

Sunday, April 18th, 2010

Living Hope EFC

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Why Christians Want to Live for God. 12:1-2.

I'd like to tell you two stories and ask a question:

Story one: Mike's Home Run.

When Mike was 13 or 14, he loved to play baseball, and he was playing for a coach who was a good friend of ours. One game he did something that got him into a bit of trouble.

- He through a cup of ice & some of it hit the coach, who thought Mike intentionally threw the ice because he was upset with him.
- The coach got offended, so Mike sat on the bench the rest of that game & the next game, until the last two innings. He finally got to bat, and hit a home run, the only run of the game for his team.

Story two: Queen Elizabeth's would-be Assassin. -Green, 176

The story of an attempted assassination of the first Queen Elizabeth.

A woman dressed as a male page and hid in the Queen's closet. She didn't realize that the queen's attendants always made a careful search of her bedroom before she retired. They found the woman hidden behind her gowns and brought her to the queen.

The woman realized her case was hopeless, and threw herself down on her knees and pleaded for the queen to show her grace.

The queen looked at her coldly and quietly said, "**If I show you grace, what promise will you make for the future**"

The woman looked up at her and said, "**Grace that has conditions and precautions is not grace at all.**"

Queen Elizabeth responded: "You are right. I pardon you by my grace." **And they led her away a free woman!**

Question: Which do you think became a "grateful, committed servant" of his superior, Mike or the would-be-assassin?

- History tells that from that moment on Queen Elizabeth had *no more faithful & devoted servant that that woman who received her grace.*
- On the other hand, I'm not sure what you call what Mike received from his coach? Punishment? An unjust discipline? = NOT mercy.
- But whatever it was – it did not make Mike a more committed player.

The same is true about our view of God, and the degree of our willingness to commit our lives to Him.

- If we view God as treating us unjustly, harshly, as unfair, we will not want to play on His team. We will not want to be around Him.
- IF, on the other hand, we know deep in our being that God has shown us great mercy, spared us from deserved justice, then loving & serving Him will be our very nature.

Paul does not talk to us about becoming fully devoted, committed “living sacrifices” of God, until he has thoroughly taught us about God’s mercy.

NOTE THE PATTERN IN THE EPISTLES

Paul begins his letters with doctrine, then moves on to practice, conduct.

- First, we must understand what God has done. Then what He expects

Paul’s MESSAGE in ROMANS 12:1-2:

1- Because of God’s great mercy toward mankind – our reasonable response is to live lives fully committed to Him.

2- This will happen as our minds are constantly controlled by God’s truth

Vs. 1: Because of God’s great mercy – our reasonable response is to live a life totally committed to pleasing Him.

1. Understanding God’s Mercy is Key!

- **Rom.3:23!** Paul has explained our condition: **1:18-32, 2:1-11, 3:10-**
- NOW – perhaps you think you’re different. You have seek after God.
- ...We may seek something. *BUT none seeks a God who tells us we are unacceptable, sinful, deserving of wrath & judgment.*
- **Rom.5:6-10.** God did for us, what Queen Elizabeth did for her would-be-assassin. He shows us GRACE, MERCY – undeserved!
- **Rom.6:23, 8:1, 11, 14-18, 31-** God forgave our sin & made us **Sons**.
- God’s mercy has provided for us ETERNAL LIFE in heaven!

WE are asked to live by faith, in this reality! This new realm! (12:1)

FAITH = “Assurance of things hope for, evidence of things not seen.”

- We cannot see God, Jesus, our sins on the cross, our home in heaven
- God tells us this is all true. Our conscience & spirit – witness it is so.
- **The Result:** We are asked, invited to live as though the invisible is more true of our identity & of God’s present work in the world, than what our *five senses* tell us is reality.
- **‘What God has done, is doing, will do – is something so profound that it has no equals for us – in this present life.**

(Pray&Watch – Neal & Judy Brower, 15)

“We are designed by an eternal, invisible God to be eternal.

- Everything we see on this earth is temporal.

“Since birth we’ve been trained to desire, seek after, be satisfied in the tangible and temporary. We’re trying to suck enough out of the things we enjoy in this life to fill up our hearts – which have eternal capacity.

- ***That means we have to hold tight to what we have & be ready to fight for what we want - based upon our five senses.***
- **“The Result** = is a life filled with anxiety & fear. Can my friend be trusted? Will the economy crash? Will the gov’t turn on us? Is cancer eating me alive & I don’t know it? Will one of our kids or grandkids go over the deep end? Will I ever find a life partner? Is my

spouse cheating on me? Will an empty nest reveal an empty marriage? Is my job the next one out? Is there any \$ security?"

Pray& Watch: Neal & Judy Brower make three insightful statements:

(1) "Deep & lasting purpose & joy can only be found in a life devoted to what cannot be seen."

(12) To what God has planned for us.

(2) Only frustration & disappointment awaits those depending on the temporary to satisfy, when, as eternal beings, we were created to be satisfied by eternal things. 16 We have eternal void, only God satisfies.

(3) "If we don't ***change our perspective*** on what matters, we will spend our lives confused, disappointed & frustrated by what God is doing." 21

- More is happening in the spiritual, unseen realm, and in the hidden places of human hearts, than we can conceive.
- The Father wants us to live where He is working out His K'dom plans
- "Everything God is doing is about eternity. He is always at work in the invisible parts of people, to reveal the invisible to us, 22.
- **Our purpose on earth is to be used by God for things not seen**, for the reconciling of the invisible parts of people to their eternal God,15.
- **God asks us to be HIS HANDS, FEET, VOICE, PRESENCE – fulltime!**

2. God wants what we know, to be lived out in our "bodies."

- This is the definition of "integrity:" *what we know & do line up.*
- We are to make a conscious decision, based upon what we know to be true about our identity and God's mercy, to offer our bodies as...

