

An Address to All Our Christian Brethren

by Thomas Campbell

Christian enjoyment consists in the exercise of faith, hope, and love, which are the three essential elements of a deep and abiding relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Scripture: John 13:34, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Faith And Love"

Description

Thomas Campbell emphasizes the importance of unity among Christians based on love and obedience to Christ, rather than divisive opinions and practices. He highlights the necessity of exercising faith, hope, and love for the actual enjoyment of our holy religion, pointing out that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient. Campbell stresses the significance of focusing on the gospel's declarations, invitations, and promises to maintain joy and glory in our Christian walk, urging believers to continually meditate on these blissful subjects for true enjoyment.

Transcript

Upon the Necessity and Importance of the Actual Enjoyment of our Holy Religion.

WE speak to all our Christian brethren, however diversified by professional epithets, those accidental distinctions which have unhappily and unscripturally diversified the professing world. By our Christian brethren, then, we mean the very same description of character addressed in our Declaration published at Washington, Pa., in the year 1809--namely, "All that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, throughout the churches." If there were none such at that time throughout the churches, then Christianity was dead and gone. And if there be none such at present within the same limits, it still continues extinct.

In my former address, however, to those distinguished characters, my earnest intention was to excite them to a co-operative reformation, with respect to certain opinions and practices which had unhappily and unscripturally divided them, contrary to the express letter of the law of Christ: John xiii. 34, 35. and xv. 12-14. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you; that you also love one another.--This is my commandment.--By this shall all know that you are my disciples." It appeared evident, that, by the interruption of this love, we had lost the divine badge of discipleship. Consequently, that our agreement in opinion with Martin Luther, John Calvin,--Gill,--Guise,--Knox,--or Wesley, &c. &c. was become the badge, bond, and centre of our religious union, instead of the love and obedience of Christ. And, of course, was direct rebellion against him, and ruinous to his cause. See Matth. xii. 25., with John xvii. 11, 20-23. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every

city or house divided against itself shall not stand."--"Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. Neither pray I for these alone, but for those also that shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.--That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." From these sayings of our blessed Lord, does it not most evidently appear, that not only the prosperity of his kingdom, but also the honor and happiness of his professing people, depend upon that blissful unity which he inculcates, and for which he so earnestly and repeatedly prays? And is it not, therefore, most urgently incumbent upon all his professing people, to advocate and maintain this holy unity and unanimity, [199] both for his glory and their own good; and, also, for the salvation of a perishing world, according to his ardent prayer above quoted? But leaving these things to the serious consideration of all concerned, I pass on to the subject of the present address. And here would just promise, that although the promotion and maintenance of Christian union upon Christian principle, is a most important and indispensable duty; yet as it consists in the detection and correction of erroneous opinions and practices, and thus employs the mind in abstract speculations; it is, therefore, unfavorable to those mental exercises, in which the enjoyment of our holy religion consists. See 1 Cor. xiii.

According to that highly important portion, if a man had all attainment, that grace or nature could confer, and yet had not Christian love, he would be a mere cypher in Christianity; he would not have the first principle of it; that is, a faith which works by love, and purifies the heart. Theorizing, criticizing, and practising, are very different exercises. We may be proficient in the two former, and very deficient in the latter. But it is in the latter, that the actual enjoyment of our holy religion consists: "For now abideth these three--faith, hope, and love:" but the last is the best, the greatest; for it is the effect of the other two;--the proper and adequate effect of their combined influence.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if you would really enjoy our holy religion, you must persevere and abound in the exercises of evangelical faith, hope, and love. I need not here suggest that knowledge is necessary to faith;--that without the former, the latter cannot be. For as it is impossible to have faith without testimony, so it is just as impossible to believe testimony without knowing its contents. We can believe nothing of which we are ignorant; nor exercise our faith upon any thing, that is not present to our mind,--that we are not thinking about.

Therefore, if we would exercise faith, we must have the subject matter before our minds. This, then, as Christians, brings us home to the gospel;--brings us to the feet of Jesus. There we learn the first--the grand fundamental lesson of the gospel; namely, that "God so loved a guilty perishing world, as to give his only begotten Son to suffer for the sins of the world, that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life." See John iii. 16, 17, with chapter vi. 51.

The realizing belief of this is the principle, the very source and fountain of all our spiritual enjoyment of a present salvation. For if God so loved us, as not to spare his only begotten Son, but thus to deliver him up to the accursed death of the cross for us all; how will he not with him, also freely give us all things? Rom, viii. 32. Indeed, the provisions of his love for us in Christ, are completely sufficient for our complete salvation, from the [200] guilt, the love, the practice, and the punishment of sin.

See 1 Cor. i. 30. "Who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." So that we are complete in him, in whom it pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell; for the redress of all our grievances, the healing of all our diseases, the supply of all our wants, spiritually

considered. Wherefore, he is thus made the immediate, proper, and adequate object of our faith, for all these blissful purposes. And, therefore, as such, we should keep him always before our minds in all our approaches to God, for the enjoyment of this great salvation.

Thus did the primitive Christians: see 1 Peter i. 3-9; and thus were filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the actual enjoyment of the present salvation, above described; and in the blissful anticipation of a future salvation, yet to be revealed in the last time.--"An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for them." This pure gospel faith, duly exercised, fills the soul with hope, love, and joy. But, then, for this blissful purpose, it must be duly exercised, as did the primitive Christians, who lived and walked by this faith.

