

Our Rights! God's Rights!

What rights do we have as Christians? I recently talked to a wife who told me she was leaving her husband because she was unhappy in her marriage. I immediately took issue with her decision and her immediate response to me was, "It's my right to be happy." First of all happiness as this wife is using the term is not a good basis for Christians to build a foundation on because it is based upon selfishness and depends on feelings which have no depth or substance.

God takes happiness and turns it into joy if we will turn over to Him our right to happiness. Joy is rooted in one's spirit and overcomes feelings regardless of our circumstances. Now what about rights? As Christians God has promised us eternal life if we will but believe (John 3:16). From this promise we can establish that we as practicing believers have every right to believe that whatever God promises to us through His Word is ours. As we live out our lives on this earth our so called personal rights need to be turned over to Him.

God's promises are all true and are ours if we but obey, but in coming to total obedience in our relationship with the Lord we must die to self. This means that we have to give up our right to whatever we perceive happiness to be, give up anything based upon the pleasing of self. John 3:30 states that "He must increase, but I must decrease." This verse certainly suggests a dying to self making the Lord a priority in our lives. I am reminded of the story in Mark 10 concerning the rich young ruler who was asked by Jesus to sell all he possessed, but at these words he went away sorrowful. What was wrong? The rich young ruler was suddenly faced with a choice. The choice being to give up his possessions to Jesus or claim his so called right to keep them for self edification. Because of his choice he went away grieved. When you and I make self more important than Jesus we also walk away in defeat.

The quality of our walk with the Lord is contingent upon our willingness to die to self. In John 12:24,25 it says "Truly truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.

Our willingness to give up our rights is based upon making the Lord number one at the expense of self. Many individuals and marriages are being deceived and robbed when they believe the lie of the enemy that God wants them to be happy at the expense of total obedience to Him.

The greatest example of yielded rights is brought out in Phil. 2 where Jesus yielded Himself to death on a cross. Because of His willingness to give up His self right to life, God the Father highly exalted Him.

When you and I come to the place of yielding our rights regardless of the cost, we die to self, and God gives us new life in Him. Out of this new life true joy will come which is God's gift to us for our obedience to Him.

If you are struggling and discouraged with what you perceive to be your right let me encourage you to take the following steps:

1. Identify the right to be yielded (what is it you are hanging on to?)
2. Transfer that right to God (die to self)
3. Thank God for whatever the outcome may be (by faith).

Let me close with the following words from Oswald Chambers "My Utmost For His Highest". "Every time we stand on our rights and insist that this is what we intend to do, we are persecuting Jesus."