

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

What it Means to Be a Christian

By Granville W. Tyler

Men should be constantly endeavoring to learn more about Christianity; its blessings cannot be enjoyed to the fullest without at least some knowledge of it. The Jew was born in covenant relationship with God and was afterwards taught the law, his responsibility to God, etc. But not so in this age, for one must be taught and must learn in order to become a Christian (Heb. 9:8-13; Jn. 6:44, 45); this teaching and learning must continue after he becomes a Christian that his knowledge may be increased. In the great commission Jesus commands his disciples to teach and baptize and to teach those who are baptized (Matt. 28:19, 20). Ignorance hinders the progress of Christianity here and leads to eternal destruction hereafter. Obviously, there are mysteries connected with this profound system which the human mind can never fathom, but these have to do with the divine side, or God's part. God has revealed our duty to us in language that we can understand. It would be impossible to mention all the misconceptions and false ideas advanced in the name of Christianity, but let us take a look at a few of them.

Many believe and teach that since God does the saving, man has nothing whatsoever to do in the matter of eternal salvation, but is absolutely passive in every respect. No Bible believer doubts for a moment that God saves, for the Bible plainly states that he does. But to draw the conclusion that God saves man unconditionally is not only farfetched, but absolutely false. ***“For by grace (God's part) have ye been saved through faith (man's part); and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory.”*** (Eph. 2:8, 9) When people asked Christ and the inspired apostles what to do to be saved, and this was done more than once (Matt. 19:16-22; Acts 2:37, 38; 16:29-34), they, without exception, told them something to do. Who would dare say they made a mistake? Jesus said: ***“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven”*** (Matt. 7:21). In the last book of the Bible the promise of eternal happiness is made to those who ***“do his commandments”*** (Rev. 22:16).

It is sometimes stated, and apparently believed by many, that we are not in any way under any kind of law today. We are not under the law of Moses, nor can we merit salvation by perfectly keeping any law. But to say that Christians are not under the law of Christ is to reveal a gross misunderstanding of what it really means to be a Christian. ***“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death”*** (Rom. 8:2). This law of God is just as binding and immutable as are his laws controlling the material universe; the consequences of violating this law are just as certain and even more serious in effect than the violation of the other laws. The New Testament contains the law of the Christian and no man can disrespect or ignore this law and please God. ***“But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing”*** (Jas. 1:25). We are not only required to order lives by this law while we live, but shall be judged by it in the last day (Jn. 12:48).

Christianity should not be thought of as a formal set or code of laws merely governing our outward acts. The principles set forth in the New Testament must reach the remote recesses of our hearts and control our thoughts and emotions (Matt. 5:8; 15:17, 20; Phil. 4:8). All ceremonies and acts of obedience or worship must be from the heart to be acceptable to God. Notice, ***“But thanks be to God, that whereasye were, servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered ;and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness”*** (Rom. 6:17, 18). ***“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”*** (Jn. 4:24). Going through an outward form for baptism, the Lord's supper, giving of our means, or anything else without the proper attitude of mind or condition of heart, is to ***“become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.”*** It certainly does not follow, however, that one can have

a pure heart and please God without obeying these commands. The acts commanded accompanied with sincere motives are essential; he who refuses to obey the outward acts commanded in the Bible is rebellious in the sight of God.

Some seem to hold the religion of the Bible as merely a negative system and feel that refraining from criminal action will make one a Christian. It is true that one must refrain from and be opposed to those wicked and sinful acts, but merely refusing to participate in outrageous practices is not enough to make one a Christian. He must not only cease to do evil, but must learn to do well also. In order to become a Christian one must obey certain positive commands. In Acts 10 Cornelius is pictured as one of the finest men morally you can imagine, and yet he had to hear the gospel preached, and was specifically commanded to be baptized (vs. 48). To Saul who had already turned away from his wicked acts, Ananias said: ***“And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name”*** (Acts 22:16). After becoming a Christian one must move forward; he must stand for something as well as against something. Notice both the negative and the positive in Paul’s words to Titus, ***“For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world”*** (Tit. 2:11, 12). Christianity is a progressive system; it must be carried forward by those who march beneath its banner. ***“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch, as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”*** (1 Cor. 15:58).

We may speak of the joy and happiness of being a Christian, but we must not overlook the responsibilities, burdens and hardships along the way. Jesus promises rest to those who take his yoke (Matt. 11:28-30), and the promise of eternal life is to those who deny themselves, take up his cross and follow him (Matt. 16:24-27). Those who enter the Christian life feeling that they are to be carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease should sit down first and count the cost (Lk. 14:28-33). Every Christian enjoys blessings, has hope and assurance, for which the world longs but cannot know; but he who feels that there are no persecutions, disappointments or heartaches, has a poor conception of Christian living. Hear the apostle Paul: ***“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”*** (2 Tim. 2:3). Again: ***“Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal”*** (1 Tim. 6:12). – [The Reflector, July 2017](#). (Originally appeared in, *The Evangelist*, Corinth, MS, December 11, 1941). ■

Why God Matters

By Steven F. Deaton

Does God matter? Some behave as though He does not. They live their lives in their own way. They curse, drink, gossip, lie, cheat, steal, or commit fornication. To them, God does not matter. However, logic and the Bible, teach that God does matter.

God matters because He is the Creator. He made all things through His Son (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16, 17). Being the Creator, He is superior to the creature, man (Gen. 1:26, 27). He gave man life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:25). He is not only the giver of life, but the sustainer as well (Heb. 1:2; Acts 14:17). Man, therefore, must understand that God matters.

God matters because He is the Judge. God is the giver of the law of Christ (Jn. 16:7-15). All men will stand before God and be judged by Jesus Christ according to the law - the gospel (2 Cor. 5:10; Jn. 5:22; 12:48). Hence, God matters.

God matters because He is God. The very nature of God demands the conclusion that He is relevant. God is the Almighty (Gen. 17:1). He knows all things and with Him all things are possible (Psa. 139:7-12; Heb. 4:13; Mk. 14:36). He is self-existent and eternal (Ex. 3:14; Ps. 90:2). We know the President of the United States matters because He is the president. The CEO of a company matters to people in the company because he is the CEO. The God of the universe matters because He is God. – Hebron Lane church of Christ. ■

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

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250