

## The Church is a Body of Winners

“During the 1950’s, this so-called Pastor preached a social gospel of human freedom, equality, and love, and created a Church that was an inter-racial mission for the sick, homeless and jobless. And before you knew it, this quasi-Pastor has assembled a large following of over 900 members.

Everything seemed to be going fine until the government investigated his supposed cures for cancer, heart disease and arthritis. And after being under this scrutiny, they decided to move the group to Ukiah in Northern California and later to San Francisco and then to Los Angeles.

But it wasn’t long before suspicions were being raised of illegal activities within the Church and so this supposed man of God moved some of the people to Guyana where they leased about 4,000 acres of dense jungle from the local government there.

And soon this self-proclaimed prophet developed a belief he called *Translatation* in which he and his followers would all die together and would move to another planet for a life of bliss.

But soon, authorities from the United States came to check out the rumors that this place was being run like a concentration camp, and that people were being held there against their will.

So when they were getting ready to leave, the armed Church security guards opened fire and killed one U.S. congressman and four other people. And now fearing retribution, the leaders reached a consensus to commit group suicide.

And so when all was said and done, on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1978, some 914 people had died: 638 adults and 276 children. The Church was called The People’s Temple and the so-called Pastor was...Jim Jones.”

Now folks, with all due respect to the families involved, I’d say that **supposed Pastor** and that **supposed Church** left behind a horrible trail of

death and destruction, how about you? But folks, believe it or not, did you know this same deadly scenario is being played out all across America every single day. And get this! It's not causing the destruction of just hundreds of lives, but millions of lives. And can anybody guess what that might be? Hey, that's right! It's the American Church walking around acting like they've got **practical amnesia!** You talk about deadly behavior!

Oh, we say we know who we are as the Church, but half the time, with our lips and with our lives, we act like we've forgotten who we are. And it's not only detrimental in our walk with Christ. It keeps others from believing in Christ. Therefore, to avoid this **atrocious** of Christian's living like they got practical amnesia by not knowing who they are, we're going to conclude our study from the Word of God on the people of God entitled, **"Will the REAL Church Please Stand Up?"**

And we've already seen the **first thing** we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we've got practical amnesia is that the Church is the **Body of Christ**. The **second thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Brides**. The **third thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of One**. The **fourth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Hope**. The **fifth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Joy**. The **sixth thing** we need to know is that the

Church is a **Body of Love**. The **seventh thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Peace**. The **eighth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Strangers**. The **ninth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Disciples**. The **tenth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Servants**. The **eleventh thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Rebels**. The **twelfth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Worshippers**. The **thirteenth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Warriors**. And last time we saw the **fourteenth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Witnesses**. And there we saw that even though the Bible says we were **supposed to be** witnesses for Christ declaring the gospel to the lost, what are we doing? It looks like we've actually **stopped** witnessing to the lost! **Why?** Because we've stopped **praying for the lost**, we've stopped **sharing with the lost**, and because of that we've stopped **caring for the lost**. And because of that, we're not only ceasing to be a Body of Witnesses, we're actually turning into a Body **atheistic close-mouthed people ashamed of the gospel**. And I don't think that's the kind of Church Jesus came to die for, how about you?

But people, believe it or not, did you know that's not the only thing we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we got

practical amnesia? The **fifteenth thing** we need to know is **The Church is a Body of Winners**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

**John 16:17-33** “Some of his disciples said to one another, What does He mean by saying, In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me, and Because I am going to the Father? They kept asking, What does He mean by a little while? We don't understand what He is saying.

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask Him about this, so He said to them, Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me? I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

In that day you will no longer ask Me anything. I tell you the truth, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My Name. Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about My Father. In that day you will ask in My Name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.

Then Jesus' disciples said, Now You are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that You know all things and that You do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that You came from God.

You believe at last! Jesus answered. But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these

things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Jesus clearly told His disciples that they would have a **temporary time of grief**, speaking about His crucifixion of course, but when He rose from the grave, they would have a what? **A permanent joy**, right? A joy that no one can take away! **Why?** Because Jesus has overcome the world! He whooped the devil’s pants off on the cross! He won! And since we belong to Him that makes us a bunch of what? **Winners!**

And surely we know that, right? I mean, surely we know that the Church is a **Body of Winners** because Jesus won the ultimate victory! He defeated sin, death and hell. And since we belong to Him we’re on the winning team! Therefore, we always have a victorious attitude and outlook on life, right? Well, you’d think so, but we’ve got some problems. **Why?** Because if you look at most Churches it doesn’t look like we’re **victorious winners in Christ**. Are you kidding! By the looks on our faces and our attitudes in life, it looks like we’re a **bunch of losers in Christ!**

So why in the world do we do this? Why do we Christians **who are supposed to be** a Body of victorious winners in Christ, actually look like a bunch of losers in Christ? Hey, great question. I’m glad you asked. It’s

pretty simple. The **first reason** why we look like a bunch of losers in Christ is because we've forgotten Christ has won for us a **Forever Pardon of Sin**.

