

How to Live a Beautiful Christian Life

by J.R. Miller

To live a beautiful Christian life, we must learn to apply the principles of true religion in our daily life and make the most of our opportunities, no matter what our circumstances may be.

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Romans 5:3-5, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:1-3, Philippians 4:13, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 2:6

Topics: "Christian Living", "Endurance in Trials"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that living a beautiful Christian life requires applying the principles of true religion amidst everyday challenges and irritations. He asserts that true victory is not found in escaping trials but in enduring them with grace, reflecting Christ's character in our actions. Miller encourages believers to recognize their current circumstances as God's chosen environment for growth, and to embrace the struggles as opportunities for spiritual development. He highlights that the grace of Christ equips us to live godly lives regardless of our surroundings, and that character is forged through adversity. Ultimately, he calls for a resolute commitment to live patiently and lovingly, relying on Christ's strength to navigate life's difficulties.

Transcript

"Whoever claims to live in Him--must walk as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6

"Leaving you an example--so that you should follow in His steps." 1 Peter 2:21

We have only successfully acquired the art of living a Christian life--when we have learned to apply the principles of true religion, and enjoy its help and comfort in our daily life. It is easy to join in devotional exercises, to quote Bible promises, to extol the beauty of the Scriptures; but there are many who do these things--whose religion utterly fails them in the very places and at the very times--when it ought to prove their staff and stay!

All of us must go out from the sweet services of the Sunday--into a week of very real and very commonplace life. We must mingle with people who are not angels. We must pass through experiences that will naturally worry and vex us. Those about us, either wittingly or unwittingly, annoy and try us. We must mingle with those who do not love Christ. We all meet many troubles and worries in ordinary week-day life. There are continual irritations and annoyances.

The problem is to live a beautiful Christian life--in the face of all these hindrances! How can we get through the tangled briars which grow along our path--without having our hands and feet torn by them? How can we live sweetly--amid the vexing and irritating things and the multitude of little worries and frets which infest our way, and which we cannot evade?

It is not enough merely to 'get along' in any sort of way, to drag to the close of each long, wearisome day, happy when night comes to end the strife. Life should be a joy--and not a burden. We should live victoriously, ever master of our experiences, and not tossed by them like a leaf on the dashing waves. Every earnest Christian wants to live a truly beautiful life, whatever the circumstances may be.

A little child, when asked 'what it was to be a Christian,' replied, "For me, to be a Christian is to live as Jesus would live--and behave as Jesus would behave--if he were a little girl and lived at our house." No better definition of the Christian life could be given. Each one of us is to live just as Jesus would--if he were living out our little life in the midst of its actual environment, standing all day just where we stand, mingling with the same people with whom we must mingle, and exposed to the very annoyances, trials and provocations to which we are exposed. We want to live a life that will please God, and that will bear witness on its face to the genuineness of our piety.

How can we do this? We must first recognize the fact that our life must be lived just in its own circumstances. We cannot at present change our surroundings. Whatever we are to make of our lives--must be made in the midst of our actual experiences. Here we must either win our victories--or suffer our defeats. We may think our lot is especially hard--and may wish it were otherwise. We may wish that we had a life of ease and luxury, amid softer scenes, with no briars or thorns, no worries or provocations. Then we would be always gentle, patient, serene, trustful, happy. How delightful it would be--never to have a care, an irritation, a cross, a single vexing thing!

But meanwhile this fact remains--that our aspiration cannot be realized, and that whatever our life is to be made, beautiful or marred, we must make it just where we are. No restless discontent can change our lot. We cannot get into any 'paradise' merely by longing for it. Other people may have other circumstances, possibly more pleasant than ours--but here are ours. We may as well settle this point at once, and accept the battle of life on this field--or else, while we are vainly wishing for a better chance, the opportunity for victory shall have passed.

The next thought is that the place in which we find ourselves is the place in which the Master desires us to live our life.

There is no haphazard in this world. God leads every one of his children by the right way. He knows where and under what influences each particular life will ripen best. One tree grows best in the sheltered valley, another by the water's edge, another on the bleak mountain-top swept by storms. There is always adaptation in nature. Every tree or plant is found in the locality where the conditions of its growth exist, and does God give more thought to trees and plants than to his own children? He places us amid the circumstances and experiences in which our life will grow and ripen the best. The peculiar discipline to which we are each subjected--is the discipline we each need to bring out in us the beauties and graces of true spiritual character. We are in the right school. We may think that we would ripen more quickly--in a more easy and luxurious life--but God knows what is best; he makes no mistakes.

There is a little fable which says that a primrose growing by itself in a shady corner of the garden, became discontented as it saw the other flowers in their mirthful beds in the sunshine, and begged to be moved to

a more conspicuous place. Its prayer was granted. The gardener transplanted it to a more showy and sunny spot. It was greatly pleased--but there came a change over it immediately. Its blossoms lost much of their beauty and became pale and sickly. The hot sun caused them to faint and wither. So it prayed again to be taken back to its old place in the shade. The wise gardener knows best where to plant each flower, and so God, the divine Gardener, knows where His people will best grow into what he would have them to be. Some require the fierce storms, some will only thrive spiritually in the shadow of worldly adversity, and some come to ripeness more sweetly under the soft and gentle influences of prosperity, whose beauty, rough experiences would mar. He knows what is best for each one.