ILLUS: *Pig & Chicken.*

A pig and a chicken were discussing how they could contribute to the world hunger situation. The Chicken: I'll give eggs and you give ham."

The Pig: "That's easy for you to say. For you it means a contribution. For me – it means **total commitment.**"

"Bodies:" It is one thing for us to think good thoughts, have good intentions, desire to serve God/ others. But these must not be short-circuited. **What is inside – must come out** – if it is to make a difference.

"Living Sacrifices:" A picture of OT *fellowship offering*. The Israelites would bring an animal offering to God as a sign of gratitude for God's forgiveness & blessings. They gave the whole animal to God.

- And these sacrifices were "without blemish." **Holy, acceptable!**

PONT: Our bodies are the instruments through which we express ourselves and relate to others. 1 Cor.10:31 = Rom.12-15! - WWJD

- **As God's children, He wants us to have a family resemblance.**

"Reasonable service/ act of worship:" To not live for God, while claiming to be God's child – may be what a lot of people do, but it is not the normal Christian life!

- This is true worship! John 4:24 – “in spirit and in truth.”

Q: Should our loyalty to God be more than to our favorite football team, baseball team, our occupation, political cause, or to another person?

Q: SO WHAT IS THE SECRET TO DOING THIS?

Vs. 2: This will happen as our minds are constantly controlled by God’s truth instead of what our five senses see in this world.

Our commitment to God and others will never exceed our thought life!

- **Christian ethics and practices are always built upon understanding God’s Revelation.**
- The further away from Biblical Revelation/ doctrine a society or church gets, the further from Christlike conduct it will stray.

The First part in accomplishing this is “Do not be conformed:” = “To be molded after a certain model, the scheme of this age/ world.”

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- **1 John 2:15-17.** This is the opposite of all we are as eternal beings.
 - It is the opposite of what God is doing, calling people to know Him.
 - **Being conformed to *this age* means** rooting our aspirations, desires, achievements, finding our satisfaction & significance—in the temporal.
 - **Jesus warns us of this danger: Matt.13:22.** Worries, riches, pleasures choke out the Word of God in us.
 - Gal.1:4 Christ gave Himself to rescue us from the *present “age.”*
 - 2 Cor.4:4 “The god of *this “age”* has blinded minds ...”
 - *This “world” is a philosophy of living that is contrary to God’s truth.*

BALANCE: We can enjoy and even pursue things that are valued in this life, but it would be foolish to “love them,” and set our security or degree of satisfaction upon them. **They are not secure, permanent, or eternal.**

- They are often presented to us as worthy of life investment. **Mt.6:33**

The present world, with its values, agendas & priorities confines the soul to blindness with reference to God’s concerns, & robs of eternal reward.

The Second part in living a lifestyle committed to God is: = “Being **transformed in our minds.**” *We must tell ourselves the truth about life!*

- This is not easy – because it goes contrary to our natural bent.
- We must constantly tell ourselves what God says to be true.
- God is right here, working for the eternal kingdom in men’s hearts.

“If we don’t change our perspective on what matters, we will spend our lives confused, disappointed & frustrated by what God is doing.” 21

“Transformed:” = “μεταμορφω” – metamorphosis.

- **“To Change dramatically from one form to another.”** From inside out.
- **2 Cor.3:18** – This is what God is working on in us! Is it our work?

- Used of Christ's *transfiguration*. His actual internal glory spilled out!
- POINT:** God wants us to look at His truth about reality, His worldview, our identity – so consistently – that we actually live it as our lifestyle.

ILLUS: Reading God's Word: Like taking **Vitamins**. – Green, 29

Some people expect God's Word to hit them like a jolt of adrenaline every time they read it. If it doesn't – something is wrong.

- Although this happens periodically God's Word is **more like vitamins**
- People taking vitamins do so for the long-term benefits, not because every time they swallow them they are hit with a jolt of energy.
- Over the long term, vitamins built up resistance to disease, add to our health and general well being.

ILLUS: One young believer was discouraged in his attempts to read and remember the Bible. He said: "It's no use. Not matter how much I read I always forget it."

His friend told him: "When you pour water over **a sieve**, no matter how much you pour, *you don't collect much*. **But at least you end up with a clean sieve.** – Green29

Spurgeon: A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't." - Green, 29.

POINT: You will know the TRUTH & the truth will set you free!

- David: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living..."
- Psalm 1: Blessed is the man who does not sit, stand, walk...

SUMMARY

- If we view God as treating us unjustly, harshly, as unfair, we will not want to play on His team. We will not want to be around Him.
- IF, on the other hand, we know deep in our being that God has shown us great mercy, spared us from deserved justice, then loving & serving Him will be our very nature.
- **We are asked to live as though the invisible is more true of our identity & of God's present work in the world, than what our *five senses* tell us.**
- **'What God has done, is doing, will do – is something so profound that it has no equals for us – in this present life.**
 - Our commitment to God & others will never exceed our thought life

There are two choices before us:

1 – Live according to the influence upon our five senses, and be unfulfilled, disappointed, frustrated, finding no final purpose/ significance

2 – OR live lives fully devoted to God, telling ourselves the truth about the fleeting nature of this world and the eternal nature of God's Kingdom, and discovering God's will for daily living.

The choices we make will determine the results we receive.