

Sunday, June 6, 2021 am

## Concerning First Principles WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

Today, I would like to look at the question, “What is a Christian?” Obviously, this is a very basic lesson as it deals with the very foundation of why we are here – because we believe in Jesus. We believe that He is God, that He came to this earth as Immanuel (God with us – Matthew 1:23), that He came to provide the necessary sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins by dying on the cross, and that He arose from the dead giving us a hope that when this life is over, we can spend eternity with Him and the saved.

In my studies, I am convinced that anyone of an accountable age and ability needs to become a Christian to have a hope of that salvation. So this morning, as part of our first principles studies, I would like to talk about what a Christian actually is, based upon God’s word, the Bible.

### I. The name Christian

- a. The word “Christian” is a somewhat misunderstood word in the world today.
  - i. Sometimes attributed to anyone who merely acknowledges Jesus
  - ii. Our nation is described as a Christian nation – a misnomer and sadly, a term they seem to be trying to get away from
  - iii. Others use it as an adjective – we often hear of “Christian homes”, “Christian churches”, “Christian music”, etc. While understand the intended meaning of such (things that are influenced by a “Christian mindset” through the word of God), the usage of the word in scripture is different.
  - iv. Others use it in a hyphenated sense – e.g., “a Baptist Christian”, “A Methodist Christian”, “Catholic Christian”, etc. There is a problem with this type of language as it implies that God’s word divides us (cf. John 17:20-21, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13)
- b. Our English word is actually a transliteration of the Greek word, Χριστιανός, (Christianos). This word is found 3 times in the New Testament:
  - i. Acts 11:26 – the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.
    1. Some contend that the word was originally used in a derogatory sense by enemies of Christ. Whether that is true or not, I do not know.
    2. However, I believe this “calling” in this text is from God.
    3. I base this upon Isaiah 62:2, *The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the Lord will name.*
    4. AND the usage of the word “called” in the New Testament. While it can have a secular application, in the New Testament, the word is mostly in reference to a divine calling. It is used 9 times in the NT, 8 of which (including our text) are related to God speaking (cf. Matthew 2:12, 22, Luke 2:26, Acts 10:22, Hebrews 8:5, 11:7, 12:25). The only exception to this is found in romans 7:3, where a woman divorced marries another man while her first husband lives was to be called an adulteress.
    5. Thus I believe this is a name God intended for us.
  - ii. Acts 26:28 – where Agrippa said, “You almost persuade me to be a Christian.”
  - iii. 1 Peter 4:16 – yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.
- c. So what does the word mean?
  - i. IT is one associated with Christ. One who has put on Christ.
  - ii. L&N, describes it as “a believer in and follower of Christ”
  - iii. BDAG, one associated with Christ, “Christ-Partisan”
  - iv. TDNT, “it denotes Christ’s adherents, those who belong to Him.”

- v. Simply stated, a Christian is one who has accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord by complying to His instructions in becoming a Christian, and remains loyal to Him regardless of the cost.

## II. Some descriptions of a Christian

a. First, let us notice what a Christian is NOT:

- i. One who merely believes – many believe, even in Jesus, but they are not Christians. James 2:19; John 12:42 speaks of how many, even among the rulers believed in Jesus, but they would not confess Him out of fear. I contend that their belief was not enough, AND UNLESS they changed after this, they were not saved.
- ii. One in name only – many say they are Christians, but that alone does not make you one
- iii. The description of one who is moral and good – while such is the character of a Christian, these things alone will not make you a Christian. Matthew 7:21-23.  
In John 3, we read of a good man in Nicodemus, but he needed to be born again. Acts 10:1-3 speaks of Cornelius, but he needed to be told what to do to be saved.
- iv. Simply being religious or spiritual – if you study your Bible, you will find that a Christian IS religious (James 1:27) and spiritual (Romans 8:1, Galatians 6:1). But those qualities alone will not make you a Christian.
- v. Someone merely going through the motions as he follows the steps of salvation. The heart has to be part of the process (Romans 10:9-10). What we do needs to be done for the right reason. That is why it is important that we determine God's plan of salvation according to scripture.

b. A Christian is:

### i. *One who has obeyed the gospel*

1. He believes in Jesus – John 3:16, 8:24 where He declared, “Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.
2. He repents – turning away from the world – Luke 13:3, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Peter on Pentecost called for repentance – Acts 2:38
3. He confesses Him – Romans 10:9-10, Matthew 10:32-33, cf. John 12:42 – even among the rulers, many believed but would not confess Him...
4. He is baptized –
  - a. Matthew 28:19-20.
  - b. He is thus “born again” of the water and Spirit – John 3:3-5.
  - c. Again, this was taught on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38).
  - d. It was emphasized to Paul (Acts 22:16, 9:18), and many other examples in Acts.
  - e. Galatians 3:27-28 – tells us that as we are baptized into Christ, we put on Christ.
  - f. Finally, consider 1 Peter 3:20-21 which notes that baptism saves us. Not the mere act of getting wet, but the answer of a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus.

