

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

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Revised May 11, 1999

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PREFACE

Since their origin in 1983, these lessons have evolved into something more (or at least different) than what they started out to be. Preachers are helped by their hearers in more ways than the hearers realize, and I am grateful to those in various places who have listened to these lessons and contributed to their improvement. I am responsible, of course, for any defects that remain. A special thanks is due to Mauro Accomazzo, of Groton, Massachusetts, for his encouragement with regard to this project in 1995.

We live in dangerous times, spiritually speaking. I believe outright paganism is capturing the culture of our age. It has never been more important for the Lord's people to understand clearly and deeply what it means to be a Christian. As the war between good and evil grows more evident — and the stakes become more clear — those on the side of good who intend to be overcomers need to think with crystal clarity about who and what they are as the Lord's people.

The realm of truth is the only place where there is any safety at all. The glorious truth about what is really involved in being a Christian needs to be an object of serious study in the Scriptures.

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The Significance of Being a Christian

(1) A PERSON REBORN

Introduction

- A. When it comes right down to it, what does it really mean to be a *Christian*?
- B. The noun *Christian* occurs three times in the New Testament.
1. In **Ac. 11:26**, the new *relationship* of the Christian is in view.
 2. In **Ac. 26:28**, the new *character* of the Christian is in view.
 3. In **1 Pt. 4:16**, the new *way of life* of the Christian is in view.
- C. Obviously, a person could not really be a Christian without knowing the steps he took to become one - e.g. Mk. 16:16; Ac. 2:37,38.
- D. But it is important for the Christian to grow in his understanding of the real *significance* of what he did when he became a Christian.
1. For instance, Christians are those who have “trusted” in Christ, having heard “the word of truth” (**Eph. 1:12,13**).
 2. They are those who have obediently “received the word of God” (**1 Thess. 2:13**).
 3. They are those who have been “enlightened,” have “tasted the heavenly gift,” have “become partakers of the Holy Spirit,” and have “tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (**Hb. 6:4,5**).
- E. Questions like these ought to be asked and meditated on:
1. What did I *do*?
 2. What have I *received*?
 3. What are the *implications* and *consequences* of what I have done?
 4. What has *happened* to me?
 5. What have I *become*?
 6. What is *different* about me?
 7. What are the *meaning, significance, importance, and value* of becoming and being a Christian?
 8. What am I now to *do*?

F. These matters have much to do with the Christian's sense of *identity*.

1. We shall hardly be successful in living the life of a Christian without the right "slant" on ourselves.
2. We need the peace and strength of an accurate self-understanding, a healthy sense of personal worth. "Our greatest need is to be, not simply to have" (Robert Mounce).
3. Overcoming temptation requires an adequate perspective on self.
4. A distorted self-image will cause us to project a distorted picture of Christianity to outsiders.
 - a. Misunderstandings are prevalent about religion and about those who are religious.
 - b. "Most people have not rejected Christianity, but a caricature" (Arnold Toynbee).
 - c. Someone has said that a Christian is someone who has really met one — indeed, the drawing power of a real example of a Christian is great. Cf. Mt. 5:16.
 - d. The world desperately needs more people who genuinely *are* Christians — and genuinely understand what that *means*.

I. A NEW LIFE

A. The Christian needs to think of his life as a "new" life - Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17. Cf. Rom. 7:6.

1. The newness is not physical, but spiritual — it has to do with the "inward man" (2 Cor. 4:16).
2. The character of this inner man is the most important thing that distinguishes one human being from another.
 - a. "Alexander the Great, seeing Diogenes looking attentively at a parcel of human bones, asked the philosopher what he was looking for. Diogenes' reply: That which I cannot find — the difference between your father's bones and those of his slaves" (Plutarch).
 - b. Cf. Eccl. 9:2,3,11,12; etc.
3. The Christian values the renewal of his *thinking* - Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23.

B. In effect, the Christian is a "new creation" (Gal. 6:15). Cf. Eph. 2:10; Jas. 1:18.

II. A NEW PERSON

A. The new birth.

1. The "born again" person is not some special kind of Christian — if a person is a Christian at all he has experienced the new birth - Jn. 3:3-8. Cf. Ezek. 36:25-27; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5.
2. The Christian has been born to a new *hope* by the *word* of God - 1 Pt. 1:3,23.

B. From death to life.

1. The Christian is “alive” in the truest sense - Jn. 5:24,25; Rom. 6:10,11,23; Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 2:12,13.
2. “Eternal life” can be thought of in both a present and a future sense - Tit. 1:2; 1 Jn. 5:13; etc.

C. From darkness to light - Ac. 26:18; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pt. 2:9.

D. In Christ - Rom. 16:11; 1 Cor. 7:39; etc.

1. Baptism is “into Christ” (Rom. 6:3). Cf. Gal. 3:27.
2. In Christ, there is no condemnation - Rom. 8:1.

III. A NEW LOYALTY

A. The Christian is indeed a “converted” person. Cf. 1 Thess. 1:9.

1. Conversion inherently involves *change* — in this case *for the better*. “When change is successful, we look back and call it growth.”
2. Without genuine conversion, including repentance, “Christianity” is meaningless.
 - a. Cf. Mt. 4:17; Rom. 6:16-18.
 - b. “He who dreads new remedies, must abide old evils” (Bacon).
3. By God’s grace, the convert to Christ has won a crucial victory, and he needs to continue to make good that victory - 2 Pt. 2:20-22.

B. The Christian’s conversion is to Christ and His will - Col. 3:1-4,17. “The biggest step ever taken is the step from ‘I want to’ to ‘I ought to’” (D. Elton Trueblood).

1. The Christian is activated by new values - e.g. Phil. 3:4-8.
2. The Christian decides his conduct by a new criterion - Eph. 5:17.
3. The lordship of Christ is the Christian’s focal point - Ac. 2:36; 1 Pt. 3:15.

C. Christ lives in the Christian - Gal. 2:20.

1. An “old man” has disappeared, and a “new man” has taken his place - Rom. 6:5-8.
 - a. “You cannot get rid of your sins without getting rid of yourself” (S. Shoemaker).
 - b. “A man’s character is like a fence — it cannot be strengthened by whitewash.”
2. There is an “indicative” and an “imperative” aspect of the “new man” - Eph. 4:17-24; Col. 3:9,10. Cf. Rom. 13:14.

D. The Christian’s new loyalty to Christ is a matter of loving *devotion* - Mt. 15:8,9; 22:37,38.

1. “The heart of religion is not an opinion about God, such as philosophy might reach as the conclusion of its argument; it is a personal relation with God” (D. Elton Trueblood).
2. “Religion is either a dull habit or an acute fever” (William James). Cf. Rev. 2:2-5.

Conclusion

- A. The Christian is indeed a *person reborn*. He has reason to think of himself as “blessed.” Cf. Eph. 1:3.
- B. The experience of becoming and being a Christian fixes one’s attention on the glorious future - Phil. 3:12-14. Cf. Lk. 9:62.
- C. The word *hope* takes on a whole new meaning.
- D. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Significance of Being a Christian

(2) BELONGING TO THE LORD

Introduction

- A. Paul drew attention to one specific factor in the newness of the Christian's life when he asked, "Do you not know that...you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19,20).
- B. The Christian needs to grow in his understanding of the fact that he has been "bought at a price" and that he consequently belongs to God.

I. GOD'S PERSON - 1 PT. 2:9,10

- A. His own special *people*.
 - 1. Israel "after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18).
 - a. God made the physical nation of Israel a special treasure to Him above all people - Exo. 19:5. Cf. Deut. 14:2; 26:18; etc.
 - b. He did so because of love - Deut. 7:6-8.
 - 2. Spiritual Israel.
 - a. Even under the Mosaic covenant there was a more important consideration than whether one was physically an Israelite - Jn. 8:37-41,44. Cf. Rom. 2:28,29.
 - b. Under the covenant of Christ, the Christian is *by faith* a descendant of Abraham, an "Israelite," whether he is racially a Jew or a Gentile - Gal. 3:7-9,26-29.
 - c. Hence, Christians constitute "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). Cf. Eph. 2:12.
 - 1) God's relationship with national Israel anticipated His present relationship with Christ's church - 2 Cor. 6:16 (cf. Lev. 26:12; etc.). Cf. Ac. 15:14; Hb. 8:10; 1 Pt. 2:9,10.
 - 2) As God "redeemed" a group of people from Egyptian slavery, He has "redeemed" Christians from slavery to sin - Tit. 2:14. Cf. Mt. 20:28; 1 Pt. 1:18,19; Rev. 5:9.
 - d. Christians are the beneficiaries of the *blessings promised* to the forefathers of physical Israel - Ac. 26:6; Rom. 4:9-16; 1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 3:8,9,13,14,29; Hb. 11:39,40.
 - 3. God's own special people are described in a rich variety of ways in Scripture.
 - a. Those who "know" God and "are known" by Him - Gal. 4:8,9.
 - 1) Cf. 1 Cor. 8:3; 2 Tim. 2:19.
 - 2) Cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; Tit. 1:16.
 - b. Those who are "of God" - 1 Jn. 4:4,6; 5:19.

- c. Those who “have God” - 2 Jn. 9.
- d. Those who “are Christ’s” - 1 Cor. 3:23. Cf. Rom. 14:8; Gal. 3:29; 5:24.
- e. Those who are “betrothed” to Christ - 2 Cor. 11:2. Cf. Eph. 5:25-27.
- f. Those who are the “friends” of Christ - Jn. 15:14,15.
- g. Other metaphors describing God’s people:
 - 1) “Flock” (Jn. 10:14-16).
 - 2) “Temple” (Eph. 2:20-22).
 - 3) “God’s field...God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9).
 - 4) “Spiritual house...holy priesthood” (1 Pt. 2:5).
 - 5) “Kings and priests” (Rev. 1:6). Cf. “to be a kingdom, to be priests” (ASV).
 - 6) “Royal priesthood...holy nation” (1 Pt. 2:9).

