

## Religionless Faith

Sunday Morning, November 6, 2016

So what would religionless faith look like? In a biography on the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he was quoted as saying, “Christ did not just die for us...He lived for us! He lived by faith in life.”

A religionless Christian life is clearly seen by living a life of faith and righteousness (i.e. by “righteousness”, living right in God’s eyes) in any circumstance whether good or bad.

Note: If Christianity is simply religion (i.e. church and religious jargon) then it is not Christianity.

Church is good as God intended it, but it should be an outward expression of the Christian life. On the back of your bulletin today we printed a true story tied to our day of International Prayer for the Persecuted Church. The young pastor’s wife, Cheng Jie, is a great example of one who lived her faith. Christianity was not just a religion to her. Let’s read this abbreviated version of her story right quick:

“As the date of her long-anticipated release from prison neared, Cheng Jie wondered whether her young sons would even remember her. She’d spent the last two years at a labor camp in China, and she hadn’t seen her sons at all during her imprisonment. Cheng Jie — a young mother, a pastor’s wife, and a former kindergarten director — never anticipated her 2014 arrest. It was her role as the director of the Hualin Foreign Language Experimental Kindergarten that took her to prison for two years. *(more on next page)*

Chinese authorities charged the school and its administration of “illegal business operations,” due to the use of what the authorities called religious curriculum. The school was closed, and four people associated with it, including Cheng Jie, were arrested. Her husband was allowed to visit once a month, but the children, who were 1- and 3-years-old when she was arrested, were not allowed to come. During their visits, the husband and wife encouraged one another, but the guards refused to allow him to give Cheng a Bible. But God provided her with a copy of His Word another way. Another prisoner had one, and she traded it to Cheng Jie for some other items. Despite the long work hours, Cheng read the Bible faithfully every night and found encouragement in God’s Word. She also taught her cellmates songs, hymns, and Bible stories. In February 2016, Cheng Jie’s sentence was complete, and she was released. It took a while for her now 3 and 5 year old sons to warm up to her, but the family is grateful to be reunited. Though it was hard on Do Hongbo to care for the boys on his own, he said God gave him good health during that time so he could take care of the children. Today, the family faces an uncertain future. They don’t know what life will hold for them. Cheng Jie’s prison record is a black mark against the family. It will be difficult to find work and her sons may not be allowed to enter school. Though they were reluctant to leave behind their church family, Du Hongbo decided, “The church belongs to God.” They are preparing to relocate.”

Consider **(II Corinthians 5:7)**

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Or **(Matthew 6:33a)**

But seek first the kingdom of God & His righteousness

Now God makes it clear that our faith should reveal our works.

**(James 2: 18 – 24)**

18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.

24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

You see, if we only have works without faith it is nothing, but if we have works as a result of our faith, we have something!

Faith should be the core of who you are, and works the outward expression of your faith.

If we were to strip ourselves of religion, being “religionless”, would people see our lives living faithfully for Christ? Our faith should be clothed in religious expression, but never should our religion be without faith!

God sums it up this way in His Word in

**(Romans 13:14)**

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Clothing ourselves in Christ is not an outward act of religion, but an act of faith and righteousness in Christ!

How do we clothe ourselves with faith & righteousness?

1. Make the decision

**(Job 29:14a)**

I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;

2. Be baptized or immersed

**(Galatians 3: 26 - 27)**

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

3. Stop doing and thinking the way you did.

Learn new ways to behave & things to think on from the Word. We are taught this in **(Eph. 4:22 – 24)**

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

4. Start wearing God's clothing, His character and ways, each day.

**(Colossians 3:12)**

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

We must take action each day. We must put on each day. It takes daily effort. But with God the putting on can be easier. To try to display these character traits on our own would be impossible.

Clothing ourselves with Christ keeps us from being religious.

Pride is the one thing that will keep us from being right with Jesus and from living the life of faith and being clothed with righteousness.

**(Habakkuk 2:4)**

"Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

When we evaluate ourselves mentally outside of our normal religious expression and become religionless and evaluate our faith and righteousness in the midst of our life's circumstances, we will learn whether our religious clothing is truly a reflection of living our life in Christ.

Does your lifestyle outside church reflect your faith?

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## Invitation & Lord's Supper

As Christians we have been sealed in the blood of Christ and are a part of a new covenant with the Lord. The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the incredible cost to God for us to enter into the new covenant. We need to examine ourselves, because if one member of the body is out of fellowship with God, it affects the whole body. That is the nature of this new covenant that we remember today. This is our opportunity to examine our relationship with Christ and to be restored to the blessings of a covenant relationship. Through a revived people, God can make an impact in our church, our community, our state, our nation and the world.

**(Matthew 26: 26 – 29)**

<sup>26</sup> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

<sup>27</sup> Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

<sup>28</sup> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

<sup>29</sup> But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."