

Inconvenient Christianity

Introduction:

If you are a Christian reading this document, and I have every reason to expect that you are, then you are probably aware that being a follower of the Lord Jesus can sometimes demand a price that can be quite steep. Yes, it is certain that being a Christian can at times be very inconvenient, so that is the kind of Christianity that we will be discussing in this essay. We will discuss many of the ways that living the life of a believer may compel you to make stands that alienate you from your friends and families. It is important for the believer to realize that their walk with the Lord does not always result in smiles and hugs, but frequently engenders feelings of turmoil, and aggravation, requiring patience. During the course of this essay we will discuss some of the stumbling blocks that we all must avoid, while walking along this path that leads to salvation.

Chapter 1: The Lusts of the Flesh

I have chosen to discuss first, this stumbling block to walking in the fullness of one's Christianity, since that is where most of us who proclaim Christ Jesus are stymied in our attempts to move forward. One of the many false assumptions that Christians make is to believe that somehow, they can conquer the sin nature that dwells in their flesh. Christians, such as these, spend their efforts in a vain attempt to get their flesh to cooperate with their spirits in walking in the things of God. It's as though they expect their flesh to one day capitulate and wave the white flag of surrender. So consequently, they waste their time battling the flesh instead of crucifying it. This results in a life that is dissipated, and hampered by condemnation. In order to avoid this unfortunate fate, the Christian must fully understand just what the **born again** process is really all about. When we accept the free gift of salvation, we are signing up for a new "heart", meaning that who we are on the inside, or in the spirit man, is now completely different. It means that we now side in with God on the way that He sees things. Sadly though, we are still stuck with the flesh that has been cursed along with the ground from which it was formed. Moreover, this flesh is non-redeemable, meaning that it cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Well if this is the case, then one could legitimately ask, "What good is being a Christian if I am still saddled with the same sinful flesh?" The answer is that it is impossible to defeat the flesh and to put it underfoot, if you do not walk according to the spirit, and you cannot walk according to the spirit unless you have been born of the Spirit. Now this being born of the Spirit, what does it mean? It means that we have received the free gift of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, by His giving up of His flesh in the likeness of sin, so that we might be free of ours. This is accomplished through obedience in the Spirit, Who is the means by which we obtain strength to live according to the will of God, and to reckon ourselves as dead in the flesh, yet made more than alive in the glory of the spirit. We see then, that the true power of our covenant is not found in abolishing the flesh, or in surrendering to it, but in denying it the opportunity to be a stumbling

block to us, by allowing it to rule our lives, as though it still had dominion over us. Happy indeed is the Christian who realizes that he has power over his own body, and refuses to let it be an instrument for sin any longer.

How does this knowledge help one to avoid the inconvenience of being hampered by the lusts of the flesh? Consider the following true statement. It is impossible to sin without using the members of the flesh. Could you lie without a tongue? Could you steal without your hands? How far could you go in fornication without your sexual organs? With this in mind, it is evident that it is much to our advantage to reckon all of these members as dead, and as such they are not available to be used as instruments of sin. The power of this revelation is that to those who have crucified the flesh, the power of sin is no longer a threat to them. They are free to live secure in the knowledge that the time they spend in the body will be used to produce fruits of redemption, and not as an occasion to dissipate oneself, in living a life in service to the lusts of the flesh, and in so doing reaping a harvest of death.

Chapter 2: The Case for Hate.

If you have read my essay on “A Time to Hate,” then you should be prepared to handle this next issue that certainly makes Christianity inconvenient at times. Let us examine the following Scripture.

If anyone comes after Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26

Jesus Himself, of course, uttered these words, so there can be no debate as to the propriety of this command. But, what exactly is He saying here? Does He really expect me to hate my family? Yes, He absolutely does, and I dare say, that would certainly be inconvenient. Allow me to reveal to you the mind of the Lord concerning these things. He expects our commitment to Him to be wholehearted, and complete. Now, suppose that you have a family member, like a mother or father, who believes some doctrine other than the doctrine of Christ, and maybe they are pressuring you to abandon your faith in Jesus. Perhaps you feel more loyalty to them than to the Lord. In which case, for the sake of family unity, you might be tempted to put your light under a bushel. This would be a grave mistake, for in so doing, you are demonstrating that your faith in the kingdom of God is weak, and as such, you are then considered to be unworthy to share in the glory of the gospel. What the Lord is saying here is that your commitment to Him had better be such that if your family stands in the way between you and Him, you had better be prepared to literally hate them, and if you can't do that, you are showing that your love for them is greater than it is for Him, in which case you are not worthy of Him anyway.