B. *Called* out of darkness into light.

- 1. It is God who has “called” the Christian - Rom. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24; 1 Pt. 1:15.
- 2. God’s calling involves both His *inviting* (1 Thess. 2:12) and His *designating* (Jas. 2:7; 1 Jn. 3:1). Cf. Isa. 62:2; Ac. 11:26.
- 3. The gospel of Christ is the medium of God’s calling - 2 Thess. 2:14. Cf. Rom. 1:16.
- 4. Christians are:
 - a. “Called to be *saints*” (1 Cor. 1:2).
 - b. “Called into the *fellowship* of His Son” (1 Cor. 1:9).
 - c. “Partakers of the *heavenly* calling” (Hb. 3:1). Cf. Phil. 3:14.
 - d. “Called in one *hope*” (Eph. 4:4). Cf. Eph. 1:18; 4:1.

C. A *chosen* generation.

- 1. Christians are God’s people by God’s choice - Eph. 1:4; 1 Pt. 1:2. Cf. Deut. 7:6-8.
- 2. God’s choosing (election) of His people involves freedom of the individual will and personal responsibility to obey Him - Col. 3:12; 2 Pt. 1:10. Cf. Mt. 22:14.

D. The Christian can rejoice that he is *God’s* person and, hence, God’s “beloved” (Rom. 1:7).

II. GOD’S CHILD - GAL. 3:26

A. The Christian has much to gain from an understanding of his place in God’s “family.”

B. The familial relationship to God in Christ is described in two basic ways.

- 1. *Sons/children of God*.
 - a. The expression “child of God” is capable of more than one meaning.
 - 1) All human beings - Ac. 17:26-29.
 - 2) Jesus Christ - Mt. 16:16; Jn. 3:16.
 - 3) Christians - 1 Jn. 3:1,2.
 - b. Sonship to God is not limited to any race, gender, or social status - Jn. 11:52; Gal. 3:26-29.
 - c. Christians are recipients of the blessing of “adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

- d. Christ is unashamed to call God's sons His "brethren" (Hb. 2:10,11). Cf. Mt. 12:48-50.
 - e. The *family* of God is obligated to emulate the *character* of God - 1 Jn. 3:10.
 - f. The *sons* of God are the *heirs* of God and *joint heirs* with Christ - Rom. 8:16,17. Cf. Gal. 4:6,7.
2. *Heirs of God.*
- a. God "has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12).
 - b. The inheritance is according to God's promise - Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:6.
 - c. The inheritance of the Christian involves every "spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3,11,14,18).
 - d. The carnal son of God "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).
 - e. Heaven is the object of the Christian's inheritance - Mt. 25:34; Tit. 3:7; Hb. 1:14; 1 Pt. 1:4.

III. GOD'S PILGRIM - PHIL. 3:20

A. Belonging to God obviously requires *not* belonging to self, to Satan, or to the world.

- 1. Jesus put the matter plainly: "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Mt. 12:30).
- 2. Of His apostles, Jesus said, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (Jn. 17:16) — like the apostles, we are to be *in* the world without being *of* the world.
- 3. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:15).

B. The Christian is a "citizen" in God's "kingdom."

- 1. "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).
 - a. "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20).
 - b. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hb. 12:22,23).
- 2. "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).
- 3. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

C. In a slightly different usage of "kingdom," Christians are "sons of the kingdom" (Mt. 13:38).

D. The consequence of belonging to God is that the Christian must ever *think* and *act* as a "pilgrim" or "sojourner."

1. To “the pilgrims of the Dispersion,” Peter wrote: “Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Pt. 1:1,17). Cf. Hb. 11:13.
2. He also said, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Pt. 2:11).

Conclusion

- A. As God’s *person*, God’s *child*, and God’s *pilgrim*, the Christian needs constantly to contemplate the *privilege* of being who he is and to strive for a godly *character*.
 1. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19,20).
 2. “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Cor. 6:16).
- B. Paul wrote to Timothy, “But you, O *man of God*, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11).
- C. May we each aim to be a person who is “*of God*.”

The Significance of Being a Christian

(3) THE LIFE OF FAITH

Introduction

- A. The gospel is “the *faith*” (Jd. 3) — and those who have obeyed it have been “*faithful* to the Lord” (Ac. 16:15; cf. Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2; etc.).
- B. Collectively, “*believers*” (Ac. 2:44; 5:14; etc.) are “the household of *faith*” (Gal. 6:10).
- C. “*Faith*” is the underlying principle of all the Christian’s conduct - Gal. 2:20. Cf. Rom. 1:16,17; 2 Cor. 5:7.
- D. Unfortunately, the *nature* and *crucial importance* of faith in the life of the Christian are often misunderstood.

I. THE MEANING OF FAITH

- A. Definitions.
 - 1. Latin *fidere* = to trust. Cf. confide, confidential, fiduciary, fidelity, infidel, infidelity, etc.
 - 2. Three basic ideas are relevant to this study.
 - a. **BELIEF** (certainty, conviction) of the truth of a proposition.
 - b. **CONFIDENCE** in a person’s trustworthiness > *dependence* (trust, reliance) on that person himself.
 - 1) This involves the idea that the *object* of faith can be counted on *to provide what is needed* — “a man of faith” is one who trusts God.
 - 2) Real faith is “a conviction practically operative on the character and will and thus opposed to mere intellectual assent to religious truth” (OED). Cf. Jas. 2:19.
 - c. **FIDELITY** to a trust or commitment > *allegiance* (loyalty, constancy) > *dependability* (reliability).
 - 1) This involves the idea that the *subject* of faith can be counted on *to do his duty* — “a faithful man” is one who can be trusted by God. (Contrast the characteristics of the fickle or traitorous person.)
 - 2) We are to be “true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal” (Francis Havergal).
 - 3. The usage of *pistis* (faith) and *pistos* (faithful) in the New Testament reflects all three concepts.
 - a. **BELIEF** (Ac. 8:12; Rom. 10:17).

- b. **CONFIDENCE** (Rom. 4:3,18-22; Jas. 1:6) > *dependence* (1 Pt. 2:6; 4:19).
 - 1) We can entrust ourselves to God — He is “count-on-able.”
 - 2) Can the Lord entrust Himself to us? Cf. Jn. 2:24.
- c. **FIDELITY** (1 Cor. 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:12) > *allegiance* (1 Thess. 3:1-5; Rev. 2:10) > *dependability* (Mt. 24:45; 25:21; 2 Tim. 2:2).
 - 1) We ought to be true to God.
 - 2) Has the Lord been truer to us than we have been to Him? Cf. Rom. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13.

B. Significance.

1. These three components of faith are progressive.
 - a. **BELIEF** (intellectual credence) is the important beginning point - Hb. 11:1,6. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:18.
 - b. This grows into **CONFIDENCE** (self-surrendering reliance) - Phil. 4:10-13.
 - c. This grows into **FIDELITY** (unswerving loyalty) - 2 Tim. 4:7,8. Cf. Eph. 1:12,13.
2. Each is based upon solid evidence concerning the character of God Himself.
 - a. He has demonstrated His credibility - Num. 23:19; Tit. 1:1-3.
 - b. He has demonstrated His dependability - Rom. 8:31,32.
 - c. He has demonstrated His worthiness of allegiance - 2 Tim. 1:8-12.
3. We can have faith *in* God and be faithful *to* Him because He is a *faithful God!* Cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; Rev. 19:11.

II. FAITH AS A WAY OF LIFE

A. Confessing faith - Mt. 10:32,33.

1. The Christian’s faith is a *confessed* faith — one that is *continually* confessed - 2 Cor. 9:13; 1 Jn. 4:15. Cf. Mt. 26:31-35; Lk. 22:31-34,54-62; Jn. 12:42; Tit. 1:16.
2. The Christian must continue to *live* on the basis of faith in the saving work of Christ for us - Jn. 3:16.
 - a. Faith must never be minimized, even in rebuttal of the “faith only” doctrine.
 - b. At conversion and afterwards, Christians are baptized *believers*.
3. Perversions of faith must be avoided.
 - a. *Counterfeit* faith - Mt. 7:15; 15:8; 23:27,28; 2 Cor. 11:13,14.
 - b. Faith in *self* - Prov. 16:25; 28:26.
 - c. *Self-righteous* faith - Job 4:6; Lk. 18:9.
 - d. *Partial* faith - 2 Chron. 25:2.
 - e. *Misoriented* faith - 1 Cor. 2:5.
 - f. *Skeptical* faith - Jas. 1:6.
 - g. *Small* faith - Mt. 14:31.
4. Making the “good confession” (1 Tim. 6:12) implies *commitment*.
 - a. Commitment in the sense of a *bona fide* (“in good faith”) pledge.
 - 1) The commitment and trust involved in the marriage relationship well illustrate what must be true of our pledge to the Lord.
 - 2) Our confession must be held fast - Hb. 3:1,6,14; 10:23.

- b. Commitment in the sense of an entrusting of self to God - Mt. 10:38,39; 1 Pt. 2:23; 4:19.
Cf. commitment of money to a bank for safekeeping.

