

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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Side-Effects of Christianity

by Neal Pollard

A person, when taking medication, wants to know what the side-effects are. Often-times a medicine can cause drowsiness, nausea or nervousness. Diabetics, heart patients and infants are just some of those people who rely upon such information for personal safety.

Some side-effects are fondly anticipated. The typical result of diet and exercise is weight loss. The expected outcome of soft music or pastel-colored walls is a lowered stress level. One hopes that a good education will produce not only enlightenment, but also a quality job.

Christianity has side-effects. As a result of being a Christian, one enjoys the remission of sins and a place in Christ's Kingdom, the church (Acts 2:38; 47). Salvation comes as a direct result of obedience in response to God's grace shown at Calvary (Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 5:8-9). This is most significant, in view of the fact that, without Christ's atonement for man, no one could reasonably expect any hope of an escape from eternal punishment in hell (Romans 5:8-9).

Yet, while obeying God's plan of salvation is the spiritual healing every soul needs (cf. 1 Peter 2:24), no faithful child of God limits the joy and satisfaction of Christianity to the blessing of salvation (Ephesians 1:7). The inspired Paul proclaims that all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Often we have preached this and have become frustrated, especially in teaching our young people. In dealing with very real concepts but using abstract terms, at times we fail to impress our audience with the tangible rewards of being a Christian. Yes, faithfully proclaiming the truth will make enemies (Galatians 4:16). Living godly will bring persecution upon the Christian (2 Timothy 3:12). A child of God is not immune from problems, mourning, criticism or frustration. But, compared to the lifestyle of the world (cf. James 4:1-3), the Christian life has beautiful, fulfilling "side-effects." Consider.

The Christian is Informed. Moses told Israel, when giving the old Law, "And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee" (Deuteronomy 17:10, emphasis mine, NP). Important and lasting principles for handling the Word of God are contained in the latter part of this verse. The process of teaching and hearing the Bible involves the *recipient* ("And thou," "thee"), the *requirement* ("shalt"), the *response* ("observe to do"), the *realm* ("all that"), the *renderers* ("they"), and the *result* ("inform"). A child of God is one who has heard the Gospel and responded positively, believing the information absolutely necessary for salvation. Through vigilant Bible study and practical application thereof, the Christian **knows** Christ through His commands (1 John 2:3), **knows** how he was redeemed (1 Peter 1:18), **knows** the emancipating power of truth (John 8:32), and **knows** the fatality of trying to serve both God and the world (James 4:4). Having and following the information of Scripture spells the difference between heaven and hell. Ever deepening our knowledge of God's Word further equips us with the ability to handle it aright. (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15).

The Christian is Reformed. The Hebrews writer makes reference to that period of time in which God's people served under the Old Law, performing the acts unique unto it "until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:10). To what he is referring with the phrase "the time of reformation" he immediately explains in the following verse, that the reformation was paved by the *incarnation* ("Christ being come"), *ministration* ("an high priest"), *propitiation* ("His own blood... for us"), and *redemption* ("obtained eternal redemption") of the Savior (Hebrews 9:11). Christ reformed the system of worship and the means of drawing near unto God by dying on the cross, and man could not enjoy redemption by "the blood of goats

and calves" (Hebrews 9:12, 13). Jesus "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

There exists, then, the potential that a man can himself reform his way of life and the condition of his soul because of the aforementioned "time of reformation" where Christ blotted out the Old Covenant, establishing His New Covenant (cf. Hebrews 8:6-7; Colossians 2:14-17). He does not "save himself" through meritorious works whereby he earns salvation (Ephesians 2:9). However, a man must perform "works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20), "good works" (i.e., "works required by God," Ephesians 2:10), and works prompted and called for in response to God's will by active faith (James 2:18). God has always required obedience on the part of one who wished to please Him (cf. Hebrews 5:9). Notice that under the Old Law, the Jews were taught that God's blessings and salvation were conditional, contingent upon their walking according to His will. Moses wrote, "And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things (statutes, judgments and commandments, verse 15). but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you and punish you yet seven times for your sins" (Leviticus 26:23-24, emphasis and parenthesis mine, NP). God expected a change of life to be produced by one who came in contact with God's will. God expects that of mankind under the New Testament today. If man refuses to be reformed by Him by the things of Christ, he is told to expect that God will punish him eternally (Mark 16:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

The Christian is Conformed. God determined before the creation that He would save any person who would respond to His grace, obey the gospel and live faithfully unto death. That is biblical predestination. Paul, by inspiration, writes, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Conformed in this verse means "fashioned like unto" (*Strong's Greek Dictionary*, 68). At the resurrection,

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our "vile body will be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). In conversion, the same process (*Gk.—**summorphos***) occurs in the lives of all who conform themselves to the purpose of God (Romans 8:28). We are brought into the family of God, the church, through conversion. Almighty God becomes our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ becomes our "elder Brother," and fellow-Christians become our brothers and sisters "in Christ." This elevated position and status whereby we no longer are in the dominion of Satan but in the family of the Lord is of eternal importance.