The next thought, is that it is possible to live a beautiful life anywhere. There is no position in this world in the allotment of Providence, in which it is not possible to be a true Christian, exemplifying all the virtues of Christianity. The grace of Christ has in it, potency enough to enable us to live godly, wherever we are called to dwell. When God chooses a home for us--he fits us for its peculiar trials. There is a beautiful law of adaptation that runs through all God's providence. Animals made to dwell amid Arctic snows are covered with warm furs. The camel's home is the desert, and a wondrous provision is made by which it can endure long journeys across the hot sands without drink. Birds are fitted for their flights in the air. Animals made to live among the mountain-crags, have feet prepared for climbing over the steep rocks. In all nature this law of special equipment and preparation for allotted places prevails.

And the same is true in spiritual life. God adapts his grace to the peculiarities of each one's necessity. For rough, flinty paths--he provides shoes of iron. He never sends any one to climb sharp, rugged mountain-sides, wearing silken slippers. He always gives sufficient grace. As the burdens grow heavier--the strength increases. As the difficulties thicken--the angel draws closer. As the trials become sorer--the trusting heart grows calmer. Jesus always sees his disciples, when they are toiling in the waves--and at the right moment comes to deliver them. Thus it becomes possible to live a true and victorious life--in any circumstances. Christ can as easily enable Joseph to remain pure and true, in heathen Egypt--as Benjamin in the shelter of his father's love. The sharper the temptations, the more of divine grace is granted. There is, therefore, no environment of trial, or difficulty or hardship--in which we cannot live beautiful lives of Christian fidelity and holy conduct.

Instead, then, of yielding to discouragement when trials multiply and it becomes hard to live right, or of being satisfied with a broken peace and a very faulty life--it should be the settled purpose of each one to live, through the grace of God--a patient, gentle and unspotted life--in the place and amid the circumstances He allots to us. The true victory is not found in escaping or evading trials--but in rightly meeting and enduring them. The questions should not be, "How can I get out of these worries? How can I get into a place where there shall be no irritations, nothing to try my temper or put my patience to the test? How can I avoid the distractions that continually harass me?" There is nothing noble in such living. The soldier who flies to the rear when he smells the battle is no hero; he is a coward.

The questions should rather be, "How can I pass through these trying experiences--and not fail as a Christian? How can I endure these struggles--and not suffer defeat? How can I live amid these provocations, these reproaches and testings of my temper--and yet live sweetly, not speaking unadvisedly, bearing injuries meekly, returning gentle answers to insulting words?" This is the true problem of Christian living.

We are at school here. This life is disciplinary. Processes are not important: it is results we want. If a tree grow into majesty and strength, it matters not whether it is in the deep valley or on the cold peak, whether

calm or storm nurtures it. If character develops into Christlike symmetry, what does it matter whether it be in ease and luxury--or through hardship? The important matter is not the process--but the result; not the means--but the end; and the end of all Christian nurture is spiritual loveliness. To be made truly noble and godlike--we should be willing to submit to any discipline.

Every obstacle to true living should, then, only nerve us with fresh determination to succeed. We should use each difficulty and hardship, as a leverage to gain some new advantage. We should compel our temptations to minister to us--instead of hindering us. We should regard all our provocations, annoyances and trials, of whatever sort--as practice-lessons in the application of the theories of Christian life. It will be seen in the end--that the hardships and difficulties are by no means the smallest blessings of our lives. Someone compares them to the weights of a clock, without which there could be no steady, orderly life.

The tree that grows where tempests toss its boughs and bend its trunk, often almost to breaking--is more firmly rooted than the tree which grows in the sequestered valley, where no storm ever brings stress or strain. The same is true in life. The grandest character is grown in hardship. Weakness of character, springs out of luxury. The best men the world ever reared--have been brought up in the school of adversity and hardship.

Besides, it is no heroism to live patiently--where there is no provocation; bravely--where there is no danger; calmly--where there is nothing to perturb. Not the hermit's cave--but the heart of busy life--tests, as well as makes character. If we can live patiently, lovingly and cheerfully, amid all our frets and irritations day after day, year after year, that is grander heroism than the farthest famed military exploits, for 'he who rules his own spirit--is better than he who captures a city.'

This is our allotted task. It is no easy one. It can be accomplished only by the most resolute decision, with unwavering purpose and incessant watchfulness.

Nor can it be accomplished without the continual help of Christ. Each one's battle must be a personal one. We may decline the struggle--but it will be declining also the joy of victory. No one can reach the summit--without climbing the steep mountain-path. We cannot be borne up on any strong shoulder. God does not put features of beauty into our lives--as the jeweler sets gems in clusters in a coronet. The unlovely elements are not magically removed and replaced by lovely ones. Each must win his way through struggles and efforts--to all noble attainments. The help of God is given only in cooperation with human aspiration and energy. While God works in us--we are to work out our own salvation. He who overcomes, shall be a pillar in the temple of God. We should accept the task with quiet joy. We shall fail many times.

Many a night we shall retire to weep at Christ's feet--over the day's defeat. In our efforts to follow the copy set for us by our Lord--we shall write many a crooked line, and leave many a blotted page blistered with tears of regret. Yet we must keep through all, a brave heart, an unfaltering purpose, and a calm, joyful confidence in God. Temporary defeat should only cause us to lean on Christ more fully. God is on the side of everyone who is loyally struggling to obey his divine will, and to grow into Christlikeness. And that means assured victory, to everyone whose heart fails not.

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