But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

**Romans 7:21-8:2** "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. The Apostle Paul discovered a strange law at work in the Christian life, didn't he? And what was that strange law? It was that we Christians not only sin before we get saved, but what? We sin **after we get saved**, right? How many of you can testify to that? Well, the rest of you just did by lying. But anyway, notice what else he said. He said even though we commit these acts of wretched sin, what's God do? Does He beat us over the head with a two-by-four? Does He tell us, "Get out of My face! I never want to see us again?" Or maybe does He threaten us with losing our salvation? No people! What did it say? We don't lose our salvation. **Why?** Because in Christ there is no condemnation, right? We're forever pardoned of all our sins.

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know we're **winners in Christ** because we've got eternal forgiveness of sin. And therefore, no matter what happens in life, we've always got a huge smile on our face, right? People are you kidding? We don't look like a bunch of winners! We look like a bunch of losers! If you look at most Christians today, it looks like their diet consists of sour pickles, lemons, and prunes! **Why?** Because it's simple people! We've gotten our eyes off of Christ. We've forgotten the victory we have in Him and instead only see ourselves still covered in sin!

**But people, this is what's so amazing about the gospel!** God doesn't forgive us of just some of our sin. He forgives us of all our sin! In fact, so much so that **right now**, not tomorrow, not in the future, but **right now** God sees us as if we had never sinned. Therefore, to remind us of this amazing victory over sin we've got in Jesus Christ, let's listen to this man's realization that are sins are "erased" and you tell me if we've don't have something to celebrate in life as Christians.

"I always had this fear of going to heaven. You say, 'Afraid of going to heaven?' You bet! You say, 'I thought it was hell?' I wasn't afraid of hell. I mean, I figured if I went to hell at least they would accept me there. You know, they wouldn't say you're not good enough. But heaven, I had the feeling that they were going to pull down this movie screen and place this video tape of all the sins I've ever committed. And my mother would be there!

Now people, I don't know if they have a tape on me recording all my sins. And I don't know if they have a tape on you recording all your sins. But if there is such a tape, I've got good news for you. Jesus has erased your tape! Your sins says the Scripture is blotted out, it is buried in the deepest sea, it is remembered no more.

That thrills me, not just to have my sins forgiven, but forgotten. I don't know how you're going to heaven but I am going to move. You see, I from West Philadelphia. In Philadelphia you don't walk. They'll kill you if you walk. You move man! You see, people back off when you move. That's how I'm going to walk into heaven. I'm going to move and I'm going to yell at the angels, 'Out of my way angels!' Well, they're only messengers.

And I'm going to strut before the Lord and Jesus will be there with all my sins forgiven, forgotten, buried in the deepest sea, remembered no more. Isn't that incredible? And with a record that is washed clean, with sins that are purged, the Father will embrace me and I can call Him Abba Father."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say we've got lots to celebrate in life as Christians, how about you? I mean, gee whiz, you talk about an amazing victory, right? Therefore, **the point is this**. If we're walking around in life looking like a loser in Christ instead of a winner in Christ, could it be something as simple as we've got our eyes off of Him and on to our sin? Could it be we've forgotten that Jesus has won for us a forever pardon of sin? I kind of think so!

Oh, but that's not all. The **second reason** why we look like a bunch of losers in Christ is because we've forgotten Christ has won for us a **Fantastic Paradise with Him**.

