

## Ragamuffins

He goes to Bible Study, and actually does his homework and reads ahead. He is faithful and regular in attendance at worship services and special services at his church. He serves in his worshipping community and his community at large, giving of himself as few do. He is a Christian, not merely a wannabe. Having confessed his sin(s), he has taken the Lord Jesus Christ as his savior. He does not depend upon his own good works for salvation. He is secure in his salvation, as he should be, and he shares the gospel regularly. This man will go to Heaven. He is the “successful” Christian.

But sometimes, the successful Christian can fool himself into thinking of his success in a way that is counterproductive. You see, once even the genuine Christian begins to fancy himself a *successful* Christian, his *success* can be called into question. Oh, his *salvation* may not be in question, but that sense of success in Christianity will hamper his chances of genuine spiritual growth, and his teach-ability becomes questionable, leaving him stuck at whatever level he is. It is at this moment that his *success* becomes severely limited.

Some Christians however, are more realistic about their limitations... and this is a great grace. They, though engaged in their faith, have no misgivings about their success in Christianity. They know the Grace of God for what it is... amazing; and they (if there is a healthy way to do this, and I think there is) loathe their own efforts, recognizing their utter futility and lack. They know that they are Ragamuffins.

For these Christians, a man named Brennan Manning wrote a book of encouragement. He entitled it “The Ragamuffin Gospel”. Rather than my attempting to describe for you what Manning meant by the term, I will let you read his own introduction, following...

*The ragamuffin gospel was written with a specific reading audience in mind.*

*This book is not for the super-spiritual.*

*It is not for the muscular Christians who have made John Wayne and not Jesus, their hero.*

*It is not for academics who would imprison Jesus in the ivory tower of exegesis.*

*It is not for the noisy, feel-good folks who manipulate Christianity into a naked appeal to emotion.*

*It is not for hooded mystics who want magic in their religion.*

*It is not for Alleluia Christians who live only on the mountaintop and have never visited the valley of desolation.*

*It is not for the fearless and tearless.*

*It is not for red-hot zealots who boast with the rich young ruler of the Gospels, "All these commandments I have kept from my youth."*

*It is not for the complacent who hoist over their shoulders a tote bag of honors, diplomas, and good works, actually believing they have it made.*

*It is not for legalists who would rather surrender control of their souls to rules than run the risk of living in union with Jesus.*

*If anyone is still reading along, The Ragamuffin Gospel was written for the bedraggled, beat-up, and burnt-out.*

*It is for the sorely burdened who are still shifting the heavy suitcase from one hand to the other.*

*Rev. Peter J Haddad*

*It is for the wobbly and weak-kneed who know they don't have it all together and are too proud to accept the handout of amazing grace.*

*It is for the inconsistent, unsteady disciples whose cheese is falling off their cracker.*

*It is for poor, weak, sinful men and woman with hereditary faults and limited talents.*

*It is for the earthen vessels who shuffle along on feet of clay.*

*It is for the bent and bruised who feel that their lives are a grave disappointment to God.*

*It is for smart people who know they are stupid, and honest disciples who admit they are scalawags.*

*The Ragamuffin Gospel is a book I wrote for myself and anyone who has grown weary and discouraged along the way. Brennan Manning*

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to hang onto. But he made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a slave, and coming to be in the likeness of a man. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil 2:5-8*

If Jesus can become a Ragamuffin, I guess it's good enough for me.

Pastor