

- ***READ Ecclesiastes 2:24,25*** December is certainly a favorite time of year for many people. It often involves time with family and friends, the exchanging of gifts, and holiday parties. It is a time of joy and celebration at the closing of yet another year and the excitement of looking forward to the next. This time of the year is just fun! Or at least it should be, right?
 - Have you ever come across anyone who when finding out that you are a Christian, they get this funny look on their face and then after some time they begin to ask questions about what life is like as a Christian? Unfortunately, there is this misconception in the minds of some in the world that the Christian life is...well that the Christian life is a boring life. There are some people who when they imagine the life of a Christian, their minds automatically go to imagining monks or nuns. They imagine the Christian life as being dull, dry, and without any sort of excitement. Its obvious to me that none of these people have ever seen some of those recreational bowling teams made up of nuns!
 - But all kidding aside, it is sad that some believe that the life of thee Christian is without joy, fun, or excitement. Maybe some of this comes from the fact that there are many activities that the world deems as fun that disciples just don't participate in. We see it all throughout commercials advertising alcohol or other products, right? Young attractive young people are just having the time of their lives, but what about Christians? Can Christians have fun, too? Let's talk for a few minutes about this question this evening, and consider the teachings of Scripture concerning this life, fun, and enjoyment. We are in the time of the year where much of this takes place...can Christians be a part of the festivities or not?
- I. **It is possible for us to have fun and enjoy life without engaging in sin.**
- A. **Christians are often accused of not having the ability to have fun because we don't participate in many of the activities that the world deems as fun.**
1. A few weeks ago we looked at **I Peter 4:1-4**, and I would like to revisit this because it paints for us the exact picture of the attitude that we see from those around us who might seek to disparage us because we don't "have fun" like they do. In this text, Peter is speaking to disciples who are experiencing some problems at the hands of those who are seeking to malign or speak evil of them because he doesn't run around doing the same things that they do.
 2. Peter says that the time they spent in their past life participating in these things is enough for them. The time they once spent in "*sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries*" was enough for them. They had moved on to better and holier things in Christ, but those others who were still participating in these things weren't to keen on just letting them go.
 3. We've seen this kind of thing before haven't we? Maybe you've seen it in your own life where others look at you as some sort of fuddy-duddy because you don't see the fun and joy in partying with alcohol and dealing with those consequences. In a world where recreational alcohol usage is commonplace, it probably is strange for others to hear that we don't participate in things such as these that involve the usage of alcohol, and there is good reason for such.
- B. **Those of the world who ridicule Christians fail to realize the foolishness of their decisions.**
1. Those who participate in this type of recreational alcohol usage that leads to drunkenness and dissipation must be blinded to the foolishness of their actions. In their minds, its all worth it and ok because at least they're having fun, right? I mean...who can have fun without a little alcohol or other recreational drugs, right?
 2. What they see as fun and enjoying life is actually foolishness. The wisdom of the Proverb writer shines true in **Proverbs 23:29-35** as he discusses the foolishness of those who give themselves over to alcohol. They might be looking for fun, but they will only find heartache. God's wisdom shows us the truth concerning such things.
- C. **It is fully possible to find joy in this life in things that are good, pure, and wholesome.**
1. This is exactly what we see in the text that we opened with at the beginning of our assembly. Notice that Paul says in **Philippians 4:4-8** that we can be a people who are able to rejoice always if we are willing to put our faith and trust in God and focus and be able those things that are good and right.

2. Remember, the world tells us that fun and enjoyment can only be found in things such as alcohol, sex, and the like...but God through Paul tells us that joy and peace will only be found in those things that are excellent and worthy of true praise. It must be on these things that we dwell, and we must dwell on these things because God has given them to us. They are for our good, and we must remember that even His commandments are for our good. **(I John 5:3)**

II. God has given us a time for fun and enjoyment in this life.

A. The emphasis in this point is in the fact that God has given us times for fun and joy.

1. This is what we read back at the beginning of the lesson in **Ecclesiastes 2:24,25**. The wise preacher had seen in this life under the sun that man must take time *"to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good."* But notice that directly following this statement, he make mention that the ability for man to do this, the ability to enjoy life and have fun is a result of God's blessings being upon man. *"For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?"* is the question posed by the Preacher.
2. The conclusion must be that God has designed a world for us to experience in which fun and enjoyment are a part of life. The Preacher even goes on to say as much in **Ecclesiastes 3:4**. In this section of this book, the Preacher is showing that life is full of a lot of different experiences that bring balance to our existence, and part of this existence is the fact that sometimes we will weep and mourn, but there will also be times when we will be able to laugh and dance. There will be times where we will be expected to have fun and enjoy ourselves. The Preacher must truly have believed this because He repeats Himself again concerning the need for man to have fun and enjoy this life in **Ecclesiastes 9:9**. So where does this leave us in regards to our question?

B. If God has given us times for fun and joy, then we would be remiss not to take advantage of such times and give Him thanks for the blessings of these times.