**Hebrews 11:24-26** "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along



with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. The great and mighty man of God Moses made a deliberate choice to do what? He chose to be mistreated with the people of God instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin, right? **And why did he do that?** Was it because he was looking forward to being blessed by God to get a brand new chariot with chrome wheels? Or maybe he was looking forward to getting elected in the Egyptian Church board? No people! What did it say? He didn't do it because He was wanting to get on a Church board. He did it for a what? For a heavenly reward, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know **just like Moses** that we not only have a forever forgiveness of sin through the Messiah but we get to spend eternity in a fabulous paradise with the Messiah. And therefore, we can endure any problem or any trial on earth because we know we've got something way better coming. We got something to look forward to, right? People are you kidding? We don't look like a bunch of winners! We look like a bunch of losers! If you look at most Christians today, it looks like they just got audited by the IRS, somebody ran over their dog and their house just burnt down! **Why?** Because it's simple folks! Once again, we've got our eyes off

of Christ. We not only still see ourselves covered in sin. We've forgotten we get to spend eternity in a paradise with Him. And people, this paradise or heaven is one place that will not only blow your mind, but it's a place where **once for all** you will leave all of your troubles, **and I mean all of them**, forever behind, like these nurses found out.

“One day there were three nurses who died and went to Heaven and there they were met by Saint Peter who asked them. ‘What did you used to do back on Earth and why should you be allowed into Heaven?’

So the first nurse told Peter, ‘I was a nurse at an inner city hospital. I suffering long and worked hard to bring healing and peace to as many sufferers as possible, especially the poor children.’

So Saint Peter said, ‘Very noble. You may enter.’ And he ushered her through the gates.

So he turned to the next nurse and asked her the same question, ‘What did you used to do back on Earth and why should you be allowed into Heaven?’

And the second nurse replied, ‘I was a missionary nurse in the Amazon. I suffered for many years and worked day and night with a small group of doctors and nurses to help people in numerous tribes, healing them and telling them of God's love.’

‘Excellent!’ said Saint Peter. And he ushered her through the gates as well.

Well, finally he posed the same question to the third nurse. But she hesitated and then replied sheepishly, ‘I was just a nurse at an HMO.’

So Saint Peter considered her answer for a moment and then told her, ‘Well, okay. You can enter, too.’

And the nurse exclaimed in relief. ‘Wow! For a moment there, I almost thought you weren't going to let me in.’

To which Saint Peter replied, ‘Oh, you can certainly come in, but you can only stay for three days.’”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I personally am looking forward to not having to deal with anymore HMO’s, how about you? No wonder it’s called heaven! Hello! But people, let’s not just take the word of those nurses. Let’s take a look at some Bible verses. Let’s see what the Bible says heaven is like.

1. The Dwelling Place of God: (Psalm 2)
2. The Dwelling Place of Angels: (Matt. 18)
3. A Heavenly Country: (Heb. 11)
4. A Holy Place: (Isaiah 57)
  
5. An Eternal Paradise: (1 Cor. 12)
6. A Place with Streets of Gold: (Rev. 21)
7. A Place with Gates of Pearls: (Rev. 21)
8. A Place with Foundations of Precious Gems: (Rev. 21)
  
9. A Place of Eternal Rest: (Rev. 14)
10. A Place of Eternal Joy: (Rev. 7)
11. A Place Without Wickedness: (Rev. 22)
12. A Place Without Darkness: (Rev. 21)
  
13. A Place Without Sin: (Rev. 21)
14. A Place Without Tears: (Rev. 21)
15. A Place Without Mourning: (Rev. 21)
16. A Place Without Pain: (Rev. 21)
  
17. A Place Without Death: (Rev. 21)
18. A Place of Absolute Purity: (Rev. 21)
19. A Place Filled with the Glory of God: (Rev. 21)
20. An Everlasting Place: (2 Cor. 5)

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say we Christians really do have a lot to look forward to, how about you? Oh but that still just the tip of the iceberg! This man stretches our minds even further about what heaven might be like.

"I taught Physics and I'll give you one of my little theories about what heaven might be like. The electromagnetic spectrum contains all the different wavelengths, like radio waves, microwaves, and including a small piece called light. Now your eyeball can see the colors, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, that's all.

The spectrum goes forever in both directions beyond that. Suppose we get to heaven and God gives us new eyes that can see the entire spectrum. That means there will be brand new colors, trillions of them. Not new shades of our current colors...but brand new colors! That's why heaven has to be so large. It's for the women's closets!

But can you imagine if we get new eyes that can see the whole spectrum? You're going to be able to see the sounds coming off the piano. Right now we can only hear them. Imagine seeing the sounds. What if we get new ears that can hear the whole spectrum? You're going to be able to hear the colors, or smell them, or taste them!

We've only got five senses folks. Maybe there's more. But if God just took these five and expanded them to the max, we would spend forever walking around heaven going, "Wow! Did you smell that? Here, lick that! Wow!"