### ii. *A new creation* –

1. **2 Corinthians 5:17**. Galatians 6:15 – the idea is that of starting over, spiritually.
2. **Romans 6:3-4** shows that baptism is how we come in contact with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus – where our sins were addressed. And in this you put to death the old man of sin
3. **Ephesians 4:22** – you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts. AND you put on the new man created according to God.
4. The point here being that he has put to death the old man of sin and is now living a new life. The gospel has the power to change people.

**iii. One who is convicted –**

1. The word convicted can mean 2 things.
  - a. You are guilty and pronounced such.
  - b. It can describe one who stand genuinely and firmly behind what he believes. He stands by his convictions.
  - c. BOTH apply to the Christian.
2. A Christian realizes he is a sinner and needs the blood of Jesus.
  - a. Acts 2:37 – as Peter concluded his sermon on Pentecost, we are told they were “cut to the heart” and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They were CONVICTED.
  - b. 1 Timothy 1:15 - Paul declared that Christ came to save sinners “of whom I am chief.”
3. A Christian is also someone who genuinely believes with all his heart who Jesus is and what He stands for. He believes in the promises He has made.
  - a. 2 Timothy 1:12 is a great example of this.
  - b. Acts 4:19-20 - Consider Peter and John before the council; THEN Acts 5:29 where they said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.
4. A Christian is someone who has convictions about Jesus and his life in Him.

**iv. A disciple –**

1. A disciple by definition is a learner. But not just a mere student of knowledge (like students going to school and being taught by their teachers), but one who seeks to learn from, follow after AND imitate in his own life. That is why the idea of a disciple is associated with one’s foundation.
2. Christians want to learn from Him – Matthew 11:28-30 – take My yoke and learn of Me. John 5:24, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*
3. Christians want to follow Him – Matthew 16:24, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*  
Matthew 19:21 He told the rich, young ruler to sell all that he had, *“and come follow Me.”*  
John 10:27, (next week), Jesus noted, *“My sheep hear My voice and the follow Me.”*
4. Christians want to imitate Him – Galatians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Peter 2:21, etc.
5. Matthew 28:19-20 – Matthew’s account of the great commission notes, they were to make disciples. How? By baptizing them (obeying the gospel) and “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded.”

**v. One who abides in His word –**

1. The idea of abiding is to dwell with, or to make someone or something his home. It means to make something a permanent dwelling. NOT the nomad, but an established citizen.
2. A Christian is one who remains with Jesus and abides in Him. John 15:5-6, Jesus in describing Himself as the true vine spoke of abiding in Him.
3. When one abides in Jesus:
  - a. He knows His word – John 8:31-32, *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*  
A Christian will keep studying.

- b. He keeps His word - Matthew 28:19 - “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded...”

John 14:21, *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*”

- c. He respects His boundaries - 2 John 9 – whoever transgresses (a word meaning to act with disregard or contrary) and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

A true Christian will not just strive to do what Jesus says, He will NOT try to manipulate it to justify what he wants to do. He will not use silence as consent to do whatever he wants to do.

- d. He shares it with others – The gospel is meant to be kept to yourself.

Again, in Matthew 28:19 – he is to make disciples.

A Christian wants to let his light shine – Matthew 5:16.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 – we will all be judged. Are we warning others of what awaits?

**vi. A child of God –**

1. My final point to understand that when you become a Christian, you become part of a family. God is your heavenly Father.
2. 1 John 3:1 tells us, *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*
3. Romans 8:16-17 – tells us because we are the children of God, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.
4. 2 Corinthians 6:18, in a passage calling for us to be separate from the world, in so doing, *“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”*
5. While much more could be said about this, think of a properly functioning family with a loving father, mother, siblings all fulfilling their roles and caring for each other. What a privilege to think that we are called His children.
6. And of course, this comes with responsibilities. But ultimately it comes with rewards – that are out of this world.
7. Galatians 3:27-28 – we are all one in Him.

This is by no means a complete list of everything that describes what a Christian is, but these are some fundamental considerations to answering that question. Based upon what has been said here, Are you a Christian? IF not, why not change that today? Think about it!