Through conversion to Christ, the Christian is "made conformable unto His death" (Philippians 3:10). One who becomes a child of God is "dead with Christ" (Romans 6:8; 2 Timothy 2:11) through baptism (Romans 6:4); is "dead unto sin" (Romans 6:11); and "dead from the rudiments of the world" (Colossians 2:20). To enjoy eternal life, one must put to death a lifestyle devoted to and knowingly engaged in willful sin. This is possible through being conformed to the will and desire of God's Word.

The Christian is Transformed. Paul says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is

that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). There is "change" involved in pleasing God. Christians change their focus from a self-centered to a Savior-centered one (Colossians 3:1-2). Christians change their priorities from "things" first to the Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). Christians must change some friendships and their allegiances (James 4:4). Christians change their masters (Matthew 6:24). Christians change their hearts (Acts 3:19). The transforming power, of course, is in the gospel. It convicts and urges the change (Hebrews 4:12). Living daily according to the divine pattern causes this gradual, solidifying transformation (2 Corinthians 3:18). Truly, "handling the word of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2), "the truth" (4:2), the "gospel" (4:3) causes that change in man which pleases the Lord. Throughout the New Testament, one is confronted with countless examples of men and women who, becoming and growing as disciples of Christ, were transformed into stronger, more confident, bolder, more zealous, peace-filled and joyous lights in the world of darkness which surrounded them (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4-6). The same thing occurs today!

Obviously, this information, reformation, conformation and transformation is actually more than mere "side-effects." These traits are central to acceptable living for Christ. The idea with which we must be impressed is that becoming a child of God means so much more than having past sins forgiven and having the confidence that sins are continually cleansed as one walks in "the light" (1 John 1:7). Christians are on this earth to make a difference in the Lord's church and in the world.

How are we doing?

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*Somebody did a golden deed;
Somebody proved a friend in need;
Somebody sang a beautiful song;
Somebody smiled the whole day long;
Was that "somebody" you?*

~~~~~  
*If you are inclined to be impressed by those who appear to have it made, take another look at what it has made of them.*

~~~~~  
*The intellect directs,
the emotions generate heart,
and the will turns on the steam.*

Trust In God

by David Macy

The American people are generally in a state of confusion. Unemployment, inflation, escalating violence, and many other factors have combined to create an atmosphere of fear and distrust. Where do we go from here? What does the future hold for the great American ship which is already battered and leaking in some very vital places? No human being can accurately predict the future, but those who are God's true children and are trusting Him with all their hearts, know they have nothing to fear, no matter how troubled the waters become or how dark the sea. We, who have our hope set on the Lord, sail through all the storms into the safe harbor of God's love and providential care. Praise His Holy Name!

The righteous will be safe under the wings of the Almighty, no matter what the future holds. God is completely trustworthy, but there are some things which are not. One of these is man. The scandals which have involved some of the highest officials in our government in recent years, prove we cannot put our confidence in men. "It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8, 9).

Human beings are feeble and often fickle, and even those with the best intentions are often unable to help in time of real need. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). Judas Iscariot was a friend of Jesus, but he lifted up his heel against the Master by delivering Him to those who were seeking His life. Why are we inclined to trust our friends and other human beings more than we trust God? You probably have a friend you would trust with your business, your children and your estate after the shades of death have descended. Shouldn't you trust God even more? Even our most trusted friends sometimes disappoint and fail us, but the Almighty will never fail to keep one of His glorious promises. "[F]or he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Really trusting God will make a tremendous difference in your life, if this is not already your daily practice. It will give a peace and security to your heart that

it has never known before. Peace of mind is what the whole world is searching for, but few are finding it because they are searching in the wrong places. If they would turn toward God, they would be amazed at how quickly their search would become successful.

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Rooted and Grounded in Love

by Ed Allard

One of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians was for them to be rooted and grounded in love (3:17). We are to love God with all of our being (Matthew 22:37). We can only learn what "agape" love is, from God, who is love (1 John 4:16). God's revelation is the only source from which this can be learned. This means we must learn and love God's word. We cannot love God with all of our being without loving God's word with all our being. That's how important loving God's word is. If one does not love the Bible as the word of God, he is not going to love the God of the Bible. He will create and love a god of his own imaginings. If he does not love the Bible as the word of God he will not love the church of God. He will love a church of his own or someone else's invention. To be rooted and grounded in love, we must be rooted and grounded in love for what God has taught concerning Himself, our salvation, the church, sin, and how we are to treat others.

This is the root of the problems we face today in the church. Those who are seeking to change God's church into a denomination and those seeking to follow the practices of the denominations, simply do not truly love the word of God. Not loving the Bible, they do not believe the Bible. This is why they do not follow it. This is why they feel free to add to, take from and change what God has said. They are not rooted and grounded in love.

But I must include a word also to those of you who have relegated God's word to insignificance or a small corner of your life. For you the Bible comes after T.V., after the newspaper, after nearly everything in daily life, and certainly only when it does not get in the way of something else. Are you seeking to love God with all your being? Will He be satisfied with less?