B. *Living by faith* - Gal. 2:20. Cf. Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11.

1. To be “*in the faith*” (2 Cor. 13:5) is also to be “*of faith*” (Gal. 3:9). Cf. Eph. 3:17. Faith is a real factor in the Christian’s *manner of life*.
2. Life in Christ is the life of ***trusting reliance ON God***.
 - a. *Faith* in God is closely related to *love* for God and *hope* in God - 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3.
 - 1) Compare Hb. 11:1 with Rom. 8:24,25; 1 Pt. 1:8,9.
 - 2) In Eph. 1:12, “trust” = *elpizo* = to hope. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:10; 5:5.
 - 3) Consider Abraham’s faith/hope in Rom. 4:18-22.
 - b. The person of faith renounces any other means of “security” such as:
 - 1) The flesh - Phil. 3:3-11.
 - a) In the Old Testament, Israel persistently refused to trust God — but there were notable exceptions. Cf. 2 Chron. 14:11; 32:7,8.
 - b) Israel’s root problem was one of *unbelief* - Hb. 4:2; Jd. 5.
 - 2) Self - 2 Cor. 1:9.
 - 3) Temporal prosperity - 1 Tim. 6:17. Cf. Job 31:24,25; Mk. 10:23-25.
 - c. Instead, he relies totally upon God - Psalms 40:4. Cf. 2 Sam. 22:2-4; Psalms 23:1; 25:2; 36:7; 37:5; 56:4,11; 118:5-9; etc.
 - 1) Resting in God’s dependability - Prov. 3:5,6,26; 14:26; etc. “God will lead you to no waters He cannot part, no brink He cannot cross, no pain He cannot bear.”
 - 2) Gaining confidence in God’s provision for our “sufficiency” (2 Cor. 3:4,5). Cf. 1 Jn. 5:14.
 - a) During the Lord’s ministry, those who overcame difficulty in seeking Him out showed *trust* that He could do whatever needed to be done - Mt. 8:10; Mk. 2:3-5.
 - b) We demonstrate “little faith” when we worry about whether God will supply the things we truly need - Mt. 6:25-34; Hb. 13:5,6.
 - 3) Learning a child-like dependency - Mk. 9:42.
 - 4) Overcoming fear through faith - Mt. 14:25-31. E.g. Dan. 3:16-18; 6:10,23.
 - 5) Living life “one day at a time” - Deut. 8:3; Mt. 6:33,34.
 - 6) Entrusting self to God - Job 19:25-27; 2 Tim. 1:12.
 - 7) Counting Christ more valuable than life itself - Phil. 1:21.
 - d. In God We Trust!
3. Life in Christ is the life of ***trusting obedience TO God***.
 - a. The Christian is one who is “obedient to the faith” (Ac. 6:7; cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Cf. Rom. 6:11-18; Hb. 11:6 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:9); Jas. 2:14-26.
 - 1) *Trusting obedience*.
 - a) Abraham is a good example of trusting obedience - Hb. 11:8.
 - b) “Understanding can wait; obedience cannot.” Cf. Deut. 29:29.
 - c) “The man who insists upon seeing with perfect clearness before he decides will never decide” (Henri Amiel).
 - d) “Give as much of yourself as you can to as much of God as you can understand” (Samuel Shoemaker).

2) *Unreserved obedience.*

- a) David is a good example of unreserved obedience - 1 Sam. 17:26,40-47.
 - b) "Faith is not believing something regardless of the evidence; it is doing, on the basis of God's promises, something regardless of the consequences."
 - c) "If there is anything that will make a man great, surely it is placing himself unreservedly at the disposal of God and seeking not only to do nothing but God's will, but to do all God's will" (B. B. Warfield).
 - d) "God is not so much seeking those with the ability to do everything, as He is those with the willingness to do anything."
- b. Many are the encouraging biblical examples of those who knew that obeying God requires nothing but what is beneficial, and forbids nothing but what is harmful - e.g. Hb. 11:1-40. Cf. Psa. 143:8.

C. *Benefiting from faith* - Rom. 15:13.

1. Joy and peace come not from the absence of conflict in life, but from faith's ability to cope with it.
2. Also, faith imparts more active benefits:
 - a. Diligence in work - 1 Thess. 1:3.
 - b. Willingness to sacrifice - Hb. 11:24-26.
 - c. Strength and courage - Eph. 6:16.
 - d. "Boldness and access with confidence" (Eph. 3:12).

D. *Maintaining faith* - Rev. 2:10.

1. It is not enough to have had faith at one time — the life of faith *begun* is virtually worthless if it is not *completed* - Col. 2:5; Hb. 6:12.
2. What happens *to* one's initial faith is crucial:
 - a. Growth - Mk. 9:24; Lk. 17:5; 2 Thess. 1:3.
 - b. Testing - Jas. 1:2,3; 1 Pt. 1:7.
 - c. Addition to - 2 Pt. 1:5-11.
 - d. Standing fast - 1 Cor. 15:1,2; 16:13; 2 Cor. 1:24; etc.
3. Faith is essentially forward-looking. Cf. Hb. 3:6,14; 10:22-25; 1 Pt. 1:5,9.

Conclusion

A. Man's basic decision is whether to trust his Maker or not. Cf. Jer. 2:13; 17:5-8.

B. The Christian's life of faith will not be disappointed - Phil. 4:13; 1 Pt. 2:6.

The Significance of Being a Christian

(4) ON CONSECRATION AND CONDUCT

Introduction

- A. As a *new person* (2 Cor. 5:17), the Christian enjoys a new identity, a new sense of who he is: he is one who has been *born again*.
- B. He has a new relationship to God, a new status: he *belongs* to God.
- C. He has adopted a new mind, a new way of thinking: he thinks on the basis of *faith*.
- D. But in addition to these things, the Christian *lives* in “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) — he must actually *conduct* himself as befits a Christian.
- E. The Christian must learn to *consecrate* himself to God.

I. THE FACT OF CONSECRATION

- A. In one sense, every Christian *IS* consecrated to God already.
 - 1. What is the *denotation* of the term “saint”?
 - a. It is a derivative of the Latin *sanctus* = sacred.
 - b. It is a translation of the Greek *hagios* = lit., a *holy one* = one *hallowed, consecrated, sanctified, set apart* for God - e.g. Mt. 27:52; Mk. 6:20.
 - c. Some related Greek words are *hosios* = devout, pious (Tit. 1:8) and *hieros* = sacred, priestly (1 Cor. 9:13).
 - d. The root idea of “holy” = belonging uniquely to God.
 - 1) Moses said to the people of Israel: “For you are a *holy people* to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6).
 - 2) This language is reflected in the New Testament: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a *holy nation*, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pt. 2:9,10; cf. v.5).
 - 2. What is the *connotation* of the term “saint”?

- a. It refers to that which is not profane, common, secular — “consecrate” is the opposite of “desecrate.”
 - b. It refers to that which is *separate* (2 Cor. 6:14-18); *different, distinctive* (Jn. 15:19; 17:15,16); *devoted, devout* (Ac. 8:2; cf. 6:4); *dedicated for exclusive use, special* (1 Cor. 6:15,20; 2 Tim. 2:21).
3. To whom does the term “saint” apply?
- a. A saint is not a person of meritorious service canonized after death, accorded veneration, and thought to be capable of interceding for others.
 - b. The New Testament does not authorize the use of “saint” as a title, nor the institutional “official” designation as saint by a church hierarchy.
 - c. Nor is a saint a person of extraordinary piety, near perfection, beyond the reach of most, as in the statement “Well, I’m no saint, but I do try to live a Christian life.”
 - d. In the New Testament, saints are in the process of being perfected - Eph. 4:12,13.
 - e. *Every Christian is a saint, a consecrated one* - Ac. 9:13,32,41; 26:10; etc. Cf. Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; etc.
 - f. Saints are the same as the “called” (1 Cor. 1:2), “faithful brethren” (Col. 1:2), the “elect” (Col. 3:12), and “holy brethren” (Hb. 3:1), etc.
 - g. Each Christian, therefore, *has been sanctified to God* - 1 Cor. 6:11.

CONSECRATION	
Christ as Redeemer	Christ as King
Christ for us	Christ in us
God declares us to be holy	God exhorts us to be holy
Accomplished fact	Goal to be pursued
Saint	Holy living
Something we are	Something we must do

Figure 1

- B. In another sense, however, every Christian *MUST* consecrate himself to God day by day.
- 1. Holiness involves something we must *do*, as well as something we *are*: *indicative* (we are) + *imperative* (we ought to be). **See Figure 1.**
 - a. God *declares* us to be saints (“holy ones”), and also *exhorts* us to be holy - Col. 3:1-6.

- b. “Christianity is an ellipse with two foci — Christ as Redeemer and Christ as King, Christ for us and Christ in us, redemption and morality, religion and ethics” (Ritschl).
 - c. Ethics, morality, virtue, and character relate to the process of *becoming* holy.
 - d. These things have to do with the Christian’s “walk” or “conversation” — i.e. behavior, way of life, lifestyle.
2. Holiness is God’s will, His intention for Christians. “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality, etc.” (1 Thess. 4:3). Cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 5:26; Phil. 2:13.
 - a. God “called us with a holy calling” (2 Tim. 1:9). Cf. 1 Thess. 4:7; etc.
 - b. God’s people are to be as *He* is - Lev. 11:44,45; Deut. 26:16-19; Hb. 12:10; 1 Pt. 1:15,16.
 - c. This holiness is a *goal* - 2 Cor. 7:1. Cf. Gal. 3:3; Eph. 2:21; Col. 1:9-11.
 3. True *conversion* to God entails *growth toward holiness* in living - Rom. 6:1,2; Col. 2:6; 3:1-10; 1 Thess. 1:9; etc. Cf. Mt. 12:33; Jn. 3:5-8.
 4. Eternal life is promised only to the truly *converted* and *consecrated* - Rom. 6:22,23; Hb. 12:14; 2 Pt. 3:11. Cf. Ac. 20:32; 26:18; Col. 1:12; etc.

II. THE MEANS OF CONSECRATION

A. God sanctifies the Christian through the work of the Holy Spirit. “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, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13,14).

