

# Holy Halloween, Batman!

Grace Christian Fellowship  
October 18, 2009 Pastor Rose Brewer

Ephesians 2:1-10 (page 1423)

"Merry Christmas" – "Blessed Christmas"  
"Blessed Halloween"?"  
So, shake hand and say, "Blessed Halloween"  
How did that feel? What was it like?

*Holy Spirit, help us know what you think (and what you want each of us to do) about Halloween.*

No Harvest Party... I've wondered for a few years if a Harvest Party was the best use of our time and energy. It's a lot of work, a lot of fun, and a good thing for our neighbors. We're not sure that it's made an eternal difference for anyone, though.

For that reason, and because we're looking at simplifying what we do – being more focused – we thought it would be better not to do the Harvest Party this year. To make sure, we put out a fleece by putting it in the bulletin for four weeks and also announcing it once, asking for six people to help lead it. We had one person volunteer, and that was our clear sign.

However, we have been sure throughout the whole process that it doesn't mean that we as a people who follow God don't do anything at all October 31.

We're convinced that what we do, however, needs to be more organic, more naturally reaching out to our neighbors, and also deeper.

You'll notice that the songs we're singing today have to do with victory over death and evil.

Yes, Halloween's about trick-or-treating and getting dressed up, but that's not all it's about.

First, a few quick background facts about Halloween:

- Name "Halloween"
- hallowed – holy
  - hallows – saints (holy ones)
  - e'en – evening (Like Christmas Eve, holidays often began at sunset & continued thru next day)

Beyond it's name, Halloween is a hodgepodge, a combination, of all sorts of stuff.

All Hallow's Eve... celebrating / remembering / commemorating people who have died.

All Hallow's Eve was supposed to replace the pagan Celtic holiday (Samhain) that was partly a harvest festival, but was also a festival of the dead.

It's also connected in some ways with Day of the Dead (Dia de Los Muertos) in Hispanic cultures.

The current issues of the St. Johns Review and the St. Johns Sentinel are both filled with a hodgepodge of stuff related to Halloween.

I'm not going to say anything more about the history or the background of the celebrations. You can look any of those up on Wikipedia or at the library.

I want to move beyond history and background to three practical realities for us, and then look together at applying it over the next few weeks.

### Engage the world!

The three realities are these:

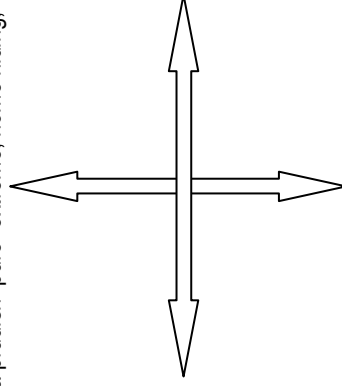
1. God calls us to not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.
2. There is a spiritual reality with good & evil.
3. We are called to choose life/goodness/love.

## Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind!

**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

**Romans 12:2**

Ultra prudish "pure" extreme, home hiding, "safe"



Totally involved in everything "Halloween"

Avoid two extremes: The "bad" extreme is to be totally involved in everything related to Halloween and glorify death and evil. Don't do that. However, don't go to some ultra prudish "purist" extreme and sit home with the lights off, hiding "safe" from everything.

Another, related spectrum: Treating Halloween as all about candy and dressing up, with nothing wrong with it at all. This view is usually held by people who grew up celebrating Halloween and don't want anyone telling them that they can't do something. To those of us in that category, this is the word: Let's submit to Christ, and to see what is best, what is beneficial.

We have a lot of freedom in Christ, but that doesn't mean that it's good to do anything.

The other end of that spectrum is to say that everything about Halloween is totally evil, Satan's field day, that must be totally avoided.

October 31 is still "the day that the Lord has made." We can still rejoice and be glad in it.

Let's be proactive! Let's be holy, but not hide. Let's shine light. Let's not be naïve and say there's nothing wrong with Halloween, but let's not say there nothing good can happen on October 31, either!

### **There is a spiritual reality and it has good and evil.**

Just look at the news any day. There is good and evil at work in our world.

In the New Testament, there's 108 references to devil, Satan, or demons – and how God deals with them and how we're supposed to respond to them. See Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4, John 13, Romans 16:20, 1 Cor 7:5, 1 Tim 5:15, etc.

There's also hundreds and hundreds of times that Scripture tells us that God (and his kingdom and his news and his purpose) is very good. See Psalm 73:1, Matthew 10:18, Luke 16:16, Acts 20:24, Philippians 2:13, etc., etc.

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."

C.S. Lewis

One of the dangers in Halloween is certainly its excessive and unhealthy interest in evil. But there's also the danger that it trivializes and then – to some degree – celebrates evil and the occult. Halloween pooh-poohs what comes from supernatural evil.

Let's, for example, take the example of witches. Now I grew up in the 70s and I freely admit to being a fan of the TV show, "Bewitched." I remember as a little kid, twitching my nose, trying to make things float through the air. That show stirred up a desire in me to make things happen supernaturally... for my own purposes.

So Halloween is not the only influence like this. But Halloween is a primary influence in our culture.

And I'm sure that at least some of us will hear someone this Halloween say, "It's okay to be a witch." Well...? Let's think about this.

