

The True Way of Keeping Christmas (Reading)

by George Whitefield

The true way of keeping Christmas is by spending time in reading, praying, and religious conversation, using the good things of life with moderation, and regarding the poor and worldly business.

Duration: 22:26

Scripture: Romans 3:20, Ephesians 5:15

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

The sermon transcript emphasizes the importance of not wasting time on worldly entertainments, especially during this season. It urges individuals to spend their time wisely, engaging in conversations that are profitable and centered around the wonders of redeeming love. The transcript encourages believers to share with one another the great things the Lord has done for their souls and to focus their conversations on Jesus. It also highlights the need to use time for reading, praying, and religious conversation, rather than indulging in activities that do not glorify God. The sermon concludes with a plea for individuals to consider the significance of their time and to prioritize the glory of God and the welfare of their souls.

Transcript

The Observation of the Birth of Christ, The Duty of All Christians, or the True Way of Keeping Christmas by George Whitefield Matthew 121 And she shall bring forth a son, and then shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. The celebration of the birth of Christ has been esteemed a duty by most who profess Christianity. When we consider the condescension and love of the Lord Jesus Christ in submitting to be born of a virgin, a poor sinful creature, and especially as he knew how he was to be treated in this world, that he was to be despised, scoffed at, and at last to die a painful, shameful, and ignominious death, that he should be treated as though he was the offscouring of all mankind, used not like the Son of Man, and therefore not at all like the Son of God, the consideration of these things should make us to admire the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was so willing to offer himself as a ransom for the sins of the people, that when the fullness of time was come, Christ came, made of a woman, made under the law.

He came according to the eternal counsel of the Father. He came not in glory or in splendor, not like him who brought all salvation with him, no, he was born in a stable and laid in a manger, oxen were his companions. O amazing condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ, to stoop to such low and poor things for

our sake! What love is this, what great and wonderful love was here, that the Son of God should come into our world in so mean a condition, to deliver us from the sin and misery in which we were involved by our fall in our first appearance.

And as all that proceeded from the springs must be muddy, because the fountain was so, the Lord Jesus Christ came to take our natures upon him, to die a shameful, a painful, and a cursed death for our sakes. He died for our sins, and to bring us to God, he cleansed us by his blood from the guilt of sin. He satisfied for our imperfections, and now, my brethren, we have access unto him with boldness.

He is a mediator between us and his offended father. Therefore, if we do but consider into what state and at how great a distance from God we are fallen, how vile our natures were, what a depravity, and how incapable to restore that image of God to our souls which we lost in our first appearance, when I consider these things, my brethren, and the Lord Jesus Christ came to restore us to that favor with God which we had lost, and that Christ not only came down with an intent to do it, but actually accomplished all that was in his heart towards us, that he raised and brought us into favor with God, that we might find kindness and mercy in his sight, surely this calls for some return of thanks on our part to our dear Redeemer, for this love and kindness to our souls. How just would it have been of him to have left us in that deplorable state in which we by our guilt had involved ourselves, for God could not nor can receive any additional good by our salvation, but it was love, mere love, it was free love, that brought the Lord Jesus Christ into the world about seventeen hundred years ago.

Why, shall we not remember the birth of our Jesus? Shall we yearly celebrate the birth of our temporal King, and shall that of the King of Kings be quite forgotten? Shall that only which ought to be had chiefly in remembrance be quite forgotten? God forbid. No, my dear brethren, let us celebrate and keep this festival of our church with joy in our hearts. Let the birth of a Redeemer which redeemed us from sin, from wrath, from death, from hell, be always remembered.

May the Savior's love never be forgotten, but may we sing forth all his love and glory as long as life shall last here, and through an endless eternity in the world above. May we chant forth the wonders of redeeming love and the riches of free grace amidst angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, without intermission for ever and ever. And as, my brethren, the time for keeping this festival is approaching, let us consider our duty in the true observation thereof of the right way for the glory of God and the good of immortal souls to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, an event which ought to be had in eternal remembrance.

It is my design to lay down rules for the true keeping of that time of Christmas which is now approaching. First, I shall show you when you may be said not to observe this festival aright. Number two, I shall show you when your observation and celebrating of this festival is done according to the glory of God and to the true manner of keeping of it.

Number three, shall conclude with an exhortation to all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to have a regard to your behavior at all times, but more especially, my dear brethren, on this solemn occasion. Number one, my brethren, I am to show when your celebration of this festival is not of the right kind. And first, you do not celebrate this aright when you spend most of your time in cards, dice, or gaming of any sort.

This is a season for which there is no more allowance for wasting of your precious time in those unlawful entertainments than any other. Persons are apt to flatter themselves that they are free and at liberty to

spend whole evenings now at cards, at dice, or any diversion whatsoever, to pass away as they call it a tedious evening. They can do anything now to pass away that which is hastening as fast as thought.