1. The Holy Spirit works in behalf of the Christian.
 - a. He makes *intercession* for us - Rom. 8:26,27.
 - b. He *seals* us and serves as *guarantee/deposit* of salvation - 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13,14.
 - c. He *bears witness* with our spirits that we are God’s children - Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6.
 - d. He *pours out* the love of God in our hearts - Rom. 5:5.
 - e. He *strengthens* us with might in the inner man - Eph. 3:16.
 - f. He is “*in*” us, serving as incentive to a holy life - 1 Cor. 6:19,20.
2. The Christian *is* a “partaker of the Holy Spirit” (Hb. 6:4) — he *should* “walk in” the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25) and be “led by” the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-14).
3. The Christian must *yield* increasingly *to* the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16), rather than grieving or quenching the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).
4. The Christian should aim to live a Spirit-filled life.

B. The influence of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is neither direct nor miraculous.

1. Even in the apostolic age, the *ordinary* working of the Spirit was non-miraculous.
2. Many received the blessings of the Spirit indirectly through the miraculous gifts given to others for the common good - 1 Cor. 2:13; Eph. 3:3-5. Cf. 1 Jn. 3:24-4:1.
3. The miraculous *extraordinary* working of the Spirit was limited to the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands - Ac. 8:14-18.

- a. The case of Cornelius is a unique exception, one which serves to emphasize the rule - **Ac. 10:44-48.**
 - b. Miraculous gifts and direct revelations were not for the sanctification or salvation of the recipients personally and individually - e.g. **Ac. 9:6; 11:13,14.**
 4. In contrast to the extraordinary work of the Spirit in the apostolic age, the moral or ethical influence of the Spirit is:
 - a. Essential for salvation - **Gal. 5:16,21.**
 - b. Permanent - **1 Cor. 13:9,10.**
 5. No direct revelation or miraculous giftedness is needed to produce the “fruit of the Spirit” (**Gal. 5:22,23**) or to become “spiritual” (**Gal. 6:1**).
- C. The influence of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is through the truth revealed in the Scriptures - **Jn. 17:17,19; 1 Jn. 2:20,24-27.**
1. The Spirit does not dwell in the Christian by local “residence” in the body, or by “possession” — indwelling speaks of relationship, not location.
 - a. God and Christ are “in” one another - **Jn. 14:10,11.**
 - b. God (**1 Jn. 4:12-16**) and Christ (**Jn. 15:4-7; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27**) — as well as the Holy Spirit — are “in” the Christian.
 - c. Metaphorical, idiomatic language is used to describe one person being “in” another.
 - 1) One can see the parent “in” the child.
 - 2) Lovers are “in” each other’s heart.
 2. The indwelling of God’s Spirit involves an intimate communion, a real relationship between God and the Christian.
 - a. The relationship is based on the *words* communicated by the Spirit in the Scriptures — but the relationship is between *persons*.
 - b. God loves, desires fellowship with men > He communicates Himself by the Spirit in the Scriptures > the Christian hears and responds in loving obedience - **1 Jn. 1:1-4.**
 - c. The resulting relationship is so close that each is said to dwell in the other.
 - d. “Religion in its essential idea is a life in God, a life lived in recognition of God, in communion with God, and under control of the indwelling Spirit of God” (A. H. Strong).
 3. Sanctification follows from God being in our hearts. Colly Caldwell suggests that when others are “in your heart,” you:
 - a. Love them with a virtually unbounded love. Cf. **Jn. 14:23,24.**
 - b. Think about them “all the time.” Cf. **Eph. 5:18,19; Col. 3:16,17.**
 - c. Develop the same attitude about things that they have. Cf. **1 Cor. 6:12-20.**
 - d. Develop the same attitude about people that they have. Cf. **1 Jn. 4:12-16; 5:1,2.**
 - e. Readily respond when they ask you to do something. Cf. **Jn. 4:34; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; 5:3.**
 - f. Want to be what they want you to be so they will love and respect you. Cf. **2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Jn. 2:28,29.**
 4. As the “temple” in which the Holy Spirit “dwells,” the Christian must be holy “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (**1 Cor. 6:19,20**). Cf. **1 Cor. 3:16,17.**

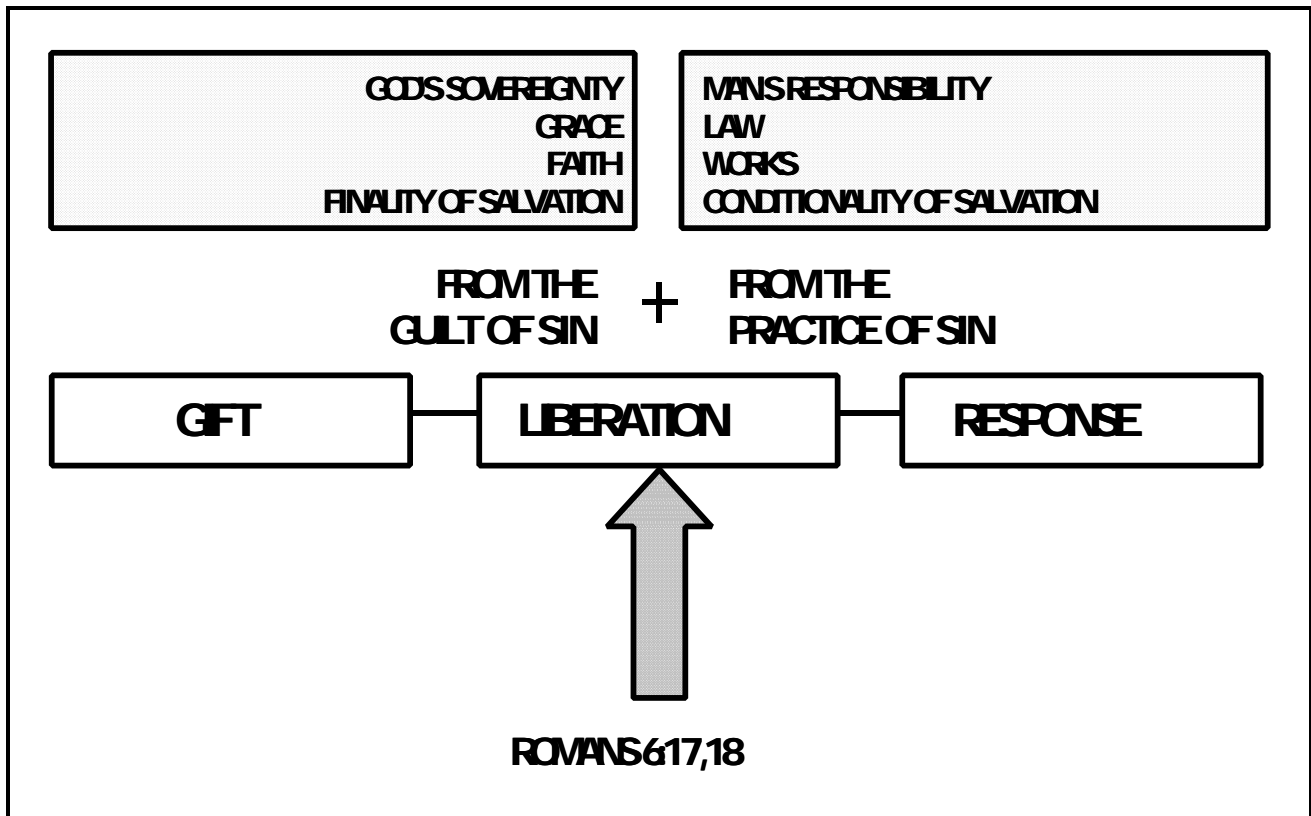


Figure 1

III. THE PROCESS OF CONSECRATION

A. The Christian must beware of *misconceptions* of sanctification.

1. Most errors here involve distortions either of what God *has* done or what man *must* do.
2. Our consecration involves both *something we ARE* as a result of God's work for us and *something we must DO* as responsible beings before God. **See Figure 2.**
3. Errors of *dogma*.
 - a. Misinterpretations of Phil. 2:13; etc.
 - 1) Calvinistic "enabling power" of the Holy Spirit, misconceptions of God's work in sanctification exclusive of any human effort, denial of "synergism," etc.
 - 2) But see Hb. 12:14; etc.
 - b. Misinterpretations of Mt. 5:48; 1 Thess. 5:23; etc.
 - 1) Wesleyan "entire sanctification," "perfectionism" minimizing either the definition of sin or the standard of conduct required of man, etc.
 - 2) But see 1 Jn. 1:8-10; etc.
 - c. "Second blessing" sanctification of holiness groups; second work of grace; instantaneous, complete, once-for-all-time sanctification as a gift; tongues-speaking and other miracles as evidence of sanctification; etc.
4. Errors of *attitude*.

