

II Timothy 4:1-8

Most people would like to live a joyous life. Many of them think that wealth is necessary for living joyously. To others service is the real secret of good and joyous living. A young doctor gave up a lucrative practice and went to a foreign country as a medical missionary. Later his father visited him and watched him as he performed several difficult operations. One of these operations required several hours. When the doctory had finished it, his father asked him, "How much would you get for that operation in the United States?" The young doctory replied, "I would probably receive one thousand dollars for it there. Here I get nothing but the knowledge that I have helped someone. But man, that's real living!" Before anyone can really live a joyous, victorious, and useful life, he must be a true and faithful Christian.

I. The Requisites For Being A Real Christian.

(1) Salvation from sin.

Any person who has lived without Christ is in a lost condition. "He that believeth not the Son is condemned already." Consequently, he is in need of salvation. The salvation which he needs has been provided for him and is offered to him as a gift. No one is ever saved until he knows that he's lost, repents of his sin toward God, and trusts Him as his Saviour. Regardless of how many things one can believe about Christ, he will never be saved until he receives Him as his personal Saviour.

(2) Commitment to God.

Until one is saved he just exists, and does not really live, even though he may enjoy good health, have a lovely family, a nice home, and a good job. One man was saved when he was eighty years of age, four years later one of his grandchildren asked him how old he was and he replied, "I spent eighty years in the service of Satan, I have known Christ only four years; therefore, I say that I am only four years of age. I never really and truly began to live until I received Christ and He saved me."

You are headed for eternity. None of us can expect more than a few more years, and then we will go out to face God. If you know Christ as your Saviour, you are really living. If you don't know Him, your life lacks the best things here and everything worthwhile hereafter. It is so important that the one whom Christ has saved from sin commit himself to the Lord.

(3) Church loyalty.

It is important that you have a vital church connection, and not simply have your name on a church roll. You must have a connection with the church that means something — that means fellowship, faithfulness, and service. On the roll of practically any church can be found the names of people who have not been within the church building for years. They have no vital connection with the church of which they are members. The church does not mean anything to them, and they do not mean anything to the church. Inasmuch as Christ loved the church and died for it, I would be ashamed if I did nothing more than have my name on a church book. Where did you learn about Christ and the way of salvation? It was either in a church or through someone who had received this knowledge from a church. Only eternity can reveal what the churches have meant to the world.

(4) Separation from the world.

You can't be saved from your sins, commit yourself to Christ, unite with the church, and be loyal to it, and then live a worldly life and know the joy of being a real

Christian. You must be in the world but you don't have to be of the world. It is wonderful when you say, "I am through with the old life of sin, and now and henceforth I intend to live for Christ."

(5) Walking with God.

You can't walk with God unless you are going His way. When you walk with God you walk in a clean pathway.

In Genesis 5:24 we are told that "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." What does it mean to walk with God? It presupposes faith in Him. It means there is mutual trust. Enoch trusted God and God trusted him. He had the most intimate experience of companionship with God. Walking with God involves trust, friendship, congeniality, fellowship, harmony, intimacy, companionship, surrender, affection, energy, victory, and safety.

It is proper for a Christian to walk with God. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God?" (Micah 6:8). While walking with God may be displeasing to many, it is pleasant to the one who does so, and God is pleased also. Unless God is pleased with us we are not living correctly. Furthermore, it is profitable to walk with God. As we walk with Him, he directs our steps, defends our dangers, and comforts us in our distresses. In walking with Him we have a pleasant companionship and an intense satisfaction. "In Thy presence is fullness of joy."

(6) Communion with God.

This means prayer and Bible study. In prayer we talk to God, and in Bible study God talks to us.

"And He walks with me and He talks with me,
And He tells me that I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known."

(7) Serving God.

A real Christian earnestly desires to serve God faithfully the remainder of his life. We know that there was a time when Satan had us in his power and he was leading us to hell. We also know that Christ Jesus went to Calvary and at the price of His own precious blood bought us for His very own. He has set us free from judgment and hell. For this reason we ought to say unto him, "Lord, I am going to serve Thee as faithfully as I can as long as I live." In doing so we shall experience the joy of being real Christian.

"Only one life, t'will soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last."

II. The Results of Being A Real Christian.

(1) Knowing that your sins are forgiven.

No knowledge is more important than this. One of the great and good men in the Bible was one of the greatest sinners on a particular occasion. David was "a man after God's own heart." Yet, on one occasion he broke four of the ten commandments at one time. He coveted. He put the flesh before God. He committed adultery. He murdered. In spite

of that terrible black record of sin, David truly repented of his sin and God graciously forgave him. Then, he later wrote the words, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Psalm 32:1). The God Who forgave David forgives His penitent children today.

(2) Knowing that you have Someone to help you along life's way.

Before He left the earth Christ said to His disciples: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). When Christ saves you the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in your heart. What would you do when sorrow comes and your heart is breaking if you could not hear His words, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1)? What would you do when it seems that the world has forsaken you if you could not hear the Lord say; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5)? What would you do when others turn their backs upon you if you could not hear Him whisper, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24)? What would you do when the responsibilities of life crowd in upon you if you could not hear Him say, through the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13)? What would you do in the time of need if you could not remember the statement in His Word, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19)? Just listen to the Holy Spirit and He will guide you aright. It is wonderful to have a divine Companion along life's pathway.

(3) Knowing that you are living by the best set of rules in the world.

These rules are recorded in the Old and the New Testaments. If you will live according to them, you will not go wrong. A man went into a barbershop to get a haircut and the shine boy took his hat. "Don't you want it cleaned, mister?" asked the boy. And then the man said, "No, it looks all right." Then the boy did the smart thing of putting the hat on a rack between two brand new hats and it looked pretty bad. The man said to the boy, "I have changed my mind. Take the hat and see that it gets a good cleaning." So we look at our lives and we are satisfied with them. But if we put our lives alongside God's rules for our living, we shall see our need of living better. Thank God for the rules that He has given us.

(4) Knowing that you are engaged in the greatest work in the world.

If one had invested one thousand dollars in a certain insurance company in 1928, that investment would now be worth one hundred and eighty-six thousand dollars. That would have been a good investment. When Henry Ford started out, a few men believed in him. They invested five hundred dollars each in his company and they became millionaires. But when you truly invest your life in God's service, you are making the greatest investment in the world. It is an investment that will pay dividends for time and eternity.

(5) Knowing that you are ready for death.

Death cuts off every opportunity for salvation. Death is coming to every one of us, and we know not when nor how. At best we will not have many years here. It is truly wonderful when one is saved and knows that he is ready for death regardless of where, when, and how it may come. Christ is the only safe refuge for the soul.

(6) Knowing that you have a home in heaven awaiting you.

When the Apostle John was nearly one hundred years of age, he was banished to the Isle of Patmos. I can visualize him looking in the direction of Palestine, where his home and his loved ones were, and from whom he was separated by the sea. So God let him look into heaven and then told him to write down the words, "And there was no more sea"

(Revelation 21:1). He knew then that a time was coming when he would never again be separated from the people whom he knew and loved. Oh, that is to be our privilege also! When we go home to heaven, we shall never be separated from God or our loved ones. Until we go home, let us live in such a manner that others can see that we know the Lord Jesus Christ.