

# “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. ■

---

## Can We Have Too Much “Positive” Preaching?

By Greg Gwin

We readily acknowledge the importance of positive preaching. Brethren need the ***“comfort of the Scriptures”*** (Rom. 15:4). Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians so that he could ***“comfort your hearts”*** (Eph. 6:20). Timothy was dispatched to Philippi (Phil. 2:9) and Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2) in order to comfort the brethren. Clearly, this kind of positive encouragement is essential. The Bible has much to say about it. No one denies this.

There are, however, some among us who are determined to only preach positive things. They want to specialize in positive preaching and to emphasize only those things which (they claim) are designed to “build up” the hearers. They will not deal with controversial topics, and they refuse to spend time rebuking the sins and weaknesses that exist in men’s lives.

This “positive” approach fails to present the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and at least two serious consequences will follow:

1) Christians will not be admonished to root out the evil that is in their lives. We must ***“put off the old man”*** (Col.3:9). We will never become the ***“new man”*** that we ought to be (vs. 10) until we have been instructed adequately in this regard.

2) Christians will become conditioned to only want this sort of teaching and preaching. After having a steady diet of positive emphasis, brethren will lose all tolerance for forceful preaching on important doctrinal and moral issues. The apostle Paul anticipated such a scenario: ***“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”*** (2 Tim. 4:3).

We are not at liberty to be “specialists” in only one aspect of the work. If we emphasize the positive while neglecting the negative, we have not done ***“the work of an evangelist”*** (2 Tim. 4:5). Our job involves both the positive and the negative. We are to ***“reprove, rebuke, and exhort”*** (vs. 2). – ***Collegue church of Christ Bulletin***, August 2, 2020. ■

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](http://www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com) - Email: [lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com](mailto:lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com) - Phone: 209-365-9250