

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

What Is a Christian?

By Clinton D. Hamilton

One is sometimes shocked by the use of the word Christian. People are called Christians who do not believe in Christ. On one occasion I heard someone say that Gandhi was a Christian! This use of the term shows that men often have erroneous views of its significance. Sometimes men contemplate no more by the term than moral goodness or outstanding concern for the welfare of men.

A name designates. Names in the Biblical record had great significance as the following indicates: Adam, man; Eve, mother of living; Samuel, asked of God; Isaac, laughter; Abram, exalted father; Abraham, father of a multitude; Bethel, house of God. The word Christian designates a person in his relation to Christ.

This name was not given in derision, as some are wont to say, but rather is God given and determined. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Paul disowned a term of derision when it was applied to him. He was charged as being a ringleader of *“the sect of the Nazarenes”* (Acts 24:5), but in answering the charge, he said, *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call, a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets”* (Acts 25:14). He served the Lord in the Way, but he refused to accept the sect designation.

Later, when Agrippa by implication called him a Christian, Paul accepted the designation. *“And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these bonds”* (Acts 26:28-29). When in derision Paul was called a Nazarene, he disowned the designation, but he accepted the name Christian when it was applied to him. It follows that the name was a divinely appointed one, for Paul knew how it was first used; he was at Antioch when the disciples were first called Christians.

Called in Acts 11:26, is the same term used of Divine actions in other passages. Joseph was *warned* of God in a dream to take Jesus from Egypt to northern Palestine (Matt. 2:22). Simeon looked for the Christ and it had been *revealed* to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:26). An angel *warned* Cornelius in a dream to send for Peter (Acts 10:22). Noah was *warned* about the impending flood that would destroy the world (Heb. 11:7). All these terms are from the same word in the original. We are forced to the conclusion that when men were called Christians, the *calling* was by divine appointment, not by human contempt.

It was noted that disciples were called Christians. As a disciple, a Christian is viewed from the standpoint of a learner or follower in relation to a teacher. Jesus is the teacher from whom we receive instructions and seek to be what He is.

Christians are also called saints when considered in the light of the manner of life they conduct. Saint is from the term which means set apart to the service of God, consecration involves purity of heart and conduct. Numerous passages refer to disciples as saints (1 Cor. 1:2, Rom. 1:7, et. al.).

The New Testament is called the faith (Jude 3) and in relation to this body of truth Christians are sometimes referred to as believers (Acts 4:32, 5:14, 2 Cor. 6:15). Jesus is the object of our faith (John 20:30-31), but what we believe is revealed in the New Testament (Rom. 10:17).

In relation to one another, Christians are called brethren (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Jn. 3:14). Being sons and daughters of God, Christians sustain to one another the relation of brethren (2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 3:1-3), and in this family Jesus is the elder brother (Heb. 2:11). Love should be characteristic of the feeling and conduct we have toward one another as brethren.

In relation to God, Christians are children (1 Jn. 3:1). God is the Father and head of this spiritual family which is His House (1 Tim. 3:15). In this family, the children are subject to the Father through Jesus, whom he has appointed over His house (Heb. 3:6).

Christians have service and sacrifices to perform before God, and in this capacity, they are designated as priests. ***“Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”*** (1 Pet. 2:5). When they were loosed from their sins by the blood of Christ, Christians were made to be a kingdom and priests (Rev. 1:6). Consequently, they are referred to as a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

How does one become a Christian? He is begotten by the word of God through obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:3, 22-25). He becomes obedient to the Christ (Heb. 5:8-9) in believing, repenting of sins, confessing the name of Jesus, and being immersed in His name for the remission of sins (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38). No one who has failed to render obedience can properly be called a Christian. – ***Truth Magazine***, March 1961. ■

Called By The Gospel

By Joe R. Price

“13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13-14, NKJV).

Paul was thankful to God for his brethren because they are participants in God’s election in Christ (verse 13). This was not a predetermining of each soul being either saved or lost, but of God’s choice to save sinners in Christ (Eph. 1:3-4, 11:12). God uses the gospel to call sinners to redemption’s glory. Jesus said the Father draws sinners to Himself by teaching them His will, ***“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me”*** (Jn. 6:44, 45). God does not call people through personal revelations, visions and experiences. He calls sinners ***“by our gospel”*** (that is, the gospel preached by the apostles, Mark 16:15). God’s call to salvation is for everyone and the same to everyone. There is only ***“one faith,”*** the gospel preached by Christ’s apostles (Gal. 1:11, 23; Acts 24:24). Notice the linkage between the gospel and salvation. The gospel that calls us to salvation produces faith so that we may be made holy (sanctified) and obtain the glory of Christ. To suggest we can be saved with the gospel nullifies the ***“sanctification of the Spirit,”*** the ***“belief in the truth,”*** obtaining the glory of Christ. – ***Sword Tips***, February 4, 2019. ■

“1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:1-6).

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