Moreover, here is the unintended consequence of this error. If your family is antichrist, they are hell-bound and you are the only thing standing between them and oblivion. If you were to make a stand for righteousness, and be uncompromising, it is possible that your light may one day penetrate their hearts and lead them to salvation. If, however, you compromise your faith, your ability to enlighten them is vacated, and they may end up in eternal judgment. If you thought that they were mad at you for becoming Christian, how

much more so when they find out that you had the key to life, but through cowardice, failed to minister it to them, and now they find themselves in the lake of fire.

At this point, I think that you can readily see that having to exercise what I will call “godly” hate, can be considered to be asking a lot of a Christian. Nevertheless, this is what we are called to if we want to walk as disciples of the Lord, and not as converts.

Chapter 3: The Stand for Righteousness

There is an aspect of Christianity that seems to be very much misunderstood. That is the fact that according to the Lord Jesus, we as the church are the light of the world, and the salt of the Earth. Just what the meaning of that is appears to have escaped us however. Most Christians are very reluctant to make a public stand on moral matters, mostly because they do not wish to incur the wrath of their families and friends when they call sin, sin. They know that in condemning sin, the world is making an enemy of them.

How is it exactly that we condemn sin in the world? It is by siding in with God on what He says about a matter. It is imperative to realize that we are God’s voice on the Earth. We are His channels of expression to the sons of Adam. It is the responsibility of those who follow the ways of the Lord, to accurately convey to the world God’s view on whatever matter may be under discussion. So, for example, suppose you are at work and a discussion comes up amongst your co-workers on the merits of gay marriage. If you have knowledge on the matter, and no self-respecting Christian should be ignorant on this subject, you should be bold to say about it what God does, which is that He considers homosexuality to be vile, despicable, and abominable. You would be dutiful to note the unambiguous choice of adjectives. Speaking so succinctly about this matter, will leave no room for doubt as to God’s position on this subject. This is exactly how it should be, since it is vital for every person to know upon which side of the tracks they are living.

It is not the role of the church to judge the world per se, but to be the vessel through which the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin. This is accomplished in two ways, first and foremost, by we who are of the church, who live according to the will of God, and secondarily, by speaking about the things that God speaks about, in the same way that He does. In other words, if God says “up” on a particular matter, then we should not say “down” about that same matter. I now call your attention to the following Scripture. (John 16:7-11)

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

8 “ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”

9 “ of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

10 “ of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more;

11 “ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

We readily see here that the Holy Spirit (Helper) is the agent by whom these things are accomplished. Well, if that is true, why then am I getting us in the middle of this transaction, which is clearly between the world and the Holy Spirit? Because, we must remember this one true thing, the Holy Spirit accomplishes everything that He does by operating through the church, in that He embodies individual Christians and they become His vessels, to accomplish through us His appointed tasks. The system is designed in such a way that there is no direct intervention in the natural realm, by those of the spirit world, but they must interact with the affairs of men, only through the cooperation of other men. This safeguard was deemed necessary to prevent the spiritual hosts of wickedness from harming mankind apart from his complicity. However, in order for the safeguard to be effective, it must prevent unauthorized incursions from either camp, whether they be light or dark.

Herein lays a spectacular spiritual truth. Haven't you ever wondered, if the Devil hates mankind so much, why doesn't he just lay waste to the planet and be done with it? The answer is that he cannot, because he is limited in causing trouble, only to the extent that he can find cooperative sons of Adam, through whom he gains license to influence the affairs of men toward a negative outcome. Up to this point he has been unsuccessful in finding an inhabitant of the Earth who is both sufficiently genocidal, as well as having enough authority to speak for the whole planet. It is however, interesting to note, that the day will come when there will be such an individual on the Earth. His name will be known as the Antichrist.

Now, here is the part that you have not considered. The Godhead is likewise precluded from directly dealing in the affairs of men, but, They too must seek those who would yield themselves to be vessels through whom, They may bring mankind to the place that God has prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Otherwise, why wouldn't God merely open up the veil to the heavenlies, and present His case directly to mankind?