See 2 Cor. v. 7. It was the formative principle of their conduct; as said the Apostle, (Gal. ii. 20.) "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Wherefore, the primitive Christians living in the habitual exercise of this divine principle, were not only filled with peace and joy at their baptism, divinely appointed to give them the blissful assurance of the remission of their sins; but were, ever after, enabled to draw near to God with true hearts, in full assurance of faith, for the continued enjoyment of sin-pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace; having their hearts thereby sprinkled from an evil conscience, (that is, a guilty self-condemning conscience,) and their bodies washed with pure water; that is, the baptismal purification from the guilt and pollution of sin, signified by the baptismal washing; the only relicious use of water under the gospel.

See Heb. x. 19-22, which evidently alludes to our baptismal regeneration from the guilt and pollution of sin, through faith in the blood and spirit of Christ. See Acts ii. 38. Now this faith and its effects are permanent in the true believer: they make him clean, and keep him clean. For although "no man liveth and sinneth not;" yet if a Christian sin, upon confessing it, he is pardoned through faith in the blood of Christ, which cleanseth him from all sin. See 1 John i. 7. So that a Christian may and ought frequently to confess his sins, and lament over them, and thank God for his sin-pardoning mercy; yet his faith will not authorize him to pray repeatedly for the pardon of the same sins.

For, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our [201] sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness." 1 John i. 9. Indeed, were not this the blissful assurance of Christian faith, we could have no peace with God, no assurance of salvation. Hence we never hear the Apostles confessing the sins of the churches, and praying for their pardon; but, on the contrary, they address them as saints, as justified characters. See 1 Cor. vi. 11, &c. &c. Thus, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.--And this hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. Rom. v. 1, 2, 5.

Upon the whole, is it scripturally--yea, palpably evident, that all real Christian enjoyment consists in the exercise of the faith, hope, and love, which the gracious declarations, invitations, and promises of the gospel are calculated to inspire? Ought we not, therefore, to make these our continual study and delight, seeing that in proportion to our so doing, must and will our enjoyment be? And is there any enjoyment equal to Christian enjoyment? Surely not; for this is, comparatively, the pearl of great price, compared with which there is nothing worth desiring. May the good Lord, then, graciously dispose and enable us, to exercise our minds upon those blissful subjects, in meditation, conversation, and prayer, as will keep our souls in the actual possession of that joy unspeakable and fall of glory, which it is the design of the bIPssed gospel to produce and maintain, is the sincere desire of your affectionate brother in Christ,

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

P. S. As the all-important subject of the above Address, cannot be fully discussed in one brief essay; and, more especially, as it must be constantly kept before the mind, in order to the constant or habitual enjoyment of it; therefore, the writer would humbly solicit the co-operation of his fellow-laborers in the good cause, for this blissful purpose, which only can be accomplished by making the due use of the divinely appointed means; namely, the gracious declarations, invitations, and promises of the blessed gospel. These we ought to keep as much as possible before the minds of our hearers in our public addresses, prayers, and praises; and also in our private conversation; thus would we feed and feast both them and ourselves. And, has not the Lord made ample provision for this, in the means divinely appointed for the conversion, edification, and salvation of his people? For the first, the gospel was to be preached, that it might be understood, believed, and enjoyed; and the believer to be baptized for this latter purpose; namely, for the actual enjoyment of the promised salvation; for it is written, 'He that believes, and is baptized' shall be saved; so that [202] the baptized believer has Christ's promise for the enjoyment of his salvation.--For the second and third; namely, present edification, and the ultimate enjoyment of the promised salvation; the converted are to associate on the day of the resurrection, to celebrate that blissful and glorious event, and to commemorate the death that rendered it possible.--The latter, the procuring cause of our redemption;--the former, the effect; that is, our actual justification. For He was delivered for (or on account of) our offences; and he was raised again for (or on account of) our justification. Rom. iv. 25. For as he graciously undertook to pay our debt by his death, he had never been released out of death's prison, if he had not accomplished it. Here, then, are the three grand comprehensive positive, ordinances of the gospel; namely, baptism, the Lord's supper, and the Lord's day, all designed to keep the blissful subject of our present and eternal salvation, in its causes, effects, and consequences, before our minds: and one day every week publicly set apart for those joyful purposes. Wherefore, if we do not enjoy a present salvation from the guilt, the love and the practice of sin, and from the fear of the future punishment, infinitely due to that tremendous evil, it must be owing to mismanagement or neglect of the divinely provided and appointed means for those blissful purposes. Paul, as a wise master-builder, duly aware of this, determined to know, that is, make known, nothing amongst his hearers, "but Christ, and him crucified." 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, 25., and chap. ii. 1, 2.

Let us, then, as far as practicable, go, and do likewise. And, in so doing, we have the blissful assurance, that "our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 59. Alas! alas! what a heinous evil must sin be! How awfully tremendous its effects and consequences, which nothing but the deepest possible humiliation, sufferings, and death of Him that made the world could possibly obviate!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-campbell/an-address-to-all-our-christian-brethren/>

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