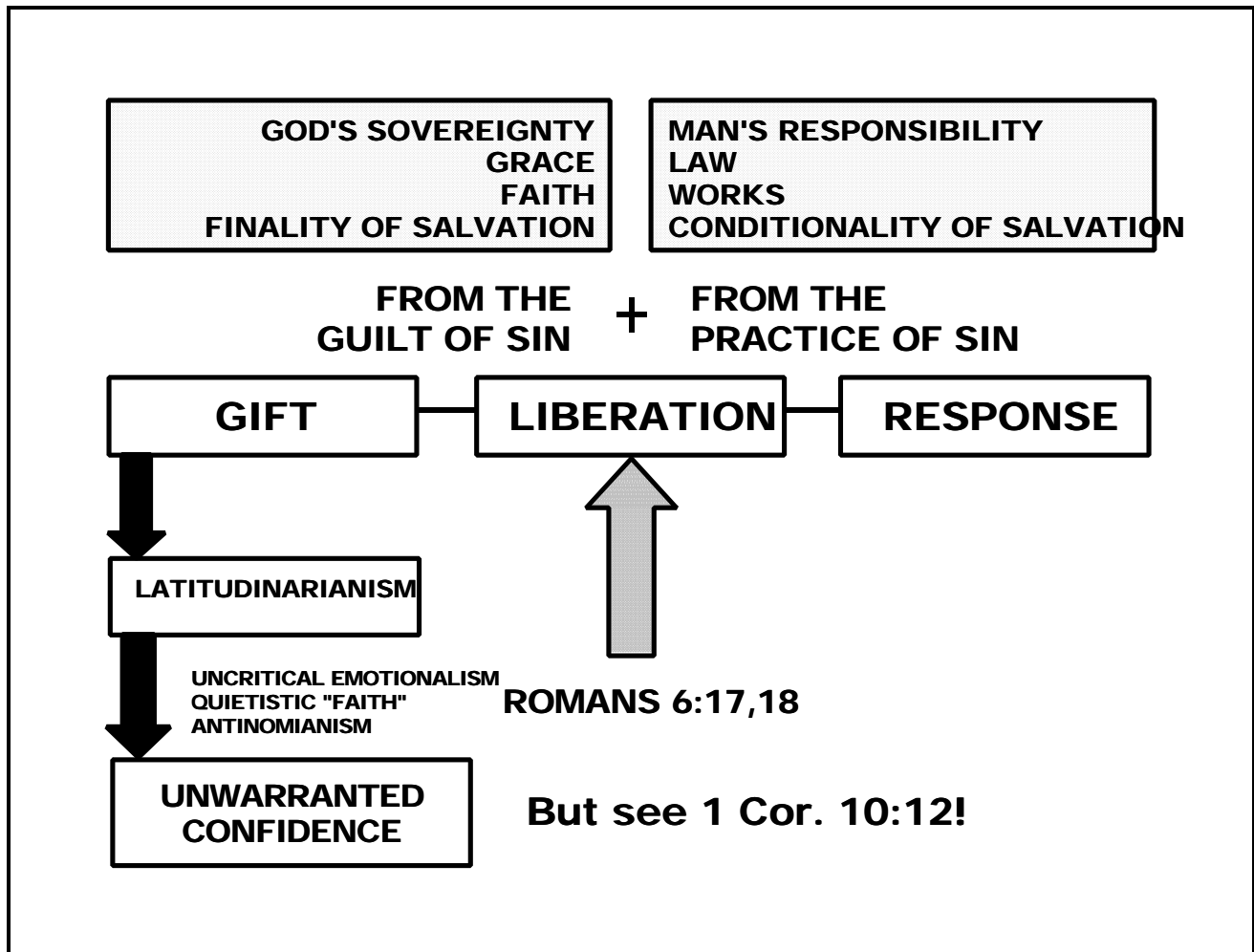


Figure 3

- a. Those based on *distortions of God's sovereignty*, grace, faith, and the finality of salvation. **See Figure 3.**
 - 1) Resulting imbalance: *latitudinarianism*.
 - a) Uncritical emotionalism, quietistic "faith." Cf. Jas. 2:14.
 - b) Ultimate extreme: antinomianism, license. Cf. 2 Pt. 2:18,19.
 - 2) Accompanying attitude: *unwarranted confidence*. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:12.

- b. Those based on *distortions of man's responsibility*, law, works, and the conditionality of salvation. **See Figure 4.**
 - 1) Resulting imbalance: *legalism*.
 - a) Mechanical ritualism, pietistic "works." Cf. Rom. 9:31,32; 10:3.
 - b) Such problems are often typified by the "cold icicles of orthodoxism" (Geoffrey Paxton). Cf. Rev. 2:2-5.
 - c) Ultimate extreme: Phariseeism, perfectionism. Cf. Lk. 18:11,12.
 - d) Such problems are often typified by self-righteousness, a holier-than-thou mentality, etc. Cf. Rom. 2:17-20.
 - 2) Accompanying attitude: *unnecessary fear*. Cf. Rom. 8:1,2; 1 Jn. 4:17,18.
 - a) Despair of holiness, righteousness, possibility of pleasing God.
 - b) This is based on a perversion of Isa. 64:6; Lk. 17:10; etc. — but see Hb. 11:5,6.

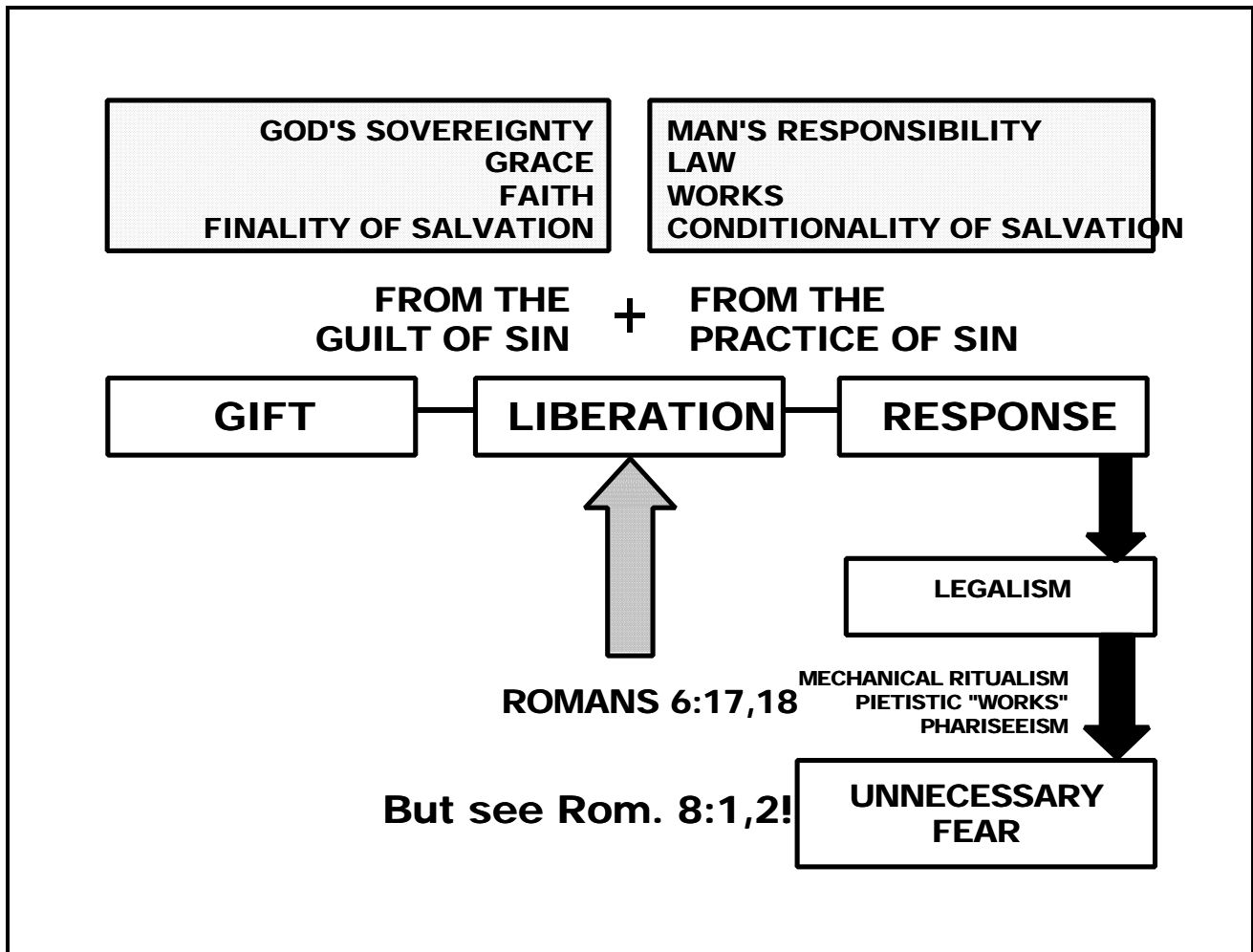


Figure 4

- c) Uncertainty of salvation.
- d) Typical ideas are “I hope I’m a Christian,” “I hope I’m going to heaven,” “Salvation depends on being 100% right,” “Going to heaven depends on dying just after prayer for forgiveness and before another sin is committed,” etc. — but see [Jn. 10:27-29](#); [Rom. 8:31-34,37](#); [1 Jn. 5:13](#).

B. The Christian must understand what *is* involved in sanctification.

1. Salvation = freedom from sin + freedom for righteousness.

- a. One experiences liberation both from the guilt of sin and the practice of sin - [Rom. 6:3-7,11-14,16-18,22](#).
- b. “Let the water and the blood, from Thy riven side which flowed, be of sin the *double* cure, cleanse me from its *guilt* and *power*” (*Rock of Ages*). A variant wording of the song says “*save from wrath* and *make me pure*.”
- c. “As justification implies deliverance from the penalty of sin, so sanctification implies deliverance from the pollutions, privations, and potency of sin” (*New Bible Dictionary*).
- d. When Christ “saves” us, He helps us break the power of sin. Cf. [1 Jn. 3:5,6](#).
- e. The Christian daily battles sin to remove it from his life - [Gal. 5:16-18](#).

