**rivalry = conflict**)
 - a. The Christian seeks to elevate others.
 - b. Thus, others do not view him as a threat. (*in workplace, in community, etc.*)

* **If you help enough other people get what they want out of life, along the way you'll get what you want.**
2. Christians do not get involved in immorality.
 - a. They do not get into conflict with others over conquests.
 - b. Being faithful mates and not focused on money they avoid conflict with their spouse.
3. Christians place a value on living at peace with others, not on elevating self.
 - a. **Rom. 12: 18-** **If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**
 - b. **II Cor. 13:11-** **Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.** (**Cf- I Thes. 5: 13b , Mark 9: 50**)

C. Being a part of the church makes the Christian happier.

1. All normal people have the need to feel a part of something bigger than themselves.
 - a. Many are searching for meaning in their lives.
 - b. Christians have found it in Christ and His church.
2. The church is the only thing on earth which is eternal.
 - a. God adds ALL saved people to His church. (**Man has a need to worship.**)
 - b. His church will be transferred to Heaven.
3. The function of the church is to be the vestibule of Heaven. (*entrance way*)
 - a. No one gets into Heaven apart from Christ. (**Christ adds all to His church.**)
 - b. Therefore, bringing people into the church is the only eternal endeavor.

4. Being in the church fulfills one's need for acceptance.
 - a. The church is a place where one is accepted.

Rom. 15:7- Therefore, accept one another,
just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
 - b. The church is a family where everyone is loved.
 - 1) Love is the foundation of Christianity. (*Jesus commanded us to love.*)

John 13: 35- “By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another.” (Cf. .. **Matt. 22: 37-40**)
 - 2) Love is directly commanded. (*3 Apostles commanded us to love.*)

Rom. 13: 8- Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another;
for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

I Pet. 1: 22- Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a
sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

I John. 4: 7- Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
5. The love of the church gives one the security of knowing that he will never have to face troubles alone.
 - a. Love demands that Christians come to each other's aide. (**I John 3: 17f**)
 - b. Love demands that we reinforce each other spiritually. (**Gal. 6: 1-2**)

D. Being a Christian enables one to live free of guilt.

1. Psychologists and psychiatrists make millions from those who are laden with guilt.
 2. Christians live knowing their sins are forgiven.
 - a. **Col. 2: 13-** When you were dead in your transgressions ... He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,
 - b. **I John 1: 6-2:2** ... So long as the Christian walks humbly before God his sins are continually forgiven.
 3. The results of continual forgiveness are :
 - a. Confidence before God.

Rom. 8: 1- Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - b. Peace within as well as with God.

Phil. 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- * Only the Christian can live in complete confidence.**

III. The eternal future of the Christian is secure in Christ.

A. Because the Christian has no conflict with God, he has no fear of His judgment.

1. The Christian will stand before God's judgment innocent of all charges.

Rom. 8: 1- Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2. Because there are no charges, there will be no fear.

I John 4: 18- There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

B. The Christian goes to meet God with an attitude of anticipation and of Joy.

1. **II Tim 4.6- 8** For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; **8** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2. **Jude 24** Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

C. Thus, the focus of the Christian's life is making sure we receive God's promise.

1. Our hope is not based upon what we have our ability to do, but upon what Christ is willing to give us as a gift.

Eph. 2: 8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

2. We keep our faith firmly squared upon the promises of our Lord.

John 14: 1-3 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. **3** If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

D. Christians bear the burdens and hardships of this life knowing what comes next is better than we can even comprehend.

1. We live in anticipation.

Read ... Romans 8: 18-25

2. We long to be with our Lord.

Read ... II Cor. 8: 5-1-11

CONCLUSION :

A. There are many advantages in being a Christian.

1. Christianity enables one to live a longer life.
2. Christianity causes one to be happier in this life.
3. Christianity give one the anticipation of Heaven.

*** The more this earthly temple deteriorates, the greater our expectancy.**

B. Jesus died to give you these wonderful advantages.

1. Have you accepted them ?
2. If not, will you accept His gift today ?
2. Will you :
 - a. confess your faith in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God ?
 - b. commit your life to serving him ?
 - c. seal your covenant with Him by being immersed for the forgiveness of sins ?
 - d. live the rest of your life in anxious expectation of His return ?

INVITATION :