Time is always upon the wing. It is no sooner present, but it is past, and no sooner come, but it is gone. And have we so much to do, and so little time to do it in, and yet complain of time lying heavy upon our hands? It is well that, instead of having too much time, it be not found that we have got too little.

When we come to die, then we shall wish, my brethren, that we had made more account of our time, that we had improved it for the glory of God and the welfare of our immortal souls. Good God, how amazing is this consideration, that many can go to church in the morning and take the sacrament, and come home and spend the afternoon and evening in cards! Is this, my brethren, discerning the Lord's body? Is this taking the sacrament according to its institution? Is not this a pollution thereof, and making the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? Therefore, those of you who have made this your practice in times past, let me beseech you in the vows of mercy not to do so any more. For, indeed, it is earthly, it is sensual, it is devilish.

Consider what is said of those who eat and drink at the Lord's table unworthily, that they eat and drink their own damnation. And can they, my brethren, be said to eat and drink any otherwise, who no sooner go from the table of the Lord, but run to the diversions of the devil? Indeed, this is exceeding sinful and displeasing unto the Lord. Then forbear those diversions, which are so evil in themselves.

O be not found in those exercises, and in that pleasure, which you would not be found in when you come to die. Thus, my brethren, you see, it is not a right celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus to spend it in cards, dice, or any other diversions, which proceed so directly from the devil, and are destructive to all true goodness. Secondly, they cannot be said truly to celebrate this time, who spend their time in eating and drinking to excess.

This is the season when persons are apt to indulge themselves in all manner of luxury. Iniquity now abounds apace. Nothing is scarcely to be seen but things of the greatest extravagance imaginable, not only for the necessities of the body, but to pamper it in lust, to feed its vices, to make it go on in sin, to be a means for gratifying our carnal appetite.

This is a means to make us forget the Lord of glory. This makes us only fit to do such drudgery as the devil shall set us about. This is only preparing to run wheresoever the devil sins.

This, instead of denying ourselves, is indulging ourselves. This is not, nor cannot be called a celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ when we are making ourselves worse than the beasts that perish. I am not speaking against eating and drinking of the good things of life, but against eating and drinking of them to excess, because thus they unqualify us for the service of God and to our fellow creatures.

They make us unsociable and may occasion us to be guilty of saying and acting those things which we should be ashamed to think of if we had only ate or drank with moderation. Therefore, my dear brethren, let me beseech you to set a watch over yourselves. Be careful that you do not run into that company which may tempt you to evil, for would a man run himself into danger on purpose? Would a man enter himself into that company, where before he goes he knows he shall be exposed to great temptations? And therefore, if you have any reason to think that the company you are going into will be a temptation, I beseech you, by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, that you would not run into it.

How can you say, lead us not into temptation, when you are resolved to lead yourselves into it by running into the occasions of sins? You are commanded to keep from the appearance of evil, and do you do that by running into the place and company where it is like to be committed? No, this is so far from avoiding and shunning it, that it is a plain proof to the contrary. Therefore, if you are for observing this time, this festival of our church, let it not be done by running to excess, for you plainly see that those who are guilty thereof cannot be said properly to celebrate it. Thirdly, nor can they, my brethren, be said to keep or rightly observe the commemoration of the birth of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who neglect their worldly callings to follow pleasures and diversions.

Alas, many, instead of keeping this time as it ought to be, run into sin with greediness, instead of devoting their time to the Lord. It is only devoted to the devil and their own lusts. How many who thus misspend their time at this season, laid by the work of their callings for a considerable time, with no other view but to follow earthly, sensual, and devilish pleasures! If they should go to hear a sermon, or to a society, my brethren, the mouths of all the Pharisees at once are open against them, that they are not only going to be ruined themselves, but are going to ruin their families too.

They think it needless to make so much ado. This is being righteous over much. But you may be as wicked as you please, and they will not cry out.

However, when you are wicked over much, by serving the devil and your own pleasures for a week or a month together, then, my brethren, with them you are only taking a little recreation, spending your time in innocent diversions. No one cries out against you. There is no outcry that you are going to be ruined.

Again, if you give never so small a manner among the poor people of God for their relief, then you are robbing your families, and you are going to turn madmen. And in a few days you will be so methodistically mad that you are not fit for a polite gentleman's conversation. But if you spend one hundred times the money in playhouses and so on, on your lusts and pleasures, then you are liked and esteemed as a good friend and companion.

But, my dear brethren, these good companions in the world's account are never so in the Lord Jesus Christ's. You cannot serve God in mammon. You must either lose your lusts or your pleasures and delights, or you cannot expect to find favor with God.

For indeed, and indeed the ways that too many follow at this time are sinful. Yea, they are exceeding sinful. You see, they cannot be said to celebrate this holy time, who thus misspend their precious time to the neglect of their families.

Such are destroying themselves with a witness. Thus, my dear brethren, I have shown you who they are who do not observe this holy festival aright. 2. I come now in the second place to show you who they are who do rightly observe and truly celebrate the birth of our Redeemer.

