



New Life Christian Community

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2Cor 5:17

Sunday, September 10, 2017

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ATHEISTS OBJECTION

What is it that you believe? I mean really, at the end of the day, what do you put all your trust in? For many, we say with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, but we don't believe in our hearts that God actually raised Him from the dead. Profession becomes a practice akin to the playwright's lines in a play. The actors must be convinced, so much as to convince an audience. But this conviction falls short of a life altering transformation that reverberates into the rest of our lives. Though it be the greatest of plays (even Shakespearean) it will never be true faith until it becomes our life.

So, I ask, what is it that you believe? For many, we are convinced we believe in Jesus. But, if we were asked to explain what we believe, would you be able? One of the areas the modern church has failed (I am more and more convinced) is in the teaching and understanding of the fundamentals of the faith. We have lived for so long merely assuming certain doctrines and truths. Though we say that we are convinced of certain truths, we have never actually understood these truths. This is what the academic world refers to as epistemological awareness. Do you know what you believe and why you believe it?

Today, in the academic world (and non-academic world for that matter), there are more and more atheists vocalizing and evangelizing their unbelief in any god. The reason for this growth in bold atheism is not the focus of this article, but the fact that this trend exists should cause the Christian to lean forward. What must we do?

One of the loudest voices in this atheistic movement was a man named Christopher Hitchens. His work is very well known. From an earthly perspective, there was scarcely a more intelligent man. He was both brilliant and winsome. He was kind and convincing.

Why have I singled him out? Because, as I see it, his main objection to the Christian faith revolved around a distorted fundamental doctrine of our faith – a distortion that could have been easily dealt with.

Mr. Hitchens was a regular public debater. In his debates with Christian thinkers (to their credit, these were usually not theologians, but apologists) he would regularly bring up his greatest grievance and objection to the “popular Christian faith.” His statement would go something like this: “I think the teachings of Christianity are immoral. The central one is the most immoral of all—that is, the one of the vicarious redemption. You can throw your sins onto somebody else, vulgarly known as scapegoating” (Hitchens, *The Immorality of Christianity*).

The centerpiece to the argument that he raised against Christianity is the very stumbling block that I encountered in seminary. I was in the midst of deep study

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ATHEISTS OBJECTION

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in the different understandings of the atonement. (The atonement is a fancy word for the events of the cross - what Jesus accomplished, how He accomplished it and how His work applies to us.)

For me instability came when I really tried to understand what it means to say that Jesus died for me. How can God be called "just" when He pours His wrath out on Jesus - the one who has never sinned. How is it "just" that I am not punished for *my* sins? Indeed, true justice only exists where punishment is dealt squarely unto the guilty party.

I began to read and seek an answer to this question. In fact, I raised the question to classmates. The answer was never a true engagement in the discussion, but, rather a - "Well, that is basic atonement theology." Or, something like, "Well, God is just...so it must be just...even if I don't know how."

How should we respond? What was I missing? What did Hitchens not understand?

I pray that the answer to Hitchens' objection is natural for you.

The answer to these objections is not found in a text book. If you look to the main Systematations of today and recent past (Grudem, Erickson, Hodge, Berkhof, etc.) you will not find this objection adequately addressed.

Where ought we to look for our answer? In God's Word. The answer is as plain as day.

Paul's entire framework (and the entire early church corpus) is built upon this premise - Those that follow Christ are those who have died *with* Christ. We are no longer alive, but Christ lives in us. We must be found *in* Christ. The answer to the atheist's objection can only be rightly understood when we view Christianity in terms of a relationship. The closest human relationship that applies to this discussion is that of marriage. My wife's burdens are my burdens. My baggage is her baggage. We are *one* flesh - this covenant is bound up in the idea of becoming one new creation. The old is gone. It is destroyed.

If, on this grand stage, you still live for your yourself, you will die for your sins. But if the life you live is in such a proximity to Christ that He is your very life - you have life itself.

Be hidden in the righteousness of Christ as we are made one with Him.

Let's be students of the Word (not other books), and allow ourselves to be crucified with Christ - proclaiming; to live *is* Christ.

Blessings, Pastor Tony

SEPTEMBER MEMORY VERSE

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (ESV)

EVENTS TO MARK ON YOUR CALENDAR

Women's Bible Study

Thursday morning Women's Bible Study Thursday, **September 14th** at 9:30 am. This year's study is the book of Romans! The only cost is a \$5 fee for materials. Childcare is available. If you have any questions, talk with Cory Mattson (715-417-0945). Check out the information & sign-up sheet on the welcome table in the entryway.

Work Day

Plan to attend Saturday, **September 16th** at 8:00 am for a Work Day at New Life. Pizza for lunch at noon. Please bring your step ladders, Windex for window cleaning and paper towels. Rags for dusting, and we plan to wash walls and railings, pails with Lysol and other cleaning stuff. For cleaning in the basement gloves are needed. This is a great opportunity to serve!

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

New Life Video Ministry

This is an opportunity to serve those who are unable to join us in person to worship Jesus Christ and to study God's Word on Sunday morning. New Life video ministry is looking for camera operators. You can sit with one of the camera operators to see what is involved, talk to anyone on the team about the ministry, or contact Jim Mabee @ 651-470-4172. Check us out, we would love to have you join our team!



We still need several teacher's assistants for IMMERSE. A teacher's assistant helps a teacher manage the classroom and helps guide children through the lessons. If you are interested, contact Pastor Chandler.

Coffee Ministry

We are in great need of a few wonderful people to help us with the coffee ministry. It is not difficult and it is a lot of fun. You will be providing one of the first touches that folks get when they enter New Life. It is an honor to be doing the Lord's work and serving others. Please contact Diane McMahon at church or call 715-453-8123.

Check out New Life Online
newlifechristiancommunity.org

Find Links to:

• Events • Sermons Online • New Life Connect • Set Lists • & More

New Life now has an Instagram account. Follow us @newlifechristiancommunity

Pastoral Eldership Team:

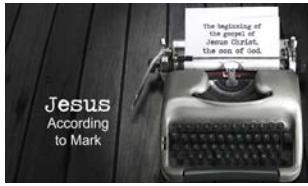
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This Week's Schedule of Events:

Sep 14 Men's Bible Study
6:30 am at NLCC
Sep 14 Women's Bible Study
9:30 am at NLCC
Sep 14 GriefShare Evening Meeting
6:30 pm NLCC Lg Classroom

Upcoming Potluck/Meal Team:

Sep 17 Meal Team #5
Fellowship follows our service every Sunday, along with a great meal.



Today's Passage:

Pastor Tony's message is from the New Testament book,
Mark 13:32-37

Sermon Notes:

