

# *It Is Written*

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## **The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**

By Steven Harper

*There are two extreme, but opposite, views of what life is like as a Christian, but neither one is a correct view. One view says life as a Christian means all your troubles disappear and life will be that proverbial bed of roses; the other says life as a Christian [that is, one who actually follows God's word and lives as He demands] is an impossible feat. The devil is the source of both of those false views, because neither one is true; the Bible does not describe the life of a Christian as easy and trouble-free, but neither does the Bible teach it is an impossible undertaking.*

The truth is, God tells us the Christian can enjoy many good things because he or she chose to leave the worldly ways and walk the 'straight and narrow way' of being a follower of Jesus Christ; but God also tells us there will inevitably be hardships. One could say the life of a Christian is going to be an experience of the good, the bad, and the ugly.

**The Good.** The most obvious good of being a Christian is that one is forgiven of all past sins. When the gospel was first preached, Peter commanded the convicted believers, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (**Acts 2:38**). The basic message of the gospel is that Jesus Christ "*died for our sins according to the Scripture*" (**1st Cor. 15:3**), and that by our belief and obedience, we can be forgiven and saved (**Col. 2:11-13**).

When Paul wrote Timothy, he urged him, "*exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come*" (**1st Tim. 4:7, 8**). Part of the "*profitable*" aspect of godly living is that one enjoys a large spiritual family — the church — and, with that, a large support group to help us through the bad and the ugly [which we will cover following this]. Let us never forget we who are in Christ are now "*fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*" (**Eph. 2:19**), and we who were once "*enemies*" (**Rom. 5:10**) can now be called "*children of God*" (**1st John 3:1**).

Christians have the great benefit of knowing God has promised, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (**Heb. 13:5**), and knowing Christ — our High Priest, Advocate, and Intercessor — is "*at the right hand of God*" to make "*intercession for us*" (**Rom. 8:34**). Knowing Christ is there to speak for us who are His, we may "*come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*" (**Heb. 4:14-16**). All of this we believe, again, because God has promised, "*if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*" (**1st John 5:14**). Truly, there is much good a Christian enjoys in this earthly life. Much more could be added when addressing only the **hope** that a Christian has! And 'good' wouldn't even be strong enough a term to describe the eternal blessings that await the faithful servants of the Lord!

But I would be doing everyone a disservice if I only told you of the *good* that comes with being a Christian; it's not all good — and don't be deceived by those who tell you it is, or will be. When one comes face-to-face with reality after having been deceived into thinking life was going to be 'easy' and nothing but good, many despair, complain, or even give up because it wasn't what they were told.

Again, it is a disservice to speak only of the 'good' while ignoring or even covering up the bad. Years ago, when in a foreign country not favorable to Christianity, I believed it right and necessary to warn potential converts that their government could arrest them and imprison them [or worse] if they

were discovered. I believed [and still do] that was correct because even Jesus warned His apostles of coming persecutions after His departure. Why? Hear Him: *“that you should not be made to stumble,”* and, *“that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them”* (**John 15:18-16:4**).

So, life as a Christian is not all good. Living a godly life that is pleasing to God will also bring...

**The Bad.** All need to know that, should you choose to leave the worldly ways behind, not everyone is going to be happy about that. If your family had no religious belief, or if they followed after the doctrines of some denomination, they may try their hardest to dissuade you from following the truth or make it extremely difficult for you when you do obey the truth. Jesus even warned, *“Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law”* (**Luke 12:51-53**). I have seen it happen many times, and will likely see it many more times; not everyone is going to be happy you are a Christian.

Why is that? For our worldly friends, it should not be surprising they will not celebrate your conversion, for as Jesus said, *“everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed”* (**John 3:20**). When your changed life shines the light of godliness and holiness on them, they may scatter like cockroaches — or they may rise up and fight. Many will simply not like being exposed now for who they really are and they will hate you and everything you represent. Don't be surprised; living as a Christian brings the bad, too.

**The Ugly.** Yes, the word *gospel* means *good news*, but living the gospel is not all good [as we just noted], and some things we may experience are quite ugly.

While the truth of God's word (**John 17:17**; **Psa. 119:160**) is what converts the lost sinner into saved disciples of Jesus Christ, the ugly part of this is that there are a **lot** of deceivers out there who are leading people not to the truth, but to false doctrines and, ultimately, eternal destruction. John warned of false prophets in the first century (**1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1**) and Peter of false teachers (**2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 2:1-3**). Satan has many helpers out there who appear to be *“ministers of righteousness”* (**2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:14, 15**) that has resulted in a world of religious confusion and division. Ugly!

Just as ugly is the fact there are many people out there who will claim to be followers of Christ but whose lives do not reflect His teachings in any way and are, in reality, nothing but hypocrites. The ugly part of this is, many see and hear their claims and are turned off to hearing anything about Christ, sin, or salvation because of those hypocrites. Ugly!

And let us not be fooled into thinking those who are converted cannot go back to the old, worldly ways of sin and ungodliness, either. While some claim ‘once saved, always saved,’ God's word warns of those who, once converted, are lured back into *“the pollutions of the world,”* and *“the latter end is worse for them than the beginning”* (**2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 2:18-21**). Worse than the beginning — when they were in sin and enemies of God? That is truly **ugly**!

So, what will get us through the **bad** and the **ugly** parts of living as a Christian? The **good**, of course! Never forget the **good** parts; stand fast in the Lord.