Ok, I know what you are thinking right now. "Isn't God all-powerful, and can't He do anything that He wants?" The answer is no, He can't, not if He wants to remain the unassailable guardian of that which is called righteous and just. The highest calling for those who are in authority is to live by the rules that they themselves enforce. If this is not the case then justice is a mockery. God has established an ordinance, which says that there are to be no direct incursions into the realm of men by those who inhabit the spirit world. This rule was, of course, necessary to keep the Devil from making a total mess of the Earth. However, he would have an excellent countercharge of hypocrisy to be leveled against the Most High, if He was found to be in violation of the very statute He Himself established.

The purpose of this chapter is to instruct you on your responsibility to faithfully portray the kingdom of God on the Earth. In order to do that, your light must truly be light. Remember that the world is darkness, and Christ Jesus has come to deliver the world from darkness into the light. Now that He has returned to the Father, He has commissioned us to take up the torch and to illuminate the world with the glory of God. We, who are light, cannot join the world in darkness and expect them to be enlightened. Moreover, we must be prepared for the fact that the world may love the darkness and hate us for shining on their deeds. Once again the Lord Jesus has wisdom for us on this matter.

*18 If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.
19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*
(John 15:18-19)

These Scriptures give us an interesting insight into our role in being the light of the world. We have a very accurate barometer with which to measure whether or not we are being successful in enlightening the world. Does the world love you? If it does you are out of the will of God. On the other hand, if the world hates you, you can have confidence that it is because you exude the aroma of Christ, a foul stench to those who are perishing, but a sweet fragrance to the God of heaven. Remember, the world loves its own, so if it loves you, then you are of the world. This is why it is important not to consume yourself with trying to be liked by those of the world. You cannot be clothed with righteousness and then be accepted by the world, for the world is evil, and under the dominion of the evil one. This is probably the greatest of all Christian failures, which is to water down the fire of salvation, since it seems to be too hot for the ones around us. We then substitute the glory of God for politically correct Christianity. All of a sudden those of the world can stomach us, but the price that we have paid is to be rendered ineffective at demonstrating the kingdom of God on the Earth.

Chapter 4: Hypocrisy

This next chapter will deal with one of the most deadly poisons known to man. It is called hypocrisy. I would define hypocrisy as the art of demonstrating knowledge of the truth, by speaking about it, but failing to live according to the things of which you have spoken. For example, the hypocrite is the one who says on Sunday that it is wrong to steal, and you turn on your news and see him on Tuesday being arrested for bank robbery. Hypocrisy short-circuits the ability of the word of God to penetrate a heart to result in a beneficial outcome. People, to whom you minister the things of God, will tend to judge them by how well they are working in your life. If you don't live by the doctrines that you tell others, how do you expect them to exceed you in diligence? The Lord Jesus spoke of such people in the following way. He stated that they are like those who stand in the doorway but will not enter the house, nor will they allow anyone else to pass. This is much worse than regular rebellion, since it puts souls at risk other than your own.

Certainly, there are times when avoiding hypocrisy can be very inconvenient, but nevertheless, we are charged by God to faithfully reflect the glory of God that we have obtained through Christ Jesus. This is how the gospel is actually spread. In other words, it is not by word of mouth, but by "word" of life. I would say that 90% of preaching of the word is done by the life of the Christian, and the 10% is the introduction to the One who has made such a demonstrable difference in your life. Unfortunately, most Christians have this ratio reversed. They spend 90% of their time spouting forth mighty Scriptural principles, and only about 10% of their time actually living the things that they preach. This is the reason that hypocrisy must, at all costs, be avoided, for it is a deadly poison to

the penetration of the truth of the gospel. It is like a herbicide that one spreads on his own vegetable garden. No matter how much you have labored, or how lush your garden, if you spray herbicide on it, it will be destroyed. But, there is an additional unintended consequence of hypocrisy. It will also act like a herbicide to someone else's garden. In other words, your hypocrisy can be used as an instrument to pluck up the seed that another has planted. This is a by-product of the unity of the faith.

