

What We Believe: Christian Living

Text: Romans 12.1–2; 1 Peter 1.15–16; Romans 6.2–4

Theme: God's gospel compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world.

Introduction — engaged in a conversation on X, formerly known as Twitter

- person talking that Jesus and Paul contradict each other when comes to law & grace
- Jesus said: if you love me, keep my commandments
- Paul said: not under law but under grace
- attempted to show law-gospel distinctive, but person refused to listen
- sadly, very confused how a believer is to live the Christian life

Legalists: merit God's favor through grunt-it-out obedience to His law

- made right with God by what we do, how we obey, way we live
- "I live my life by Ten Commandments" type of thing
- problem, hope you know by now: we cannot obey law personally, perfectly, perpetually
- **Galatians 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.**
- our salvation comes from Christ, His obedience, and His righteousness
- only in union with Him by grace through faith can we be saved & live a godly life

License, or antinomianism: salvation by grace, Christian living by grace, who needs laws

- God loves us no matter what, so how we live doesn't matter
- problem is still with us today as much as early church
- **Jude 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**
- Paul's answer to this licentiousness comes in letter to Romans
- **Romans 6:2-4 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

In union with Christ, grace and godliness coexist

- died with Christ, who is propitiation for our sins
- buried with Christ, death of old man, old nature real and powerful
- raised with Christ, given new life
- this is gospel
- along with justification, sanctification—being made holy—comes with gospel
- so much so that we can say:

God's gospel compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world

This is what Article #8 of our Statement of Faith is all about. So, let's read it together:

EFCA Statement of Faith, Article #8

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Firstly, let's make sure we see difference & union of...

I. JUSTIFYING GRACE, SANCTIFYING POWER

- spent good deal of time proclaiming: justified by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone declared in the Scriptures alone so God alone gets the glory
- justification is a once-for-all declaration by God
- not repeated, not on-going, not given to each in increments
- **Romans 8.1 declares: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**
- but this justifying faith is not alone, not limited to simply forgiving us our sins
- same God who justifies us, also sanctifies us
- same grace working in us to bring all this about
- Paul, in writing to Timothy, sums it up best:
- **2 Timothy 1:9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,**
- justification & sanctification: don't confuse them, mix them
- but do not separate them either; both part of God's power-working grace in Christ in us
- we are declared righteous because of Christ's work & obedience
- we are clothed in Christ's righteousness because only way we are seen as perfectly obedient
- but also, like a work in progress, we become more holy as we live out life in Christ
- Christ did not come to just wipe a dirty slate clean
- came to make whole new slate that looks just like Him
- **Titus 2:11-12 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.**

This gracious work of God is what empowers us to...

II. OBEY THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

- **Mark 12:28-31 28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."**
- Jesus said these sum up all the Law and the Prophets

- this is what God wants from us

1. Loving God above all things

- there is none greater to love, to know, to serve, to worship
- we know God is love, therefore we are to love Him in return
- to love Him with everything we are and have is to fulfill our purpose as humans
- this can only happen through union with Christ
- when we are joined with Christ, we can worship rightly, serve properly, give thanks well

2. Loving others with everything we have

- we are Christ's ambassadors on earth
- we are to represent Father, Son, and Spirit to others
- to love others as ourselves is not command to self-love first
- goodness knows we do not need to be told to do that
- rather, command is to curb that self-love and turn it outward to others

1) Inside the church

• **John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.**

- world will know we are Christ's by way in which we love each other as Christians
- this comes sacrificially: not just when convenient or to only those we like
- so, live out the "one another's" of Scripture
- encourage one another, honor one another, love one another, bear with each other

• **Galatians 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

2) Outside the church

- others need to see and know this love as well
- unbelieving world watching and waiting to see if real, genuine
- so we are to help care for poor, needy, those who are powerless, vulnerable
- minorities, disabled, unborn, mistreated and more
- we are to love and help uphold justice as well
- should Christians be involved in politics?
- question almost seems absurd to me: of course we should
- slavery in Britain's empire was abolished by a Christian man stood for justice
- God used William Wilberforce in Parliament to bring this about
- should be no less so today, at whatever level of gov't
- we can still have voice: call, email, write, text gov't officials
- encourage when they do what is right
- speak gently, but firmly when they are wrong

To live the Christian life is not easy so we must be aware of...

III. OUR SPIRITUAL BATTLE

• **1 Peter 5:8-9 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.**

- we are reminded that ours is not a physical war, but a spiritual one

- **Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1. The armor of God

- in Ephesians 6, Paul instructs us to put on the armor of God
- time does not permit to cover each piece
- but when you know what each is, what you see is Christ
- you have God's truth around you, Christ's righteousness in & over your heart, feet ready with the gospel, faith as a shield to protect you, Christ's very salvation on your head, and His Word in your hand
- use it, learn to wield it all well
- and know that there is no enemy that can stand against us as Christ's church
- this is why I also believe it is nearly impossible to be a Christian outside the church
- behind enemy lines, all alone? What a foolish and losing proposition that is

2. Jesus' Victory is already won!

- our battle is not easy and there are casualties
- but we should never be discouraged for our victory is assured
- I use to video record NBA championship games between Lakers/Celtics back in day
- often couldn't watch live so hoped to avoid hearing score until I had watched
- but others would let it slip who won
- that's okay; I could watch game knowing with confidence my team had won!
- this is confidence you & I have in this battle: Christ has secured the victory
- God has "disarmed the powers and authorities" — Colossians 2.15
- Jesus has "overcome the world" — John 16.33
- we have no condemnation hanging over us — Romans 8.1
- know this: greater is He who is in you and than he who is in the world — 1 John 4.4

This spiritual battle is who are against, but what we fight for comes through...

IV. FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION

- well, finally, our statement of faith addresses Christ's great commission of His followers
- **Matthew 28:18-20** 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1. Make disciples

- primary command is to make disciples
- this is a learner, a student of Jesus Christ: we learn from the One who saves us
- this commission takes us all over the world as well, since they are of all nations
- we proclaim the gospel, we train them up in the Word, and then we send them out too

2. Word and deed

- not clear if Francis of Assisi was originator of this, but often gets credit for it
- Preach the gospel all the time; if necessary use words
- problem is this is just not biblical

• **Romans 10:14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?**

- so we must tell them, proclaim to them, declare Christ is Lord and Savior
- but our Christian living will give evidence to change within us
- our deeds will be the fruit which proves what God has done

Living for Jesus through earth's little while,
My dearest treasure, the light of His smile,
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him!
O Jesus, Lord and Savior,
I give myself to Thee;
For Thou, in Thy atonement,
Didst give Thyself for me.
I own no other master;
My heart shall be Thy throne.
My life I give, henceforth to live,
O Christ, for Thee alone.

Conclusion –

- **2 Timothy 1:9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,**

- grace of God takes away our sin
- grace of God gives us new life
- grace of God empowers us to live this new life
- grace of God lets us love God & neighbor
- grace of God sees us through our warfare
- grace of God enables us to obey Great Commission
- God's gospel, by its very nature, compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world.