

“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 wouldest 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. ■

Almost Persuaded

By David Padfield

For two years Porcius Festus held Paul prisoner in Caesarea Maritima. When Felix succeeded Festus, ***“the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him”*** (Acts 25:2-3).

Unaware of the plot to kill Paul, Festus asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged. Paul responded by saying, ***“I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar”*** (Acts 25:10-11).

By exercising his right as a Roman citizen, Paul appealed his case to Augustus Caesar. While waiting for a ship to take Paul to Rome, Festus asked King Agrippa to help him ***“specify the charges”*** against Paul (Acts 25:27). Agrippa, the great-grandson of Herod the Great, had been appointed ruler of Abilene, part of Galilee, Iturea and Trachonitis by the Roman Emperor Claudius.

King Agrippa permitted Paul to freely speak concerning the charges made against him by the Jews. Luke records the moving sermon Paul preached to Agrippa in the twenty-sixth chapter of the book of Acts.

While speaking of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, Paul was interrupted by Festus and accused of being ***“beside”*** himself (Acts 26:24). Luke then records these words of Paul: ***“I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe”*** (Acts 26:25-27). Agrippa uttered one brief sentence in reply to Paul. He said, ***“You almost persuade me to become a Christian”*** (Acts 26:28).

One of the saddest words heard at the judgment will be the bitter cry of ***“almost.”*** To ***“almost”*** be a Christian is to be a child of Satan. To ***“almost”*** repent of your sins is to die in your sins. To ***“almost”*** be saved is to be eternally lost. To ***“almost”*** go to heaven is to be sent to hell. ***“Almost cannot avail; almost is but to fail; sad, sad, that bitter wail—almost, but lost.”*** – ***Church of Christ*** in Zion, Illinois, Articles. ■

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

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