- f. Christians who neglect holiness and consecration:
 - 1) Those who have never repented of their sins - Mt. 3:7-10; Lk. 13:1-5; Gal. 5:16-18.
 - a) Actually, one is not yet a Christian if he has not repented.
 - b) Repentance cannot be deleted from the plan of salvation any more than baptism, etc.
 - 2) Those who “hear” without doing - Jas. 1:21,22; 2:14-26.
 - 3) Those who remain spiritual infants - Hb. 5:12-14.
 - 4) Those who are not distinct from the world - 1 Cor. 5:1; etc.
 - g. Christians *gain a benefit* when they bring themselves under the control and discipline of God’s law.
 - 1) “For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Prov. 6:23).
 - 2) “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 Jn. 5:3).
 - h. Christians “flee” evil in order to “pursue” righteousness.
 - 1) We say no to some things in order to say yes to *better* things.
 - 2) “You will find it less easy to uproot faults than to choke them by growing virtues” (John Ruskin).
- 2. Purity, cleanness - Eph. 5:26,27; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 3:3.**
- a. The Christian must be “transformed,” must “cleanse” himself - Rom. 12:1,2; 2 Tim. 2:21.
 - b. *Moral* uncleanness is not “fitting” for the Christian - Eph. 5:3. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:17-19.
 - c. *Doctrinal* purity must also be maintained - Mt. 15:8,9; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Jn. 9; etc. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:1,2.
- 3. Conduct “in the light” (1 Jn. 1:7). Cf. 1 Jn. 3:6-9; 5:18; 2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 4.**
- 4. Exemplary conduct - Mt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15.**
- a. “Believers are to be spiritually distinct from the world’s culture, but not socially segregated from it” (Joseph Aldrich).
 - 1) To those who complained about His eating and drinking with sinful people, Jesus said, “Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Lk. 5:29-32).
 - 2) Paul wrote: “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:9,10).
 - b. We are to be “in” the world without being “of” the world - Jn. 17:14,15.
 - c. The duty of the Christian is to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Tit.2:10).
- 5. Spiritual maturity, “perfection,” completeness.**
- a. Jesus challenged us: “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:48).
 - b. Though sinlessness is impossible in this life, it is very much within the realm of possibility for us to be spiritually mature and complete. Cf. Phil. 3:15.
 - c. Spiritual maturity is the goal of all our teaching and preaching: “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present

every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” (Col. 1:28,29).

- d. Sanctification involves growth, progress toward greater purity, etc. - Gal. 4:19. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27.
- e. Such growth is not “optional” — after awhile, spiritual infancy is shameful - 1 Cor. 3:1-3.
- f. Spiritual growth demands *choice*.
 - 1) “Progress always consists in taking one or the other of two alternatives, abandoning the attempt to combine them” (A. Schweitzer).
 - 2) God asks us to choose between two paths. Cf. Deut. 30:15-20.

6. Doing all to God’s glory.

- a. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). Cf. 1 Cor. 10:31.
- b. Paul wrote: “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20).
- c. God’s glory is the ultimate end of all we do that is right: “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pt. 4:11).
- d. Ultimately, there is no middle ground.
 - 1) “Man either seeks to suppress the truth in unrighteousness or to live all his life to the glory of God” (Noel Weeks).
 - 2) Destruction is the end of those who substitute other purposes for the glory of God. Cf. Rom. 1:18-25; 2:7,8.
- e. The Christian’s actions spring from a “renewed” mind - Rom. 12:1,2.
 - 1) He aims to *please* God - 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10.
 - 2) He strives to become more *Christ-like* - 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 3:3,18; 2 Pt. 1:4; etc.
 - 3) He lives *for* Christ - 2 Cor. 5:15.
- f. God’s glory is sought in every relationship of life.
 - 1) “The good life consists not in performing one special class of actions, but in performing all actions well” (D. Elton Trueblood).
 - 2) Whatever is done is to be done “as to the Lord and not to men” (Col. 3:22-24).

Conclusion

A. Why does the Christian consecrate himself to God and conduct himself accordingly?

- 1. He may do so out of the fear of punishment (Hb. 10:26-31) and/or the hope of heaven (1 Jn. 3:1-3).
- 2. But a more important reason is that he loves God and is grateful to Him.
- 3. “For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14,15).

B. The Christian *chooses* the consecrated life.

1. Paul voluntarily gave up many things in order to consecrate himself to the Lord - Phil. 3:7-11.
 2. "Don't let the good things of life rob you of the best things" (Buster Rothman).
- C. Consecrated conduct is what life is "all about": "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil" (Eccl. 12:13,14).
- D. "Success is doing God's will God's way."
- E. "The sanctified life, then, is the life so fully surrendered to fellowship with Christ day by day that inner spirit and outward expression are ruled by His Spirit" (ISBE).
- F. Ultimately, holiness is the fruit of fellowship with God.
1. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (Jn. 15:4).
 2. "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:5-7).

The Significance of Being a Christian

(5) KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH

Introduction

- A. The Christian is “saved” (Ac. 2:47) — he “has” eternal life - Jn. 3:36. Cf. Jn. 5:24; 6:47,54; 1 Jn. 5:11,13; etc.
- B. But heaven is yet future (1 Pt. 1:3-9), and the Christian lives in “hope” of eternal life - Tit. 1:2. Cf. Mk. 10:30; Rom. 2:7; Tit. 3:7; 1 Jn. 2:25; etc.
- C. There is no contradiction here. What God promises does not have to be *inevitable* to be *certain* - e.g. Josh. 6:2. Cf. Hb. 10:34.
- D. Because salvation in heaven is *prospective* and *conditional*, the Christian, having obtained fellowship with God, must *maintain* it — we must not only “get” saved, we must “keep” saved!

I. SATAN'S WILL: AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN - 1 PT. 5:8

- A. The Christian can sin so as to be lost - e.g. Ac. 8:18-24. Cf. Rom. 11:22; Col. 1:23; Hb. 6:4-6; 10:26,27; 2 Pt. 2:20-22; etc.
 - 1. There is no scriptural distinction between sins that are “mortal” and others that are “venial.”
 - 2. There is a difference for the Christian, however, between sin “leading to death” and that “not leading to death” (1 Jn. 5:16,17).
- B. The Christian is continually involved in a spiritual warfare - Rom. 6:12; Eph. 6:12.
 - 1. There is a very real enemy who must be dealt with - 1 Pt. 5:8.
 - 2. Temptation, doubt, guilt, discouragement, persecution, etc. must be resisted - 1 Pt. 5:9.
 - 3. “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Gen. 4:7).
- C. The Christian must reach forward to the goal - Phil. 3:12-14.
 - 1. “A complacent Christian is a contradiction in terms.” Cf. Phil. 2:12.

2. “He conquers who endures” (Latin proverb). Cf. Rev. 2:10.
3. The message of Hebrews is: *hold out until the end!* E.g. Hb. 2:1; 3:6,12-14; 4:1,11; 6:11,12; 10:23,35-39; 12:1,2.

II. GOD’S WILL: FOR THE CHRISTIAN - JN. 3:16,17; ROM. 8:31-39

A. God is our *Friend* — He is on our side, willing and able to help us remain true to Him.

1. God has anticipated and graciously supplied our every spiritual need - Eph. 1:3; 2 Pt. 1:3,4,10,11.
2. The Holy Spirit has been given as a “deposit” on our salvation. Cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30.
3. With God *for* us, we need not fear losing our salvation against our will - Jn. 10:28,29; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pt. 1:4.

B. God is our *Helper* — He protects and provides for our spiritual welfare.

1. Jesus Christ is our Brother - Hb. 2:11,12.
 - a. He is our Mediator - 1 Tim. 2:5.
 - b. He is our Advocate - 1 Jn. 2:1,2.
 - c. He is our merciful and faithful High Priest - Hb. 2:17,18.
 - d. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sins - 1 Jn. 1:7-10.
2. For our welfare, God does many things.
 - a. He delivers us from temptation - 1 Cor. 10:13. Cf. Mt. 6:13; Jas. 1:12-15.
 - b. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us - Rom. 8:26.
 - c. Even the angels assist in helping us - Hb. 1:14.
 - d. God chastens us for our good - Hb. 12:5-11.
 - e. God helps and strengthens us - Psa. 28:6,7; 2 Cor. 12:9,10; Phil. 4:13. Cf. Psa. 46:1; 121:1-8; Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11; etc.
3. God provides specific blessings for the Christian’s security.
 - a. The congregational relationship - Hb. 10:24,25.
 - b. Special servants - Eph. 4:11-16.
 - c. The Lord’s Day and the public assemblies - Ac. 20:7; Col. 3:16.
 - d. The Lord’s Supper - 1 Cor. 11:23-26.
 - e. The Scriptures - 2 Tim. 3:16,17.
 - f. Prayer - Phil. 4:6,7.

C. God is our *Victory* — He defeats Satan for us. Cf. 2 Chron. 14:11; 32:7,8.

1. Our faith is in God’s power, not our own - 1 Cor. 2:5. Cf. 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:19.
2. Through God, victory over evil is something we can be confident about - Jn. 16:33; 1 Cor. 15:57. Cf. 2 Cor. 2:14; 10:4; 1 Jn. 2:13,14; 4:4.
3. Our confidence and boldness are possible because of God’s triumph - Eph. 3:12; 1 Jn. 3:20,21; 4:17,18. Cf. Phil. 4:7; Hb. 4:14-16.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S WILL: *FREE TO DENY OR ACCEPT GOD'S SAFEKEEPING - 1 PT.* 1:5

A. The Christian is *secure* in Christ, but *conditionally* so. Cf. Prov. 14:26.

1. He can be positive and optimistic about his salvation in Christ.
 - a. A confident attitude of assurance - 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:19. Cf. Lk. 1:4; Col. 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:14.
 - b. A triumphant attitude of victory - 1 Jn. 5:4,5; Rev. 2:7,11, etc.
2. Yet, he must not be lackadaisical about his obedience.
 - a. *Unwarranted confidence* must be avoided, as well as *unnecessary fear*.
 - 1) God's grace must not be presumed upon.
 - 2) Both the *warning of Hebrews* and the *assurance of Romans* are needed. Cf. 2 Pt. 1:10,11.
 - b. The question is not whether God preserves the righteous, but whether the righteous can become unrighteous — it is not whether the believer is secure, but whether he can give up his faith.
 - 1) This fact is indisputable: only the obedient go to heaven - Eph. 5:5-7; Hb. 5:9; etc.
 - 2) "Whoever abides in Him does not sin" (1 Jn. 3:4-9).
3. God's power and grace are infallible — but the Christian may refuse God's strength.
 - a. We are urged: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12,13). Cf. 1 Pt. 1:5; Jd. 1,20,21,24,25.
 - b. The person "kept" by God's power must "keep" himself - 1 Jn. 5:18. Cf. Jn. 17:11,12.