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say any trial and any heartache we ever face on this earth, is going to pale in comparison to the awesome reality of heaven, how about you? Therefore, **the point is this**. If we're walking around in life looking like a loser in Christ instead of a winner in Christ, could it be something as simple as we've got our eyes off

of heaven and on this earth? Could it be we've forgotten that Jesus has won for us a fantastic paradise with Him? I kind of think so!

Oh, but that's not all. The **third reason** why we look like a bunch of losers in Christ is because we've forgotten Christ has won for us a **Fabulous Death in Him**.

**1 Corinthians 15:54-57** "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. All of us have a body that will one day what? **It's going to die**, right? But what happens? When that body dies, we put on what? We put on immortality, right? And people, this is why each one of us is going to continue to exist **forever** in one of two places. And can anybody guess what those two eternal places might be? Hey, that's right! It's heaven or hell, right? But what was the good news? What did it say? **The Christian**, can not only know that we're going to heaven when we die, but we can actually no longer be afraid of **the moment we die!** **Why?** Well, what did it say? We don't need to be afraid of death as a Christian because why? Because thanks be to God Jesus gives us the victory, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know there's no stinkin' reason to be afraid of dying. I mean, if Jesus takes care of us when we're on earth, surely He'll take care of us when we depart from this earth, right? People are you kidding? If you look at most Christians today, it looks like were running just as scared as the rest of this world from the fear of death! **Why?** Because once again, we've gotten our eyes off of Christ. We've not only forgotten we get a paradise with Him, but we've totally forgotten that even our journey there to be with Him, our death, is actually going to be fabulous. And to show you just how fabulous this victory over death really is, let's first look at it's opposite. Let's see how a non-Christian dies without receiving the victory over death in Christ. Here are some of their last words before departing through death's door.

1. **THOMAS PAYNE**: "I would give worlds, if I had them, if the Age of Reason had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! Stay with me! It is hell to be left alone!"
2. **VOLTAIRE**: "I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O' Jesus Christ!"
3. **DAVID HUME**: The atheist died in utter despair with an awful scene crying out, "I am in the flames!"
4. **KARL MARX**: Was on his deathbed surrounded by candles burning to lucifer and screamed at his nurse who asked him if he had any last words, "Go on, get out! Last words are for fools who haven't said enough."

5. **NIETZSCHE**: Died insane, completely out of his mind.
6. **SIR THOMAS SCOTT**: “Until now I thought there was no God or hell. Now I know there is both, and I am doomed.”
7. **SIR FRANCIS NEWPORT**: “Do not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in his angry presence! You need not tell me there is no hell, for I already feel my soul slipping into its fires! I know that I am lost forever.”

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say those guys didn't die a very victorious death, how about you? Hey man, forget American Express.

**It's Jesus you don't want to leave home without**, right? Therefore, let's see how the Christian dies who did receive the victory over death through Christ and you tell me if we don't need to be afraid.

“A year and a half ago, my father-in-law died. He was one of the most godly men I ever met. The day he died, he sat up in bed and spoke. You say, ‘So what?’ So this.

He was having hardening of the arteries and wasn't talking at all. He sat up in bed at six in the morning. And his wife said he looked at the ceiling and said, ‘Oh grave. Oh death. Death where is your sting? Grave where is your victory? Praise be to God who gives me the victory!

And then he waited and he said it again even louder. ‘Death where is your sting? Grave where is your victory? Praise be to God who gives me the victory!!

And he paused and for the third time and with full triumph in his voice my mother-in-law said, he yelled laughing at the satanic forces, ‘Oh Death where is your sting? Oh Grave where is your victory? Praise be to God who gives me the victory!!! And he leaned back in bed and died.

What a way to go! To have lived life fully and intensely. To have seized the opportunity to live out the will of God and to have been alive to the mercies of God. Only then, when the final test comes, can you laugh at satan and tell him that he has no quarters in your life for you belong to the Living Lord!

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I personally would like to leave this earth in the same manner as that man did, how about you? **And people, here's the good news.** If you're a Christian, it's true for you too! **Why?** Because people, God's not only promised to take care of us here on earth, He's promised to take care of us when we leave this earth!

And people this is why no matter what goes on in your life there is no stinkin' reason for a Christian to walk around looking like a loser. We don't need to be afraid of sin. We don't need to be afraid of death. And we don't even need to be afraid of the actual moment of death. **Why?** Because we're not a bunch of losers. We belong to Christ. We're His Body. A **Body of Winners.** We've won! Jesus has given us the ultimate victory. Now let's get out there and live like it! Amen?

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To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

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