What's a witch? A witch is a human who uses supernatural powers for their own purposes. But where do those supernatural powers come from? It's not from the good and loving and holy God. And because those supernatural powers are coming from a supernatural reality that is not loving and good and holy, you better watch out. Can you just picture the devil saying, "Sure, I'll give you a few little powers... to get you hooked, and then once I have you enmeshed in it, you're mine."

Wicca witches are now targeting young, insecure girls. Many times these girls have been victims of all sorts of things in their lives. Then Wicca witches promise that these young girls can have this secret supernatural power. So girls who have been victims see a way to be in control, to have power. Of course, it's attractive. But it's a trap.

If someone gets into Wicca and believes that he or she is making things happen through incantations done with candles, cards, crystals, or whatever, why would they give up such influential abilities? After all, don't we desire to be able to have things go our way? Of course we do. This is why Wicca has a following. But, we must ask the question, "what is the source of the power behind the results?"

See <[www.cam.org](http://www.cam.org)> (Christians Apologetics and Research Ministry) for more.

But God is not tame. Any supernatural power that I can tame and who bows down to me is pretty powerless, and not worthy of making a covenant relationship with them.

Before we move on, let's look at one more example; mediums and seances.

What's a medium? Basically, it's someone who connects you with spirits of the dead.

When you look at the prophets and the history of Israel, they very clearly warn us against seeking mediums or trying to bring back the spirits of the dead. The books of Kings and Chronicles show the history of the kings that ruled over Israel. They make it very clear that the really bad kings consulted mediums. In fact, the very first king of Israel, Saul, lost his crown because he looked for wisdom from a medium – instead of God. Saul thought he was doing a good thing; he was asking the medium to bring back Samuel the prophet so that Saul could ask his advice. But Scripture makes it very clear that Saul should have been looking for wisdom from God, not from the dead.

1 Chronicles 10

<sup>13</sup> Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, <sup>14</sup> and did not inquire of the LORD.

When Israel was being formed into a nation, God gave them very clear instructions about the spiritual realm:

Deuteronomy 18:10-13

<sup>10</sup> Here are things you must not do.... Don't practice any kind of evil magic at all. Don't use magic to try to explain the meaning of warnings

in the sky or of any other signs. Don't take part in worshipping evil powers.<sup>11</sup> Don't put a spell on anyone. Don't get messages from those who have died. Don't talk to the spirits of the dead. Don't get advice from the dead...<sup>13</sup> You must be without blame in the sight of the Lord your God.

(See also Proverbs 2:18, Isaiah 19:3)

### **Choose life and good/love.**

People who are "into" darkness use Halloween as an excuse to go deeper into darkness, witchcraft, evil.

But – those of us who are "into" light – let's use it as an excuse to show the world that the light shines in the darkness. Let's use it as a night to tell others about Jesus, the Light of the World, so that all might believe!

<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

John 1:4-8

Acts 26:17-18

(*God talking to Paul*)  
"I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes. I want you to turn them from darkness to light. I want you to turn them from Satan's power to God. I want their sins to be forgiven. They will be forgiven when they believe in me. They will have their place among God's people."

Does that seem scary? To take a stand against darkness and Satan? Let's keep looking at this, and you'll see why we can stomp on the devil!

"But the Lord is faithful. He will strengthen you.

He will guard you from the evil one."

2 Thessalonians 3:3

See also Romans 16:20, Ephesians 6:11, Hebrews 2:14-15, and James 4:7.

Ephesians 2:1-10

<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,<sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ...

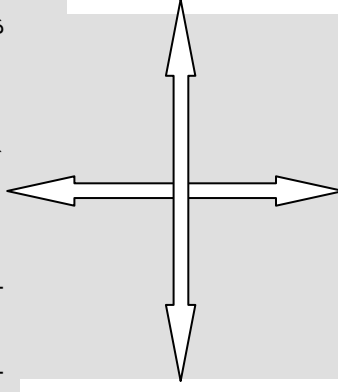
<sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...

To see how Christ has delegated spiritual authority to his disciples (people who follow him), see Mark 1:27, Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:20.

### **Application**

Let's see what God wants to do, let's be proactive and share Jesus, who is Light and Life!

Ultra prudish "pure" extreme, home hiding, "safe"



Totally involved in everything "Halloween"

<sup>7</sup> So obey God. Stand up to the devil. He will run away from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God, and

he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Make your hearts pure, you who can't make up your minds. James 4

So what do you do with these Halloween things?

- caramel corn, candy apples , candy corn?
- pumpkins?
- parties?
- trick-or-treating?
- costumes?
  - Mary Poppins? slasher?
  - average \$38 / total \$5billion in 2006
- Halloween TV shows / movies?
- ghost/scary stories?
- haunted houses (\$300 - \$500 million / year)?
- horror films?
- ouija board? tarot cards
- séances – interaction with the dead or with evil spirits?

So what are you doing October 31?

Everyone pray!

home, wherever, sanctuary

Be home to give out candy

Tracts? (10¢ each, be here next Sunday)

St. Johns All Nations COGIC movie night

See bulletin; take \$1 and a bag of candy.

Table outside church building

Bring full-size candy bars, cocoa, cider.

More radical:

- Fair-trade chocolate (<http://shop.equalexchange.com/>)
- Prayer-walk through neighborhood
- Go door-to-door singing & praying for people