

BEING A HAPPY CHRISTIAN

September 30, 2012

Is there any person in the world that should be as happy as a faithful Christian? We should all be able to answer this question with a resounding, “NO!” However, it seems that, at times, the people in the world are happier than many professing Christians. A faithful Christian should never present the attitude of being grumpy or hateful to those around him or her, especially to other Christians. The sad truth, though, is that there are many in the Lord’s church who allow that behavior to prevail. The focus of this edition of the *Cordova Connection* is to understand why faithful Christians should be happy.

A faithful Christian should be happy because God made a **promise** to us. However, we need to understand that He never promised any of us that we would not suffer in this life physically, mentally, or emotionally; only that it would be worth the suffering in the end. The promise He made was one of eternal life to those that “endureth to the end” (Mt. 10:22). Since the promise has attached to it conditions, we must meet those conditions if we are to gain the promise. Paul told the Corinthians, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). The glorious promise of God should make all of us want to “cleanse ourselves” from the things of the world. It should cause us to focus on the spiritual things of this life. How do we do that? We begin by being obedient to the gospel plan of salvation. Having faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 8:24), repenting of past sins (Acts 2:38), confessing our faith that Jesus is the Son of God in the presence of others (Acts 8:37), being immersed in water for the forgiveness of all past sins (Acts 22:16), and living faithfully for God the remainder of our lives (1 Cor. 15:58). If one has obeyed the gospel and allowed himself to be drawn back into the sinfulness of the world, he can be cleansed by repenting and asking God and those they have offended to forgive them, just like the example of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:24).

Faithful Christians must never allow themselves to be fooled into the “I can’t help it” mind set. There is no excuse that God will accept that allows one to behave in a way that is offensive and sinful. We may ask, “what if one loses a family member?” Didn’t God lose a family member, His only begotten Son? We may offer, “I feel so bad I can’t control what I do.” We could reflect on how the Lord of the world felt as He was hanging on the cross. He endured more than any person can even imagine, but He never acted in a way that was unbecoming of a faithful follower of God. Someone might say, “Well, He is God.” Are we to believe that He had some type of divine help that kept Him from committing sin? The Hebrews writer boldly denied that false statement when he wrote, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

The statement “in all points” informs us, without a doubt, that He suffered like any other human would suffer and endured every temptation that any other person would face, yet He neither gave into the temptation nor offered an excuse for doing so. Peter also said, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

Since Christ is our example, it stands to reason that we are able to follow His example. When we fall short of His example, which we will at times, we need to immediately realize our deficiencies and ask His forgiveness along with those we have offended. Any person would readily admit that Christ was a

“happy” follower of God. However, no one would suggest that His life was one of complete happiness. He suffered greater than any person ever did, but He also understood that earthly suffering was and is a very temporary occurrence and that something far greater awaits those who live righteously. He never acted in such a way that would unnecessarily offend anyone. Can we even imagine Christ being rude or hateful to anyone, especially those that offered their help to Him?

As this bulletin goes to print, we are all mourning the loss of one of our faithful sisters, Patsy Carver. Sister Carver lived faithfully and righteously and provided us a good example of a happy Christian. She, like Paul, knew there was something great awaiting her when her time in this world was over. Paul made a great statement toward the end of his life, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Because of her faithfulness to God, she could also say these words, “O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:54-58).

Let us honor one of our fallen soldiers in the fight of faith and use her as an example of how to behave in this life as we look forward with happiness to the next. I think of Sister Carver when I read Paul’s words to the Philippians, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phi. 3:17).

May God bless our efforts as we strive to live faithfully and joyfully and may He give us penitent hearts when we do not!