

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

If You Are Already A Christian

Carol R. Lumpkin

Becoming a Christian is one of the honored privileges all alien sinners have offered to them. This is accomplished only when the sinner is obedient to God’s power to save, the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16). There are some who claim to be Christians, yet the gospel has not been obeyed; in fact most do not know what the requirements of the gospel are. Christians are people who have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine (Rom. 6:17-18; 6:3-4). People in the first century A.D. who followed Christ were his disciples, those disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). This was the new name the prophet Isaiah said they were to be called (Isa. 62:2).

Just because a person is religious (those in Athens were - Acts 17), just because a person is good morally (Cornelius was - Acts 10:2), just because a person claims Jesus as his savior (denominationalists do), just because a person attends worship some place (must worship in the proper spirit according to truth - Jn. 4:24), by no means concludes said person to be a Christian. If the above be true, then God would view a person as a Christian while practicing most anything. This is not the nature of God at all. Peter said, **“Of a truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him”** (Acts 10:34-35). If it was essential for both the Jews and Greeks to obey the gospel in the first century to be saved (it was), then it is likewise necessary for all alien sinners to obey the same gospel to be saved today.

All saved people are disciples of Christ, Christians. We know that we Christians may and do sin. **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”** (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). If a Christian leaves Jesus and his word for the world (sin), he ceases to be a Christian, a follower of Christ. **“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world”** (2 Tim. 4:10). Was Demas still a Christian? No! Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). Where they still Christians? No! Hymanaus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim. 1:19-20). Where they still Christians? No!

When a saved individual turns his back upon the Lord and his word, he errs from the faith (Heb. 3:12), when a Christian departs the living God (Heb. 3:12), when a Christian falls away from God, abides not in the doctrine of Christ (2 Jn. 9), he cannot be a Christian while abiding in that lost state. The door is open for his confession (1 Jn. 1:9), repentance and prayer (Acts 8:22). Without doing the above he will never be a Christian again.

I often hear a preacher say, **“If you are already a Christian and have sin in your life you need to confess, repent and pray.”** The fact of the matter when a person has sin in his life he is not a Christian. A Christian is one who is in covenant relationship with God. When one ceases to follow Christ he is not a disciple of Christ, nor is he a Christian in the truest sense of truth.

Words are vehicles of thought. We must be ever so careful as to not leave the impression in the minds of those we teach that one is still a Christian while being in sin. Christians are saved people, those who follow the Lord. – **Truth Magazine**, August 20, 1992. ■

Faith That’s in Vain

By Lowell Blasingame

The word **“vain”** is defined as emptiness, fruitlessness, or worthlessness. Hence, faith that is in vain is one that is empty, fruitless, or worthless. The value of faith is shown in that without it one cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). It is acquired by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Religious matters not taught in the Word of God cannot be held by faith but must be placed in the realm of human opinion. We walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) only as we walk in harmony with divine truth.

It is possible that one may have faith that is in vain. The incurable may believe in his recovery, but his faith may be in vain. A mother may believe in her son’s returning safely from war, but her faith may be in vain. Such cases are pathetic,

but no more so than those whose religious faith is in vain. Paul taught the Corinthians that they were saved by the gospel unless they had believed in vain (1 Cor. 15:2). This illustrates that one's religious faith may be vainly based, upon the mere "hope" of men, rather than the word of God.

Faith in the Wrong Person. One's faith is in vain if it is in the wrong person. *"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"* (Jn. 8:24). One must believe in Christ as the Son of God or else he will die in his sins and where Christ has gone, he cannot go (Jn. 8:21). Such religions as Judaism, Masonry, and Mohammedanism deny this, yet they entertain hope for an eternal home of the soul with God. Their faith is one that is in vain.

Faith in False Doctrine. One's faith may be in vain by believing the wrong doctrine. He may believe in the right person, Christ, and then be taught doctrines not in harmony with that of Christ. Contrary to popular religious sentiment, it does make a difference what one believes. Paul taught that *"some shall depart from the faith"* (1 Tim. 4:1) and left Timothy at Ephesus *"that he might charge some that they teach no other doctrine"* (1 Tim. 1:3).

When one goes beyond the doctrine of Christ, he no longer has God (2 Jn. 9). Following the doctrines and commandments of men causes our worship to be in vain (Matt. 15:9). Human error, though honestly believed, cannot be substituted for divine truth without rendering one's faith vain. One must believe the right doctrine as well as in the right person, or he has a faith that is in vain.

Faith Without Works. One's faith is in vain if it has no works. James teaches that by works faith is made perfect, that by works a man is justified and not by faith only, and that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:22-26). Inspiration taught that the faith that avails is one that works by love (Gal. 5:6), and that Christ is the author of salvation to those who obey him (Heb. 5:9). How different this is from the teaching of men that affirm that salvation is by faith only. Faith that does not lead to obedience, like faith in the wrong person or doctrine, is a faith that is in vain.

Faith That Does not Continue. Finally, one's faith is vain if it is not an abiding or enduring faith. Such passages as Hebrews 3:6, 14; 10:23, 35, emphasize the importance of holding fast our confidence or the profession of our faith. Jesus talked about some who *"for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away"* (Lk. 8:13). Those who do this are of that number that draw back unto perdition and do not believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:38). Hence their faith is in vain.

Our salvation is by faith, but it is by a faith that is placed in the right person, Christ, and in the right doctrine, the doctrine of Christ. It is by a faith that expresses itself in obedience to that doctrine and one that abides and endures throughout our lives. Faith that falls short of this is a faith that is in vain. – *Truth Magazine*, June 4, 1963. ■

Signs of Decay

WHEN the distance to the meeting house SEEMS TOO FAR!
WHEN it seems TOO MUCH TROUBLE to get ready or get out in the weather to go to services!
WHEN the singing becomes HARD and SEEMS DREARY!
WHEN the sermons seem TOO LONG!
WHEN you see much you DISLIKE in the brethren!
WHEN the preacher's or teacher's lessons make you angry!
WHEN the members frequently say things that OFFEND you!
WHEN PRAYER is a BURDEN!
WHEN BIBLE READING is DULL and puts you to sleep!
WHEN it FRETS you to be called on to GIVE more!
WHEN you try to make EXCUSES FOR YOUR SINS and persuade yourself that God will NOT punish or judge!
WHEN you feel you are being SLIGHTLY NEGLECTED!
WATCH OUT!!! Spiritual Decay is setting in!!! ■

— Selected

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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