

The Sin That Has Taken The Shout Out Of The Church

**By Oliver B. Greene
(Condensed)**

The happiest person on this earth should be a Christian, and the happiest person on earth is a Christian, if that Christian is in the right relationship with Christ. There is much in the New Testament about "Joy" and "Rejoicing" in the Lord. The Old Testament is full of chapters and verses on rejoicing in the Lord, and the book of Psalms is a book filled with praises to God; but, in the average church today you can hear a pin drop. Amens and hallelujahs are as scarce as teeth in a hen's mouth. In most churches, if some dear soul did get happy and do a little rejoicing they would be asked to get quiet or leave. I personally know a preacher who asked a man in his audience to please not say amen any more while he was preaching!

GOD HAS NOT CHANGED! THE WORD OF GOD IS THE SAME!

But it stands to reason that something has changed, and there MUST be a reason for the quietness and deadness in our worship services today. Don't get me wrong. I do not believe in a barn dance in the house of God, and I do believe in "decency and order" in the house of God; but I also believe God is sick of the "lukewarm spirit" demonstrated today in most church services.

There is not much giving today. We hear a lot about "giving the tithe." Israel paid the tithe. When a Christian pays the tithe, they are going no further than Israel under the law. The New Testament plan is laid down in II Corinthians 9:6-7 "But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

We hear a lot today about what God is able to give us, what God is able to do for us, but we don't hear very much about what we can sacrifice for Him. I am afraid the masses of religious people (and please note I said "religious" not Christian) think of Christ as a Santa Claus with a big pack loaded with gifts. If we give EXPECTING something in return, we are not giving at all. Jesus invited men to follow Him, but He informed them that it meant cross bearing; and, He told them plainly if they were not willing to DENY themselves, they were not worthy to be His disciple. He taught that people who loved father or mother, husband or wife, houses or land; yea, and even one's own life more than they loved Him, they could not be His disciple . . .

YOU ARE RIGHT

There are not many real disciples. There are a few, yes; but the disciple road has never been flooded with travelers. It isn't today. It is true that the Lord Jesus wants our soul, our spirit, and our body; He wants us to yield our members as instruments of righteousness; but He wants more than that . . . "Give, and it shall be given unto you . . . pressed down . . . running over."

"Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." Scripture after scripture goes to prove that the man who gives, receives; but again I remind you, if we give expecting to receive; and, if we give with receiving again in mind, we are not giving in the first place. A true gift in God's sight is given out of a heart of love and a heart filled with joy because of the very privilege of giving.

God wants the first-fruits of our increase, not the leftovers. He does not want the crumbs - He wants the best! And why should we give Him less? He did not give us the leftovers ... He gave His best for us, and He gave while we were yet sinners. If He was willing to do His best and give His best for us while we were enemies, how much more should we be happy to give Him our best before we take any for ourselves?

The plain Bible truth is before us, and we can see it if we want to see; if we are not willingly blind. The reason the average Christian, and I mean believer . . . saved person, gets no more out of his Christian life is simple, because they put no more into their Christianity. The reason the average Christian reaps so little joy out of his Christian living is, because they sow so sparingly.

HAVE I EVER REALLY MADE A SACRIFICE TO SERVE THE LORD?

To make an offering to the Lord's work? To witness for Jesus? IF NOT, how can I hope to be a happy Christian? How can I hope to reap joy unspeakable and full of glory? If I sow sparingly, how can I hope to reap a bountiful harvest? LET'S FACE IT!

GIVING CLEANSSES . . . RECEIVING POLLUTES

"Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you." Luke 11:41. In this chapter, Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees concerning outward cleanliness and outward show, while the inside is filthy . . . In Matthew 23:14 Jesus rebuked the same crowd for devouring widow's houses, and then for pretense they would make long prayers in the synagogues. Those fellows are dead, but some of their relatives are still alive; and some are still praying long prayers in churches, but they are not fooling God, and they are not fooling many people.

RECEIVING has ruined more than one, supposedly, "good man." I suppose most of you who read these lines know someone who was a good neighbor, and seemingly, a good fellow until money started rolling his way. And, then it seemed that he forgot all his neighbors, the church, the Lord, and everything else but his "filthy lucre." Sad, but so, it seems the more most men get, the more they want; and they will go the limit to get all they can . . . and the more they get the "MORE THEY CAN."

The rich farmer in Luke 12 is an example; the rich young ruler in Mark 10 is another example; I suspect you have an example not too far from where you live. Riches and pollution walk side by side; and, not many people give it a thought, but riches and SORROW are closely connected in God's Word.

"Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21.

WE HAVE THE DEEPEST LOVE FOR THOSE FOR WHOM WE SACRIFICE MOST

I WONDER how much I have ever sacrificed to be in a position to send a little more treasure up to heaven. What have I ever sacrificed to GIVE, or to GO, or to DO for Jesus? How much has it ever COST me to serve God? How much has it ever COST me to be a witness for Christ? Jesus gave me salvation when I confessed my sin and called on His precious name, but what have I given to Him? How much treasure have I sent on to the glory world?

It makes us happy to hear folks say nice things about our loved ones . . . and dear ones. It makes us happy to hear someone say something nice about our pastor, or a minister who led us to Jesus, or to hear them say something nice about our church . . . BUT DOES IT MAKE US HAPPY to hear someone say something nice about Jesus? Does it thrill our soul to hear someone talk about heaven? IF WE HAVE MORE UP THERE than we do down here, it does. But, if our treasure is down here, we had rather hear folks talk about things down here.

Jesus said "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Church members who shout at the ball games . . . cry around the T. V. and in the movie, but when they come to church, sit on the seat like they are half dead and won't even sing . . .

