

What do you Get for Being a Christian?

Rom. 8:18-25

07/19/20

What exactly do you get for following Christ? Does the **sun shine brighter** for you? No. The Sun is the same for Christians and non christians alike. Well then, does the **rain adapt itself** more readily to your needs? Does your Christian parade get rained on less than non-christian parades? No. Certainly, as a Christian you must be **more successful** than others? No. Not necessarily. As a matter of fact those who follow Christ often end up with less than others because of their refusal to be dishonest. Alright. Then how about disease? Certainly Christians are **more germ free than non-Christians**. No. Disease seems to be rather indiscriminate. Christians get sick and die just like anybody else.

By this time you're saying to yourself: "Um pastor, you're not being very persuasive here!" True, but I am being very honest....and I'm not quite finished being honest. There is actually something that we get for following Christ and it's more valuable than anything on earth: We get hope.

People who are obviously sinful, like you and me, by faith have been made eternal children of God. Not only do we have forgiveness of sins, but our souls are redeemed and our bodies will be raised, restored, and glorified. **This is our hope**. And this **Hope** is the peculiar possession and distinction that belongs to those who have been justified by the blood of Christ Jesus.

Critics like to refer to this hope that we have as the 'Pie in the Sky, believing that our faith is a distraction and has little bearing on life in this world, but that's not true. The hope that we have in Christ not only calms our hearts when it comes to the future, but it also informs our minds for the present. We know that beyond this world and all of the trouble that's in it there is more, more to reality than what can presently be seen by the eyes. There is the kingdom of God which is ours. Knowing this as we do can make a whole lot of difference

How to explain this difference? In Roman 8:22 Paul compares the suffering of this world to a woman going through the pains of childbirth. It has been said, that there are few things more painful than giving birth. But the pain of childbirth, which is as intense as pain can be is different from just regular pain. It is different for two very distinct reasons:

First, the woman knows that the pain is normal and will resolve itself. Their mothers told them about it. They even read books and take classes and make their husbands take the classes too. What they learn is that the pain of childbirth is normal and survivable

Second, the woman knows that at the end there will arrive a new little member of the family. What pain there might be in labor melts away into joy at the end of it. The pain of childbirth is different because it is endured with knowledge and hope.

The hope that we have in Christ is different in the same way. **First** we know that suffering is normal in this broken world and sinful world. and **Second** we know that at the end we will have new life for ourselves and also for the world itself. Paul explains **"And we ourselves groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."** A Christian's suffering is made more bearable by the knowledge and hope that we have.

Let's look at it from the other side. Let's look at the world through eyes of someone who does not have Christ and does not have the hope that he gives. Let's use the illustration of the

childbirth again. Imagine, if it were possible for a woman in our day to have grown up and have never heard about childbirth and had no inkling of what has come over her when she gets pregnant. It would start with morning sickness and then over the following months, great swelling of the abdomen. She would think it some sickness, perhaps cancer. Towards the end, the water would break with the frightening gush, then would come the contractions. How frightening it would all be. She would have neither knowledge or hope. Her pain would be 1000 times more scary.

This is how people who don't have Christ see the world. They don't really know what's going on and they have no hope. Many are saying they don't want to bring children into a world like this. Like this? They deny the obvious abundance of blessings and all that is needed to sustain us. They dwell only on a few bad societal problems which they see from only one side. They rage. Most of the darkness they live in has been created by their own anger. This is how they can be overcome with great fear over a disease that kills about 1/4 of 1% of all people who catch it. This is why they are weeping over a world that was supposed to have burned up, and become incapable grow enough food by 2012. Yes, that's what we were told. Now an infantile congresswoman tells us we only got 12 years left. They live in faithless fear and want us all to live in faithless fear. They got nothing. They don't have a God who has made it clear that the world will end when he says it will end and no sooner. They don't have the kingdom of God. They don't have eternity. They don't have hope. Of course they are afraid.

Are you beginning to understand the true value of the hope that you have? The hope we have in Christ influences every aspect of life, from our outlook, to our demeanor, even our moods. We know what's going on. And we know what the future will bring; that it will be good. The hope that we have in Christ is, by far the greatest treasure there is. Despite corruption and decay that we see with our eyes. we have a hope that cannot be taken away from us. And it makes all the difference!

And one of the reasons we are still here is so we can give an account of that hope that we have. As people struggle and suffer through the pain of this sin-sick world. We are to be that calm and reassuring voice. Proclaiming both law which explains why things are happening like they are and Gospel, which is what God has done about it through his son. we can give an account of the hope that we have. Christ died for sinners. Christ redeems sinners. Christ gives life eternal.

People often say that the Christian message is not relevant, but as you can see, it's entirely relevant and meaningful for life in the here and now. In fact, when all is said and done. And Jesus is revealed to be all in all, we will see that he is the meaning. AMEN