B. The Christian is exhorted to *avail himself* of God's help in remaining faithful.

1. Scriptural admonitions:
 - a. Take heed - 1 Cor. 10:12.
 - b. Gird up the loins of the mind - 1 Pt. 1:13.
 - c. Discipline self - 1 Cor. 9:27.
 - d. Be rooted - Eph. 3:17; Col. 2:7. Cf. Eph. 4:14.
 - e. Put on the armor of God - Eph. 6:10-18. Cf. Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:8.
 - f. Be strong in Lord - 2 Tim. 2:1. Cf. Psalms 31:24.
 - g. Stand fast - 1 Cor. 16:13. Cf. Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Thess. 2:15.
 - h. Resist the devil - Jas. 4:7; 1 Pt. 5:8,9. Cf. Rom. 12:21.
2. Activities conducive to keeping saved:
 - a. Daily prayer.
 - b. Daily Bible study.
 - c. Association with fellow Christians.
 - d. Attendance at the congregational assemblies.
 - e. Involvement in the work of the Lord, development of usefulness.
 - f. Acceptance of correction.
 - g. Repentance.
3. God's provisions are neglected only at great peril.

C. In God's strength, the Christian *can* remain faithful.

1. We have been "saved in hope" (Rom. 8:24). Cf. Col. 1:23; 1 Jn. 3:3.

2. We eagerly await Christ's return - 1 Cor. 1:7-9; Phil. 3:20,21; 2 Pt. 3:12,13.
3. We are "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37).

Conclusion

- A. "We must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, *lest we drift away*" (Hb. 2:1).
- B. It is possible to be confident that "He who has begun a good work in you [us] will *complete* it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).
- C. "[We] are *kept by the power of God through faith* for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pt. 1:5).

The Significance of Being a Christian

(6) SAVED TO SERVE

Introduction

- A. Every *right* implies a *responsibility*. Every *opportunity* implies an *obligation*. Every *possession* implies a *duty*.
- B. Enjoyment of the Christian's relationship to God involves accepting the responsibilities inherent in that relationship.
 - 1. Duty without doctrine is a tree without roots. Cf. Col. 2:23.
 - 2. But doctrine without duty is a tree without fruits. Cf. Lk. 6:46.
- C. The Christian is a person called to God's *service* - 1 Thess. 1:9.
- D. We are obligated to *fulfill* our individual service - Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5.

I. THE KINGDOM AS A REALM OF ACTIVITY

- A. Illustrations of what the Christian is.
 - 1. "Branch" (Jn. 15:1-8). Cf. Mt. 7:16-20.
 - 2. "Farmer" (2 Tim. 2:6; Jas. 5:7). Cf. Eccl. 11:3,4; 2 Cor. 9:6.
 - 3. "Soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3,4; 4:7). Cf. Phil. 2:25; Philem. 2.
 - 4. "Athlete" (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:7).
 - 5. "Member" (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).
- B. Illustrations of what the Christian is accountable for.
 - 1. "Fruitfulness" (Mt. 13:1-9,18-23; Col. 1:10; Tit. 3:14; 2 Pt. 1:8).
 - 2. "Usefulness" (2 Tim. 2:20,21). Cf. 2 Tim. 4:11.
 - 3. "Profitableness" (Mt. 25:14-30).
- C. The Christian aims to do God's *will* (cf. Jn. 4:34; 6:38; etc.), and thereby to *please* God (1 Cor. 7:32; 2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:8-10).
 - 1. The problem of "passivity" is soul-threatening - Mt. 25:31-46; Lk. 10:25-37.

- a. The spiritual “freeloader” who is “just along for the ride” will be sadly disappointed. Cf. Mt. 7:21.
- b. The Christian does not have the luxury of “just belonging” - Jas. 2:14-26.
2. Unused abilities/opportunities will eventually be withdrawn. Cf. Isa. 5:1-7.
3. We are responsible for *doing* what we *can*. Cf. Mk. 14:8.

II. THE CHRISTIAN AS A WORKER

A. Identity of the Christian.

1. “Worker” (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:15). Cf. Jn. 6:27; 1 Pt. 1:17. Cf. Rom. 16:3,9,21; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; etc.
2. “Laborer” (Mt. 9:37,38; Jn. 6:27; Rev. 14:13). Cf. Mt. 20:1-16; Jn. 4:35-38. Cf. Rom. 16:6; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:16.

B. Activity of the Christian.

1. “Work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Cf. 1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:30. Cf. Phil. 2:13.
 - a. The Lord’s work involves *people* - Mt. 4:19; 1 Cor. 9:1.
 - b. Jesus’ attitude must be emulated - Jn. 4:34; 17:4.
2. “Good works” (Mt. 5:16; 1 Pt. 2:12). Cf. Gal. 6:9,10; Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:17. Cf. Col. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:21.
 - a. Jesus “went about doing good” (Ac. 10:38). Cf. Tit. 2:14.
 - b. Christians are to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hb. 10:24). Cf. Tit. 2:7; 3:8,14.
 - c. God is able to make the Christian “complete in every good work to do His will” (Hb. 13:21). Cf. 2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Thess. 2:17.

C. Inventory of the Christian’s ability and opportunity.

1. *Abilities*.
 - a. In what ways am I especially *blessed* by God?
 - b. What do I *possess* that might be used in the Lord’s work?
 - c. What do I derive *fulfillment* from doing?
 - d. What do I *enjoy* doing?
 - e. What comes *naturally* for me?
 - f. What might I *learn* to do?
2. *Opportunities*.
 - a. What *needs* to be done in the Lord’s work?
 - b. What *scriptural restrictions* govern the work?
 - c. What *other factors* may limit my opportunity?
 - d. What is now being done *inadequately*?
 - e. What *problems* exist that need to be solved?
 - f. What are others doing that I need to *help* do?
 - 1) Opportunity is often accompanied by opposition - 1 Cor. 16:9.
 - 2) “There is much to do, there is work on every hand.”

3) “Have thy tools ready, God will find thee work” (Charles Kingsley).

D. Attitudes toward the Christian’s work.

1. *Gratitude* for the privilege - e.g. 1 Tim. 1:12.
2. *Initiative*, willingness to work without having to be prodded. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; etc.
3. *Positiveness* - 1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14. “People are often down on what they are not up to.”
4. *Enthusiasm*, eagerness - 2 Cor. 9:7. “Nothing is so easy but that it becomes difficult if done with reluctance.”
5. *Industriousness*, energy - Neh. 4:6.
 - a. “Some people are like blisters — they never show up until the work is almost done.”
 - b. “The world is full of willing people: some willing to work, the rest willing to let them” (Robert Frost).
 - c. Caution must be exercised, however, to guard against the setbacks of “burn-out.”
6. *Persistence*, perseverance, tirelessness, willingness to go the second mile - Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:7. Initiative + finishiative = completed work.

III. THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT

A. Servanthood in the Christian’s life.

1. “Follower” (*mimetes*) - Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6.
2. “Disciple” (*mathetes*) - Mt. 10:24,25; Lk. 14:26-33; Jn. 8:31; 15:8; Ac. 11:26. Cf. Mt. 28:19.
3. “Steward” (*oikonomos*) - Lk. 12:42; 1 Cor. 4:1,2; 1 Pt. 4:10,11.
4. “Minister” (*diakonos*) - Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:4; Col. 1:7,25; 4:7. Cf. Mt. 20:28; Lk. 22:27; Jn. 12:26; 2 Tim. 1:18; Hb. 6:10; 1 Pt. 4:10,11. Cf. 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Tim. 4:11; Rev. 2:19. *Every Christian is a minister* - Eph. 4:12!
5. “Servant” (*doulos*) - Mt. 20:27; 24:45,46; 25:21,23; Lk. 17:10; Jn. 13:16; 2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Pt. 2:16. Cf. Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 9:19; 1 Thess. 1:9.

B. What servanthood means.

1. Servanthood is Mt. 22:37-40 *in action* — it is the outward evidence of a shift in focus away from self. Cf. Jas. 2:14-17.
 - a. At the practical level, it involves unselfishly meeting the needs of other human beings - e.g. Lk. 10:25-37. We are our “brother’s keeper.”
 - 1) It means doing whatever we can *for* others — helping, sharing problems, alleviating suffering, teaching the gospel, restoring the erring, etc.
 - 2) The Christian serves Christians (Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:15; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:20,21; Hb. 6:10; etc.), but others, too (Gal. 6:9,10; etc.).
 - 3) “Small” acts of service are often as important as “big” ones. E.g. Mk. 12:41-44; 14:8,9.
 - 4) We need to *look* for ways to help: How can I lighten someone’s load today?
 - a) Merely asking “Is there anything I can do?” puts the other person in the position of having to ask for our favors.

- b) It is often better just to think up something appropriate and do it.
- b. Love of God cannot be detached from service to man - **Jas. 1:27**; 1 Jn. 2:9-11; 3:14-18; 4:20,21; 5:1,2.
- c. To live for Christ is to live for others, treating them as we would Christ Himself - **Mt. 25:31-46**; **Eph. 5:21**. E.g. Eph. 6:5-9.
- 2. Servanthood is a *way of life*, not an occasional “good deed.”
 - a. It is a vocation, rather than an avocation.
 - b. It involves an entire frame of mind - **Phil. 2:4-7**.
 - c. “You can tell whether you have a servant attitude by the way you react when you are treated like one.”
- 3. Servanthood is an *investment in people*, rather than things.
 - a. Consider Moses’ investment in Joshua, Jesus’ investment in the Twelve, Paul’s investment in Timothy (1 Cor. 4:16,17).
 - b. Inevitably, we must be selective — even Jesus did not heal all the sick, feed all the hungry, etc.
- 4. Servanthood is a *sacrifice* — it costs.
 - a. “Inconvenience” is nearly always a part of the cost. Cf. Mt. 5:38-42; **2 Cor. 8:1-4**.
 - b. Yet, yielding one’s “rights” is the very essence of servanthood - **1 Cor. 9:19**; 2 Cor. 12:15; **Eph. 5:21**; Phil. 2:3-8.
- 5. Servanthood is a *privilege* - **Lk. 15:18,19**.
 - a. We must take care not to resent the needs of others as burdens, requiring interruptions of our “work” — serving others *is* our work!
 - b. Paul’s attitude is worthy of imitation - **1 Cor. 15:9,10**; 1 Tim. 1:12.
 - c. “O Master, let me walk with Thee in lowly paths of service free” (W. Gladden).