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Attitudes determine altitudes.

The Fall of Sodom

by Max Patterson

Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain were so thoroughly destroyed, there was hardly a trace of the city left. So vile were its sins that the city of Sodom has one of the worst sins named after it. Ordinarily, we associate Sodom's iniquity with sexual license and immorality. In Ezekiel 16:49, 50, Ezekiel identifies at least five reasons for Sodom's fall:

Ezekiel mentions pride. Prov. 16:18 says that "pride goes before destruction," and it is certainly true in this case. There is a strong temptation for us to be proud of wealth, know-how, race, social status, etc. Beware! Pride brings misery, shame, failure and disobedience. Pride is a sin against God, and it can be a factor in our destruction the same as it was in Sodom's.

Fullness of bread is the second thing Ezekiel mentions. Sodom was on the fertile plains. Its soil produced abundantly. The tables of the people were loaded with food. One would think with such abundance, no one would go hungry. The opposite was true. The needy were ignored. Beware, lest the same happen to us who live in a mighty land and have such an abundance of blessings. There are many examples of those with abundance ignoring the needy. Consider the rich man in Luke 16.

Abundance of idleness. My mother used to tell me "idleness is the devil's workshop." It is interesting that the worthy woman of Prov. 31 ate not the bread of idleness. Beware, lest we be idle, and not busy in the work of the Lord as was Sodom.

Sodom failed to help the helpless. Sometimes people are too busy being a glutton to hear the cries of the widows, fatherless and the poor. Our New Testament teaches us that pure religion is meeting the needs of the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, James 1:27. Woe to those like Sodom, who shut up bestowing mercy on others who do not have this world's goods. John asks, "How dwells the love of God" in such people? 1 John 3:17, 18.

Finally, there were the abominable acts. When I think of the conditions surrounding Sodom, I think of our own country. Homosexuals openly flaunt their wickedness, and some newspapers, magazines and talk shows are getting dangerously close to Sodom, and others, without a doubt, have already embraced

the same degree of wickedness.

Paul said, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men..." Romans 1:26, 27. How could one miss the warning in the explicit command, "You shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination"? Lev. 18:22 and 20:13.

Thus the complete fall and destruction of Sodom. Let us not think that the same thing cannot happen to us. These Old Testament events were examples (1 Cor. 10:12), and were written for our admonition and learning (Romans 15:4). Will we learn the lesson?

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Remember, let your wardrobe include a bright, pleasant expression. A ready smile makes a fashionable accessory.

Thank God for holding you in the palm of His hand - a hand that is both gentle and strong.

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The Ascension of Christ

by James Burns

The ascension of Christ into heaven is recorded in Mark 16:19 and Luke 24:51, with the fullest account in Acts 1:1-11. The fact that He is now in heaven (Colossians 3:1; 1 Peter 3:22) also implies His ascension. A number of things result from His going to be with His Father.

His ascension lets us know He is no longer on this earth. Without this knowledge, it might be assumed that He was still here, and many "sightings" would be reported.

His ascension also prevents Christianity from being localized. If He were on earth, where He was would tend to become "headquarters." His being in heaven makes our "headquarters" in heaven.

His ascension emphasizes His continued existence. He was not raised from the dead to die again.

His departure from the earth made possible the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. He told them, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). The Comforter here is the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26). See also Acts 1:4-5; 2:33.

A consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit was the revealing of the New Testament of Christ. The Spirit was to teach the apostles all things and remind them of what Jesus had taught (John 14:26). He was also to guide them into all truth (John 16:13). Thus, His ascension made possible the coming of the Holy Spirit, who revealed for us the New Testament.

The ascension emphasizes His exalted position. He is at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20-23).

His ascension shows that His work on earth was completed. He anticipated His ascension when He said to His Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Although ascended, His work continues. As Lord and King, He rules (Revelation 17:14). As our high priest, He intercedes for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14-16). He also went to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-4).

He will also return some day, not to live on this earth again, but to receive us to be with Him (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

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THE MAN IN THE GLASS

When you get what you want in your
struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself
And see what **THAT** man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass;
The fellow whose verdict counts most in
your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you a straight-
shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're
only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all
the rest,
For he's with you clear up to the end.
And you've passed your most
dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the
pathway of life
And get pats on your back as you pass,
But your final reward will be
heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

-Dale Winbrow

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. You may read about it in the Bible. Romans 16:16.
2. It has no creed but Christ, and binds no name on its members except the Divine. Acts 11:26.
3. It speaks where the Bible speaks, and is silent where the Bible is silent. 1 Peter 4:11.
4. It exalts Christ as the only head. Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23.
5. We plead for the unity of all believers in Christ. John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-6.
6. It is not a denomination, nor a group of denominations, but simply the body of Christ. Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23.
7. Its founder is Christ Himself. Matt. 16:18.
8. Its aim - to save souls by preaching the gospel. Romans 1:16.

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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