THEY ARE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCING WHERE THEIR TREASURE IS

And, some church members have a lot more invested in T. V., ball tickets, and theatre tickets than they have ever given to the Lord. THEIR PENNIES go in the offering pan, and their dollars to the sports events and to keep up the payments on the TV. My friend, you need not wonder why there are more "shouts" in the ballpark, than in the church. You need not wonder why there are more tears shed in movie theatres and around TV sets, than in the church . . . The masses are more concerned about those things than they are the things of God; and, they have a greater investment in those things than they have in the things of the Lord. Church members will read these lines who would have a perfect fit if the preacher charged them \$2.00 to get into the church on Sunday morning, but they think nothing of paying two dollars to see "the game."

WE MIGHT AS WELL FACE IT!

The shout has just about died out in the church house . . . But it grows louder and louder in the ballpark, in the city auditorium at the fight, in the stadium on Sunday afternoon at the stock car races . . .

TEARS OF JOY

Are seldom seen in the church house today . . . very few "go forth weeping . . ." in the modern service; but there are many tears shed around the TV when the soap operas are on ... and the home goes on the rocks because of the "other woman ..."

IF THERE WAS half as much excitement in the church, and if there were half as many tears in the church, as we find in the places of pleasure . . . THE DEVIL WOULD HAVE A CHILL! We would make the demons tremble. Our churches would be full on Sunday night, and the drive-in's would be forced out of business.

BUT THE TREASURE HAS SHIFTED!

The joy bells just don't ring any more like they used to in the days when folks had "Old Time Religion."

In closing, let me say this - a believer will never grow very much in the graces of Christianity, UNTIL GOD REALLY GETS INTO THAT BELIEVER'S POCKETBOOK. A believer that is tight with the Lord, cannot grow in Grace!

"Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." II Cor. 8:7.

"THIS GRACE ALSO . . ." refers to giving. In the first six verses of the chapter, Paul is commending the churches of Macedonia for their liberality; he puts it

like this, "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their JOY and their DEEP POVERTY abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For in their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but FIRST GAVE THEIR OWN SELVES TO THE LORD, and unto us by the will of God."

The Macedonian Christians were very poor, but out of their poverty, they gave liberally to help poorer saints in other churches. Because of their liberal spirit toward the ministry and toward saints less fortunate than they . . . they had "ABUNDANCE OF JOY."

GIVING FOSTERS AND INCREASES LOVE

We love those for whom we make sacrifices. The mother loves most tenderly the child for whom she has spent the most sleepless nights. I frankly do not understand why God loved sinners in the beginning; but when I read the account of Jesus dying on the Cross, and all He suffered for the sins of the world, then I can understand why God loves sinners now. God made a tremendous sacrifice for us; He paid a tremendous price for our salvation. Jesus gave His all that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

GIVING MAKES US CHEERFUL!

Giving brings JOY! Receiving may make a man morose and melancholy. Some of the saddest, gloomiest, most forlorn, grumpy people I know, are people who always have their hand out looking for someone to put something in it. They never get ahead; they are always just a little in the red, and they don't know what on earth they will do if things get any tighter. The truth of the matter is, they NEED TO LOOSEN UP and do a little giving and open the valves of joy in their soul.

Selfishness, and just plain stinginess, is a terrible JOY ROBBER. A selfish person is not happy. A stingy person is not happy. They never will be happy until they learn the grace of giving. Maybe someone is asking, "HOW CAN I MAKE GIVING MOST JOYFUL?" The Word of God has the answer. If you listen to preachers and churches, you won't know the answer; they do not agree on giving. But the Word of God is plain: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart (IN HIS HEART), so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity . . ." "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM ..." II Cor. 9:7 and I Cor. 16:2.

Give from the heart, and give what your heart tells you to give, according to the way God has prospered you that week. There are some weeks you are able to

give more than others ... it depends upon how much the Lord has given to you!
IF YOU WANT JOY ... give what your heart tells you to give!

Give from the heart, as the heart leads . . . Give weekly, or regularly, don't lay it up ... Give where the Lord leads you to give. If you are saved, the Spirit of God will lead you RIGHT. Romans 8:14 and Psalm 23:3.

TRUE GIVING fills time and eternity with joyful surprises and reward. Dorcus is still gathering fruits from her sewing circle she carried on down at Joppa; she had a sewing society for the widows and poor in her city. Acts 9:36-43.

Every penny, or even a cup of cold water, that has been given in Jesus name, to the glory of God, is not dead or idle . . . the works go on, and will continue to go on, until the day when we ALL (by that, I mean the church in its completeness) stand before the Lord Jesus to receive our reward for our labours. II Cor: 5:10.

WHAT A JOY!

It will be when we all get to heaven and meet those we helped join to Jesus ... by our testimony . . . by our gifts ... to carry on the work of the Lord, or whatever we have done to point souls to Jesus. When we help a soul find Jesus as Saviour, we help HEAVEN TO REJOICE! "I say unto you, that likewise JOY SHALL BE IN HEAVEN over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance . . . Likewise, I say unto you, there is JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:7-10.

I contend the sin that has taken the shout out of our churches is the sin of "ROBBING GOD." Robbing God of sacrificial giving of SERVICE and OFFERINGS.

ARE YOU A HAPPY CHRISTIAN?

Do you find Joy in living for Jesus? If not, something is wrong! Very definitely wrong! Check up; see what you are putting into your Christian living and if you are sowing sparingly in service to Jesus - in witnessing or in giving of your means . . . that may be the answer. The spiritual birthright of every child of God is "FULL JOY" and "ABUNDANT LIFE." But before we can enjoy our spiritual birthright,

WE MUST MEET THE CONDITIONS LAID DOWN IN GOD'S WORD

If you are not saved, give your heart to Jesus now. If you are saved, and not enjoying your spiritual birthright, surrender fully to Jesus right now.