Two Faces Of Christianity

Intro: Everything in life is punctuated with pleasant and unpleasant experiences and emotions. That is also true of the Christian life. In writing to the Philippians, Paul reveals some of the joys and sorrows of a Christian life. Notice what he writes, Phi. 4:10-13 “10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Thus, let us study some of the sorrows (as we do not want to disillusion anyone as the Christian life is not a bed of ease) and some of the joys of the Christian life. Possibly we can persuade you to become one.

I. Some Unpleasant Features Of The Christian Life.

A. We face a world steeped in sin.
   1. Our hearts ache to see the grip sin has upon the world.
   2. The results of sin to the sinner brings sadness to the Christian.
      a. Acts 17:16 “16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.”
      b. Psa. 119:136 “136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.”

B. Few will hear and obey the Gospel.
   1. We work hard inviting people to our services (or do we?), yet few will come.
   2. Many who do come are disinterested or prejudiced; Mat. 13:15 “15 For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”
   3. We preach God’s Word with a heart full of love, yet they often become offended and will not obey the truth.
   4. Mat. 7:13-14 “13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

C. Indifference on the part of those who have obeyed the Gospel.
   1. Rev. 2-3.
      a. Of the seven churches in Asia, only two proved to be faithful (Smyrna and Philadelphia).
      b. The other five were reprimanded (notice these relating to indifference):
         (1) Ephesus: Rev. 2:4 “4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”
         (2) Sardis: Rev. 3:1 “1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”
         (3) Laodicea: Rev. 3:15, 17 “15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”
None of these congregations are in existence today.

Imagine the grief of the ones who labored to establish these congregations.

How heart-rending today to see how lukewarm some members of the church are.

How much could be accomplished if all were zealous of good works; Tit. 2:14 “14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

The latter end is worse with them; 2 Pet. 2:20-22 “20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

D. Worldliness in the church.

1. Notice Paul’s language in speaking about the worldliness and sin in the church at Corinth; 2 Cor. 2:4 “4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.”

2. We observe a great deal of worldliness in the church today.

   a. Congregations:
      (1) Recreation craze
      (2) Elaborate buildings
      (3) Pomp and circumstance

   b. Individuals:
      (1) Immodest apparel
      (2) Dancing
      (3) Drinking alcoholic beverages
      (4) Tobacco use
      (5) Materialism and Covetousness
      (6) Backbiters and gossipers

3. It is sad to have to withdraw from such.

   a. Our Lord has commanded it; 2 The. 3:6 “6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

   b. Because of its unpleasantness, it is neglected in the church today.

E. Erroneous doctrines destroying the church.

1. Jesus warned of false teachers; Mat. 7:15 “15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

2. They come in secretly and will lead many astray;

   a. 2 Pet. 2:1-2 “1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

   b. Sadly, in so many places today, error can come in openly and unopposed.

3. Any doctrine that arises in denominationalism soon makes its way into the Lord’s church.
II. SOME PLEASURES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. Satisfaction knowing it is the best and most important life.
   1. No greater joy comes to an individual than the knowledge of being engaged in the best and most important life.
   2. There is the satisfaction of knowing our sins have been taken away.
      a. We feel the burden of sin.
         (1) Psa. 38:4 “For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”
         (2) Heb. 12:1 “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”
      b. That burden is removed in becoming a Christian.
         (1) Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
         (2) Rom. 6:6-7 “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
   3. There is the satisfaction of knowing we have purpose in life.
      a. Ecc. 12:13 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”
      b. Acts 17:26-27 “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:”
   4. There is satisfaction knowing we have peace and joy in life.
      a. Phi. 4:4-7 “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
      b. Rom. 5:1 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”
      c. 1 Th. 5:16 “Rejoice evermore.”

B. The Realization of Christ’s presence.
   1. Mat. 28:20 “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
   2. John 14:23 “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”
   3. Phi. 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
   4. Heb. 13:5-6 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”
   5. 1 Pet. 5:7 “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

C. The joy of seeing people accept Christ.
   1. Acts 15:3 “And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.”
2. Luke 15: 6, 9-10, 23-24, 32 “6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost…. 9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth…. 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry…. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

D. The joy of seeing Christians develop into maturity.
1. Anxiety surrounds the birth of every child, but joy is added to joy in watching that child develop.
2. 2 John 4 “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”
3. 3 John 4 “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

E. Loving fellowship with the faithful.
1. “I feel as if I already know you for we are brethren.”
2. There is no fellowship or association to equal that of Christianity.
3. Having fellowship with faithful brethren is associating with the greatest people on earth.

F. The hope of reward.
1. Rom. 8:24 “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”
2. 2 Tim. 4:7-8 “7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”
3. Add this to the other pleasures mentioned and the joy of being a Christian overcomes the sorrows of the Christian life.

G. Death
1. Psa. 116:15 “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”
2. Phi. 1:21, 23 “21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”
3. Rev. 14:13 “13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

Conclusion: Why not become a Christian today and learn the “peace that passeth all understanding” that only the Lord can give?