1. Our God had every right to create this world however He very well pleased, and it was His will for us to be able to live in a world where fun and joy are incorporated. If God was willing to give us this type of life where we could experience such wonderful feelings and emotions, yet we refuse to acknowledge them... what does that say about us?
2. I'll be honest, I can totally see and understand why some people have this image in their heads where Christians are simply some of the most miserable people in the world. As a matter of fact, I have known some Christians who truly did seem as if they just hated life, and what a sad existence that must be. Sure life can be difficult at times. Such there can be things that we have to experience that aren't fun and won't bring us any semblance of joy...However, we would be just as blind as those who think that fun can only be had if there is a little sin involved if we allow ourselves to not see that there are plenty of things in this world that ought to fill us with joy and cause us to have a little fun, and those things are found in God's blessings. Being in God's presence and doing His will will bring us a full sense of joy. **(Psalm 16:7-11)**
3. I don't know about you...but some of my happiest memories in life have been had with some people who make up this church. We have gone and done some really fun things together that I will remember for the rest of my life. We have truly had a lot of fun together doing different things...that did not involved alcohol...I mean...some of the people that make up this church are crazy enough without alcohol. Anyways, our God is very gracious to us, and He has allowed for us to enjoy this life in an abundant way, but that doesn't mean that this life is only all about having fun and having a good time. In fact, it is truly about so much more than that.

III. However, this life isn't all about having fun...our obedience to God is what truly matters.

A. We must be sure to find balance in this life because there will come a day when we have to give an account for the way that we lived.

1. This is one of the reasons that we must be strong and stand up against those who might try to influence us to participate in things. Notice what Peter says right after he encourages the disciples to be strong against the maligning of those who participate in such wickedness. He reminds them In **I Peter 4:5**, that those who practice such things will eventually have to give an account to God, and He is ready to judge them for their wickedness.

2. Sure these people might truly believe that they are having fun with their foolishness, but whatever joy and fun they are having is truly fleeting. The Hebrew writer commends Moses in **Hebrews 11:24,25** for being willing to refuse the riches of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He said that he chose *"to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin."* This must be our attitude. We must be willing to remember that having "fun" and "enjoying" life isn't the end all and be all of our existence. We won't be judged by God based upon how well we were able to live it up. Instead, the Preacher finishes off Ecclesiastes by impressing upon the reader the necessity of making sure that they fear God and keep His commandments because after everything else, this will be what God will judge us upon. It won't matter how much fun we were able to have if we were not faithful to Him. (**Ecclesiastes 12:13,14**)
- B. Our failure to put first things first will only result in our harm and condemnation.**
1. Think with me to the well known story of the prodigal son in **Luke 15:11-32**. In this parable, Jesus speaks about this young man who forsook his family and the honor of being the first born son in order to pursue a life that I'm sure he thought was going to be nothing but fun and excitement. However, the Scripture tells us that this loose way of living cost him everything and he had to eat food with the pigs. His decisions to pursue the pleasures of this world and focus only on fun and worldly enjoyment instead of being loyal to his family and honoring them led him to a place of misery and shame. He failed to keep the most important things first in his life, and he suffered greatly for it.
 2. This young man didn't fail simply because he sought to have fun, he could've had fun and enjoyed life without leaving his family behind. He could've used the riches of his inheritance to have a good life, but it doesn't seem as if that was enough for him. However, that ought to be enough for us. I think we would all probably fall into the group of people that Paul is writing to in **I Timothy 6:17-19**. In this text, he is speaking to the rich and making sure to remind them to keep first things first. He tells them that they can enjoy their riches because they have been given from God, but that they shouldn't put their trust in them by any means. Their job was to simply use the blessing and enjoyments of life to do good, to be generous, and ready to share. Their focus was to be on storing up treasures that would truly benefit them in the future, and this certainly reminds me of **Matthew 6:19-21**.
 3. Yes, enjoy this life and have fun, but we must remember to keep things in perspective and in the correct order with God and the blessings that come from being His first. Everything else in this life can leave us, but we can still find joy in being a child of God. If we can remember this, then our pursuit of the things of this world won't hinder us from being able to give a good account of our lives to God in the last day.

So can Christians have fun? I absolutely believe that the Scriptures show us that it is more than possible for disciples to have fun and enjoy the blessings of God in this life. In fact, we ought to be a people who find much joy in the good things that come from our God, and it is nice to know that we can find that joy without having to participate in things that could and will lead us to harm and trouble. I don't know about you, but I am so thankful for the way God has designed this life to be. I'm thankful for my blessings and the good people that have been put in my life who I am able to have so much fun with. Let's be sure that we are a people who are constantly expressing our thankfulness to God for these and every blessing. May He be with us and bless us as we have some fun and enjoy His blessings during this holiday season.

PRAYER *Our loving and gracious Father in heaven...we are indeed so very thankful for the blessings of this life that You have given for us to enjoy day by day. We look all around us and we see Your love overflowing. We thank you for the ability to have fun and enjoy this life through Your blessings, and we pray that we might always focus on those things that are good, right, and wholesome and find much joy in them. We pray that you would be with those that make up this church and bless us all as we spend time with family and loved ones this week. May we continually express our gratitude towards you, and may it all be done to your glory. We love You so much for who You are and everything You do for us. Thank you Father, and we pray this in the name of Jesus...amen.*