And I shall show you who they are in two particulars, directly opposite to the others. And then, my brethren, take your choice. You must choose the one or the other.

There is no middle ground. You must either serve the Lord or bail. And therefore, my dear brethren, let me beg of you to consider first that those that spend their time aright and truly observe this festival, who spend their hours in reading, praying, and religious conversation, what can we do to employ our time to a more noble purpose than reading of what our dear Redeemer has done and suffered, to read that the King of

kings and the Lord of lords came from the throne and took upon Him the form of the meanest of His servants, and what great things He underwent.

This is in history worth reading. This is worth employing our time about. And surely when we read of the sufferings of our Savior, it should excite us to prayer that we might have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, that the blood which He spilled upon Mount Calvary in His death and crucifixion might make an atonement for our sins, that we might be made holy, that we might be enabled to put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man, even the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may throw away the heavy yoke of sin and put on the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed, my brethren, these things call for prayer, and for earnest prayer too. And do be earnest with God that you may have an interest in this Redeemer, that you may put on His righteousness, so that you may not come before Him in your filthy rags, nor be found not having on the wedding garment. O do not, I beseech you, trust unto yourselves for justification.

You cannot, indeed you cannot be justified by the works of the law. I entreat that your time may be thus spent. And if you are in company, let your time be spent in that conversation which profits.

Let it not be about your dressing, your plays, your profits, or your worldly concerns, but let it be the wonders of redeeming love. O tell, tell to each other what great things the Lord has done for your souls. Declare unto one another how you were delivered from the hands of your common enemy, Satan, and how the Lord has brought your feet from the clay and has set them upon the rock of ages, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my brethren, is no slipping about conversation by often repeating you become fully acquainted with. But of Christ there is always something new to raise your thoughts. You can never lack matter when the love of the Lord Jesus Christ is the subject.

Then let Jesus be the subject, my brethren, of all your conversation. Let your time be spent on Him. O this, this is an employ which if you belong to Jesus will last you to all eternity.

Let others enjoy their cards, their dice, their gaming hours. Do you, my brethren, let your time be spent in reading, praying, and religious conversations, which will stand the trial best at the last day. Which do you think will bring most comfort, most peace in the dying hour? O live and spend your time now as you will wish to have done when you come to die.

Secondly, let the good things of life you enjoy be used with moderation. I am not, as the scoffers of this day, to tell you against eating and drinking the good things of life. No, my brethren, I am only against their being used to an excess.

Therefore, let me beseech you to avoid those great indiscretions, those sinful actions, which will give the enemies of God room to blaspheme. Let me beseech you to have a regard, a particular regard, to your behavior at this time. For indeed the eyes of all are upon you, and they would rejoice much to find any reason to complain of you.

They can say things against us without a cause, and how would they rejoice if there was wherewith they might blame us? Then they would triumph and rejoice indeed, and all your little slips, my dear brethren, are and would be charged upon me. O at this time, when the eyes of so many are upon you, be upon your guard. And if you use the good things of this life with moderation, you do then celebrate this festival in a

manner which the institution calls for.

And instead of running into excess, let that money which you might extend to pamper your own bodies be given to feed the poor. Now, my brethren, is a season in which they commonly require relief. And sure, you cannot act more agreeable, either to the season, to the time, or for the glory of God, than in relieving his poor distressed servants.

Therefore, if any of you have poor friends or acquaintance who are in distress, I beseech you to assist them, and not only those of your acquaintance, but the poor in general. O my dear brethren, that will turn to a better account another day than all you have expended to please the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. Consider, Christ was always willing to relieve the distressed.

It is his command also. And can you better commemorate the birth of your King, your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, than obeying one of his commands? Do not, my dear brethren, be forgetful of the poor of the world. Consider, if providence has smiled upon you and blessed you with abundance of the things of this life, God calls for some returns of gratitude from you.

Be mindful of the poor, and when you are so, then you may be said to have a true regard for that time which is now approaching. If you would truly observe this festival, let it be done with moderation and a regard to the poor of this world. Thirdly, let me beg of you not to alienate too much of your time from the worldly business of this life, but have a proper regard thereunto, and then you may be said rightly to observe this festival.

God allows none to be idle in all ages. Business was commended, and therefore do not think that any season will excuse us in our callings. We are not, my brethren, to labor for the things of this life inordinately, but we are to labor for them with all moderation.

We are not to neglect our callings. No, we are to regard those places and stations of life which God in his providence has thought convenient for us. And therefore, when you neglect your business to the hurt of your families, whatever pretense you thereby make for so doing, you are guilty of sin.

You are not acting according to the doctrine of the gospel, but are breaking the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, both according to his word and to his practice. At this festival, persons are apt to take a little more liberty than usual. And if at this time from our vocations is not prejudicial to ourselves or families, and is spent in the service of God and the good of immortal souls, then I do not think it sinful.

But there is too much reason for sin.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2996.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-whitefield/the-true-way-of-keeping-christmas-reading/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net