The way that it works is as follows. Person "A" is a mature Christian who lives a life of faith. He has a friend, person "B". "B" observes that "A" leads an overcoming life and questions him on it. "A" has the opportunity to share with "B", how he came about to have such victory in his life. "B" is highly intrigued and purposes to ponder on these things. The next day at work, "B" runs into person "C", a man who always brings his Bible to work, so that he may read it at lunch, and share any tidbits that he finds with his co-workers. "B" also happens to observe that "C" does not do a very diligent job at his tasks. He is always late to work, and frequently has someone else clock out for him so that he may leave early. He also steals from the company, and spreads rumors about his fellow employees. Upon considering these observations, "B" wonders where the true value of Christianity is, since it seems to be insufficient to make person "C" act in an upright manner. Thus all of the good testimony of person "A" is ruined in the sight of person "B", because of the disobedience of person "C". The bottom line here is that you don't want to be person "C".

If you were to peruse the gospels, you would find that the Lord Jesus has much to say about hypocrisy, and I assure you, that none of it is favorable. You would do well to avoid being caught up in this error. Remember, that this is a sin that has ramifications that are outside of your immediate circumstances. Hypocrisy has a nullifying effect on all testimony everywhere, and because of this, I'm confident that the Lord will be particularly harsh on those who share in the label of hypocrite.

Chapter 5: The Road to Endurance

For those of you who thought that Christianity was all about flowery beds of ease, all of the preceding must have come as quite a shock to you. This raises the following question. "How can I strengthen my Christianity so that my light will not be able to be extinguished?" The first point that must be conceded is that God will never ask anything of us that we are not capable of delivering. However, He never said that those things would necessarily be easily accomplished. But fear not, for He also provided all of the tools that we need to be successful. The first is the blood of the Lamb, by which we gain entry into the family of God. This makes available to us all manner of tools that help us to accomplish our goals. Principle among these is faith, for it is by faith that we hold fast to all of the promises in the word that assure us of victory in life. If we do not really believe what God has promised, we are ill prepared to withstand the onslaught of fleshly distractions that are sure to present themselves at every opportune moment.

In addition, we find that faith is obtained through the indwelling of the word of God, and this brings us to the second tool that we have at our disposal to help us to overcome namely, the five-fold ministry gifts. We find according to Ephesians chapter 4:11, that when the Lord Jesus ascended, He gave gifts unto men. These gifts were the various ministries that are in place to instruct the church in the ways of righteousness, among

which we find the office of the Teacher. It is his job to explain the word of God to the brethren, so that they may grow in faith and steadfastness.

Thirdly, we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who we become eligible to receive after we have been immersed into the body of Christ. It is His job to fill our hearts with all knowledge of the truth, comparing spiritual with spiritual, so that by this, we will have a framework of morality established within our spirits. In other words He serves as our guide to judge all matters that we encounter in the world, so that we may correctly structure our lives to live within the acceptable will of God.

Armed with all of these tools, the well-prepared Christian is very much able to withstand any challenges from the world that would tend to dissipate their witness for Christ Jesus. No matter how inconvenient the stand may become, such a one would be steadfast in their resolve to remain faithful to the witness of the glorious Savior and His kingdom.

In conclusion, let me remind you of how important it is for you to count the cost when it comes to your relationship to the kingdom of God. Jesus said that He would rather you be hot or cold, but not lukewarm. You must come to grips with the fact that there is a spiritual war going on in our midst, and everyone is being called upon to choose a side. What the Lord is saying is that if you choose Him, then act like it and fight hard for His team. You should not be one who claims to be of the light, but spends their time doing the deeds of the dark. Above all we must resist growing weary of the struggle, and then laying our weapons down, for then we will have utterly failed as a soldier in the Lord's army. Yes, there are times when our testimony for the Lord Jesus will become inconvenient, yeah, even downright deadly. However, that would be our finest hour, for in the midst of our weakness, and when our cause is hopeless, that is when we see the move of our great God and King. He will rise up and deliver us from our enemies and reveal the glory that we share with our Firstborn Brother, Who has delivered us from the sting of death, and granted us that we may see eternal life.

So yes, at times the going may seem rough, but for those who do not waver in faith, there is the assurance that when the last cry of battle has faded, when the smoke of cleansing fire has abated, and when the last enemy has been vanquished, those who have endured until the end, shall take their place among the cherished of God. Their light that could not be extinguished on the Earth will shine forever, bearing witness to the glory of God in heaven. Amen.