

WHEN YOU FEEL YOU ARE MISSING FULLNESS OF JOY - The Causes of Spiritual Weariness
Part one - Teaching #1592 - Pastor Don Horban - Sunday, September 16th, 2012, 6:00 p.m.

BECOMING ACCUSTOMED TO AN INCOMPLETE RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

Romans 6:15-18 - "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! [16] Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? [17] But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."

There is a kind of discouragement that comes when you finally settle for less than you had expected in a certain endeavor. Is there anything worse than just going through the same motions and getting used to something that seemed to fall so short of what you felt it should be?

Of course, we must have Biblically informed expectations. We don't have everything in Christ Jesus that we will one day have. But what we have is *real* and *life-producing*. In short, there is *fullness of joy* - **1 Peter 1:8** - "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...."

Peter says the joy we have is a joy anchored in glory. In fact, our joy is *filled* with glory. That's because, as citizens of heaven, we anchor our minds and treasures in glory rather than here. So this joy isn't the same as this world's one-dimensional pleasures. But it is vivid and real and abiding.

Here's what I want to drill down into in this first teaching. I have gradually developed the conviction that many of our troubles in the Christian life come from not *making a proper start*. And the starting place in the Christian life is *conversion*. Please understand. I don't just mean that conversion is where you find forgiveness of sins. That, of course, is gloriously true. But what I mean is conversion is the starting place of *everything that will develop spiritually in your life - for the rest of your life*. If your initial understanding and digestion of conversion isn't as Biblically big as it was meant to be, nothing else will compensate for it later on down the road.

Because conversion is so important I'm very fond of Paul's words in **Romans 6:17** - "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed...."

This verse is one of many that give a solid definition of what it actually is to become a Christian. It gives us all a firm and definable starting point. It helps us begin with Christ in such a way that we are all on the same page - a place of *certainty* - that we're all talking about exactly the same thing when we say, "Yes, I'm a Christian."

Mind, heart, and will. All three must be solidly involved just as surely as a stool must have at least three legs. Each one is of crucial importance. Take any one away and the stool won't stand.

1) **THE MIND MUST HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF REVEALED TRUTH.**

That's hinted at in the verses from **Romans chapter six - Romans 6:15-16** - "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! [16] *Do you not know* that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

Notice that pointed question - "*Do you not know....?*"(16). At least some people lack an understanding - a *knowing* - about what being a Christian was all about. Can you imagine a person thinking the more he sinned, the more of God's grace would be automatically manifested to his life? And you can tell this ignorance leaves Paul stunned. How could anyone who knows Christ think like that?

The truth is there are many professing Christians who *do* think like that. I talk with them week after week. There are people who want to call themselves Christians, but never go to church. There are people who call themselves Christians but want to maintain homosexual relationships. There are people who call themselves Christians but aren't faithful to their marriage partner. There are people who call themselves Christians but whose lives manifest nothing but greed and idolatry.

Now, people have always sinned against the Lord. But something has been happening more and more in the church lately - something different. People are starting to feel that it's optional whether or not they are really *good* Christians or not. And if they choose to deliberately disobey the Lord in some area, they just slip from being a nine or ten, down a few notches to a seven or six.

Here's how this attitude manifests itself. I've talked with professing Christians caught up in a marital affair. Here's how the conversation frequently goes. "Well, we aren't sleeping together. We hold hands and kiss a little bit. But she understands me. Our relationship is a beautiful thing!"

Then I'll say, "Listen, you'll go to hell if you continue in that relationship!" "What are you talking about?" I'll say, "Read it for yourself - **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** - "*Do you not know* (there's that question again) *that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*"

Now, those sins are not really what I'm preaching about. My point is found in those first words of the verses - "***Do you not know?***" Those are the same words that start out our text in **Romans 6:16**. People can enter the Christian life, and be way down the road in their attempts at following Jesus - finding it a terribly frustrating experience. They find themselves feeling fake and inauthentic. They miss the joy they ***thought*** they would get by doing their own thing. But they're restless, uneasy, and fighting God in the inside. And it's all because there were certain key truths that were never firmly grasped with the mind when they first started out. And Paul would come up to them and say "***Don't you know these things?***"

And what I want to leave with you today is simply this. There are certain truths - certain absolute, non-negotiable principles, without which the Christian life simply cannot be lived. And no amount of religious activity or worship or prayer or benevolence can make up for. You don't have to know everything. But some things can't be ignored or overlooked. Make sure you've made an authentic start. It's worth the effort and the examination. More on this point next Sunday night.