

If a man's sole object is to satisfy whatever whims and impulses occur to him he soon finds himself satiated or frustrated. Various cravings prove contradictory to one another. If one craving is followed to the exclusion of all others it only leads to complete disillusionment and dissatisfaction. It soon becomes necessary to sort out these cravings and to leave some unsatisfied in order to get better satisfaction from others. If everyone seeks only to satisfy his personal cravings individuals soon come into conflict with other individuals and strife ensues.

There are many who subordinate physical desires in order to obtain what they consider as higher objectives. If these higher objectives have only the purpose of providing pleasure this is merely a more refined type of hedonism.

The word "asceticism" has been used to describe the attitude of those who have tried to run their lives on a principle that is the exact opposite of hedonism, thinking that they will be rewarded for renouncing pleasure. This is not the Christian position. The Christian position is not one of opposition to whatever gives pleasure. The Christian seeks to do the will of God, rather than to receive pleasure, and in many cases actually receives more pleasure than those who seek pleasure as an end in itself.

There have been individuals in many countries who have tried to run their lives on a principle that is the exact opposite of hedonism. They have taken the view that pleasure is to be shunned rather than sought, that the satisfaction of human cravings is to be avoided as far as possible. While this may be a natural reaction from the extremes of hedonism it is an unwarranted attitude. God has placed in the human constitution many possibilities of pleasure that under ordinary circumstances are desirable and proper. It is when pleasure is overemphasized, perverted, or made the supreme object of life that it becomes wrong.

Christianity teaches that other objectives are more important than the satisfaction of human cravings. Christianity does not teach that normal human desires should be stifled or completely neglected, but that they should be made entirely subservient to a greater purpose--that of doing the will of God.

Paul said in Philippians 4:11-13 that he had learned to be content whether suffering hunger or having plenty. He said, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." God does not order us to get along without