

The Gambler and the Christian

Two friends, a gambler who does not believe in God and a Christian, were talking. The gambler begins to share his opinion about God and about Christians. He says that Christians are simply weak minded people who use religion for a crutch. He further states that the Bible is nothing but a book of fables and myths that can be used by anyone to justify any action that a person may feel is right. There is no heaven and doing good deeds is merely a sad, self righteous attempt to appear better than other people. All Christians are really cowards who are afraid of reality.

The Christian just smiled at his friend and took him by surprise when he said something to the gambler that was apparently unrelated to the conversation. The Christian told his friend that he had given up gambling and taken up thinking instead. He told his unbelieving friend that he understood what gambling was and that true Christians do not gamble.

The gambler then began to accuse his friend of simply trying to change the subject. And then the Christian interrupted his friend with an even stranger statement by calling his unbelieving friend a lousy gambler. At this point the unbeliever asks his Christian friend to explain himself.

The Christian says to his friend - You claim there is no God and that the Bible is a book of myths and errors, yet I believe it to be God's word. Since this is what I believe, I try to live in harmony with its eternal principles of right. I pattern my life after the example of Jesus Christ my Saviour whose character is revealed in that Bible. But you my dear atheist friend are a lousy gambler. You are not just a gambler but you are lousy at gambling. You play to lose with no intention of winning.

The Christian continues... Just think about how we each view life and the ultimate outcome of each of these views. If at the end of life's journey, it turns out that you and all atheists were correct in believing that there is no God and the Bible is merely a book of fables, then I and every other true Christian will have nothing to look forward to after death. No heaven. We will have lived what we thought was a Christian life. We will have lived by standards of moral excellence and developed beautiful characters.

We will not gain anything at death but we will not lose anything either.

The Christian comes closer to his atheist friend and looking him directly in his eyes says -

However, my unbelieving friend, if at the end of life's journey, it turns out that I and every other true Christian were correct in believing...

That there is a God,
that the Bible is His word,
that character does decide one's eternal destiny,
that there is a judgment
that all those who choose to remain un-Christlike will cease to exist after the second death
and that there is a beautiful place called heaven prepared for those who have Christ like characters...

If you are wrong, my friend and these things are true, then what will you and every other rejector of God look forward to at death ?

This is why I say that you are a lousy gambler. You play to lose with no intention of winning. I don't gamble but I know a foolish risk when I see one.

There are many conclusions one can make about this story. Some may even feel that it is simply a repackaging of "Pascal's Wager". It does not matter. There is a particular point in this story that deserves more careful consideration: BELIEFS HAVE CONSEQUENCES. (*And sometimes those consequences are not immediately apparent*) Right beliefs have good consequences and wrong beliefs can have bad and sometimes even fatal consequences.

There are many people whose understanding of life connects them in some way to the gambling unbeliever. They reject the Bible without reading it claiming that it is a book of fables, full of error and subject to faulty, human interpretation and so they are convinced that they have nothing to fear by disregarding it. Others reject God because they have, in fact, read the Bible and have concluded that it is indeed a mythological compilation of errors..

Is this reasonable ? How could a person believe that the Bible is a book of fables steeped in error and yet reject God because of what they have read in that same error ridden Bible ? How can they be sure that their bad picture of God is not a fable or one of the errors that they claim are in the Bible ?

When a person chooses to believe that the good things in the Bible are not true, how can they be sure that the evil things are true ? The truth of the matter is this; if a person does not trust the Bible when it reveals the beauty of God's character then that person cannot trust the Bible when it appears to reveal evil in God's character. If a person does not trust the Bible about the goodness, the power and the love of God, then that person has no basis for trusting the Bible whenever it presents an opposite picture of God's character. That is to say, not unless he or she is gambling.

God is love. (1 John 4:8) This is His character. This is the essence of all his dealings with every created being of every world in His universe. The inability of imperfect human reasoning to comprehend this does not make it untrue. Jesus Christ came to reveal the character of God to us that we might be drawn and attracted towards Him. God desires the service of love; service that springs from an appreciation of His character. The birth, life and death of Jesus Christ forever dispels from every intellectually, honest mind the notion that God is selfish. Do you want to know what God, our Creator is like? Do you want know what kind of person He is ? Look at the character of Jesus and you will know what God is like .

Not only did Christ die to pay the penalty for the sins of every human being who repents, but He lived to demonstrate the kind of character that everyone must have who will live in heaven. A Christ-like character is the only kind of character that can enjoy heaven and a Christ-like character is the only kind of character that can be trusted in heaven. We can do nothing in our own strength to develop this kind of character but by God's enabling grace, prayed for and received each day we can be made fit for heaven and prepared to receive God's gift of immortality.

One more thing. Character cannot be changed after death. It becomes more and more permanently fixed by our choices from day to day. How much time do you have left ? The longer one waits to yield to the beckoning, love call of God's voice to the conscience, the less likely it is that the individual will be able to change, until at last, it is too late. Every person's character will be the result of each individual's lifetime of choices. God does not save anyone against his or her will or without his or her cooperation.

All of these thoughts are found in the verses of the Bible. If there is no God and the Bible is a book of fables which is full of errors, then you have nothing to lose by not believing what you have read in this article. If there is a God and the Bible is all true, you have everything to lose by not believing what you have just read in this article. Beliefs have consequences. Anyone feel like gambling ?