C. Hindrances to servanthood.

- 1. Service to the wrong master - **Mt. 6:24**; **Rom. 6:16**.
- 2. Limitations on how, where, and when we will serve - e.g. Exo. 3:10,11. “Most people are willing to serve God — but in an advisory capacity only!”
- 3. Limitations on whom we will serve - e.g. Jonah 1:1-3; Jas. 2:1-9.
 - a. The truth is, *anyone* made in God’s image is *worthy* of our service.
 - b. Cf. Lk. 6:27-36; Rom. 5:6-8.
- 4. Negligence, “sluggishness.” Cf. **Hb. 6:11,12**.
- 5. Laziness, slothfulness. Cf. **Mt. 25:26**.
- 6. Ingratitude. Cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; **Phil. 2:5-7**.
 - a. It is dangerous to forget how generously *we* have been served.
 - b. We all like service with a smile — we are not so good at *giving* service with a smile!
- 7. Pride, self-centeredness.
 - a. Self-pity - e.g. 1 Kgs. 19:13-18.
 - b. Competition, rivalry with those we should be serving. Cf. Phil. 1:15-18.
 - c. Inordinate desire for recognition, praise, etc.
 - 1) Cf. **Mt. 6:1-4**.
 - 2) “Much of what God wants done in this world involves *unsung* effort.”
 - d. Living for self. Cf. **2 Cor. 5:15**.
 - e. Humility and unselfishness are really the basic prerequisites for servanthood - Ac. 20:19; **Phil. 2:3,4**.

D. The greatness of servanthood.

1. Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mt. 20:28). Cf. Lk. 22:27; Phil. 2:7.
 - a. Jesus is the “Suffering Servant” - Isa. 53:1-12.
 - b. Jesus is our example.
 - 1) We cannot be like Christ without being a servant - Mt. 10:24,25; Jn. 13:3-17.
 - 2) Contrast Jesus’ attitude at the Last Supper with that of Judas.
2. True greatness consists of serving others - Mt. 20:20-28 (cf. Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 22:24-27); Mt. 23:11; Mk. 9:33-37.
 - a. Jesus’ emphasis on *service* is opposed to the worldly idea of “success.”
 - 1) Consider our “superstars,” celebrities, heroes, and role models.
 - 2) In choosing an occupation, how many ask, “How can I render the greatest service to others?”
 - b. “God measures success, not in units of silver, but in units of service.”
 - c. Our “credentials” are not so important as our *living* “letters of commendation” (2 Cor. 3:1-3).
 - d. “Find out where you can render a service, then render it. The rest is up to the Lord.”
3. Servanthood is rewarded.
 - a. Joy, happiness, etc. - Ac. 20:35.
 - 1) Discouragement, depression, etc. often result from a failure to serve others.
 - 2) The shortest route to self respect is to serve others wholeheartedly and to “esteem others better than (yourself)” (Phil. 2:3).
 - 3) “If things are not going well with you, begin your effort at correcting the situation by carefully examining the service you are rendering, and especially the spirit in which you are rendering it” (Roger Babson).
 - 4) “It is joy here, joy beyond compare, in the service of my King” (Tillit S. Teddlie).
 - b. Open doors for the gospel - 2 Cor. 4:5. “There is no better way to earn the right to be heard than by first showing yourself to be a servant.”
 - c. Eternal reward - Mt. 16:24,25; 24:46; 25:21,23. E.g. Col. 3:22-24.
4. Our responsibility is to “fulfill” our individual “ministry.” Cf. “you must leave no part of your Christian service incomplete” (2 Tim. 4:5 Barclay).

Conclusion

- A. The Christian is “at God’s disposal” — and he does *all* that he does “as to the Lord” (Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:23).
- B. The Christian’s work/service is a part of the joy of being in Christ.
 1. “There is one who scatters, yet increases more” (Prov. 11:24,25).
 2. “The happy people are those who are producing something; the bored people are those who are consuming much and producing nothing” (W. R. Inge).
- C. *Discipline* is needed for us to:

1. *Plan, set goals* for our work and service.
2. *Prepare*. Cf. Eccl. 10:10.
3. *Engage* ourselves in activity.
4. *Finish* what we start.

D. Judgment will involve an accounting of our use of *potential*.

E. God's work is *urgent* - Jn. 9:4.

F. We must *influence* one another to *want* to be active - Hb. 10:24,25.

G. We have been taught to teach, won to win, *saved to serve* — all to God's glory - 1 Pt. 4:10,11.

The Significance of Being a Christian

(7) THE CHRISTIAN CONNECTED TO OTHER CHRISTIANS

Introduction

- A. We have seen that Christianity involves *activity*.
- B. Some of that activity is “together” work with *other* Christians.
- C. Each Christian needs to understand the importance of this *collective* work.

I. THE “TOGETHER” ASPECT OF LIFE IN CHRIST

- A. The problem of “solo” Christianity.
 - 1. Some have a concept of Christianity which results in minimal involvement with the congregation of which they are a part.
 - a. These are “independent” Christians — aloof, isolated, solitary in their “service” to Christ.
 - b. The congregation’s work becomes “what they are doing down there,” etc.
 - c. Some may not *understand* the congregational facet of life in Christ.
 - d. Others *intend* to be mavericks and refuse to be a real *part* of a congregation.
 - 2. Yet, it is “not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18) — if this is true socially, it is also true spiritually!
 - 3. The usual consequences of solo Christianity are dangerous: inactivity, unhappiness, spiritual stagnation, etc.
 - 4. The bottom line is: Christians rarely *survive* apart from their proper relationship *together*.
 - 5. Removed from the fire of which it is a part, a glowing ember soon cools...and dies.
- B. Illustrations of the *togetherness* of Christians.
 - 1. “Fellowship.” Cf. Ac. 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:3,7.
 - a. Christians are conscious of an “inside/outside” distinction - 1 Cor. 5:12,13.
 - b. Christians are “fellows.”
 - 1) “*Fellow citizens*” (Eph. 2:11-22, esp. v.19).
 - 2) “*Fellow heirs*” (Eph. 3:6). Cf. Rom. 8:17; 1 Pt. 3:7.
 - 3) “*Fellow workers/laborers/helpers*” (Col. 4:11). Cf. Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:2; Philem. 1,24; 3 Jn. 8.

- 4) “*Fellow servants*” (Col. 1:7). Cf. Col. 4:7; Rev. 6:11.
- 5) “*Fellow soldiers*” (Phil. 2:25; Philem. 2).
- c. Christians extend “the right hand of fellowship” to one another. Cf. Gal. 2:9.
2. “Brotherhood.” Cf. 1 Cor. 5:11; Gal. 3:26; 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Pt. 2:17.
 - a. Cf. Mk. 3:31-35.
 - b. The Christian needs to have a “family” consciousness about other Christians.
3. “Membership.” Cf. 1 Cor. 12:18,27; Eph. 5:30.
 - a. The church is Christ’s “body” (Eph. 1:22,23). Cf. 1 Cor. 12:13.
 - b. “Corporate” responsibilities attend membership in the body. Latin *corpus* = body.
 - c. Body members are *functionally interdependent* - Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:16.
 - d. There are no “vestigial” organs or “decorative” parts, no useless or unimportant members.
 - e. Christians are “members of one another” (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25).

C. Church “membership.”

1. The “local” church is something different from the “universal” church.
 - a. The “church” of Christ *universally* is the sum of all Christians - Mt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22.
 - b. A “church” of Christ *locally* is a specific group of Christians who function together as a “congregation” - Ac. 14:23; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2; etc.
 - 1) A local church can assemble, or “congregate” — that is why we call it a “congregation.” Cf. 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:19,23,28,34,35; etc.
 - 2) The universal church is a *relationship* — it has neither *function* nor *organization*.
 - 3) The local church has both - e.g. Phil. 1:1,5; 4:15.
 - c. One “automatically” becomes a part of the universal church when he obeys the gospel (Ac. 2:47; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; etc.) — but an individual must himself carry out his intention to become a part of a local congregation (e.g. Ac. 9:26-28).
 - d. The mere provision by God of this congregational relationship implies an important divine *purpose* for it, and a corresponding *responsibility* of Christians to avail themselves of it.
 - e. The idea of becoming “just a Christian” does not mean one will have no connection to a local church. Those who are baptized and then disappear, never again to see their new brethren, misunderstand what is to *follow* baptism!
2. At the local level especially, Christianity is a “community” affair.
 - a. Latin *communis* = common, involving participation by all. Cf. community, communion, common, etc.
 - b. Universally, Christians do share a common *relationship* to God - 2 Pt. 1:1. Cf. Tit. 1:4; Jd. 3; etc.
 - c. But it is in the local congregational relationship that this results in an actual common *life together* - e.g. Ac. 2:42-47.
3. Christians are obligated to participate in the life of a faithful congregation, whenever possible.
 - a. The command to *withdraw* “fellowship” from certain ones implies that participation in the fellowship by faithful Christians is not optional - 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6; etc.
 - b. Much of what the Christian does is “for the *common good*” (1 Cor. 12:7 NASV).
 - c. One’s bond to his brethren has a bearing on his bond to God.

- d. Christians have responsibilities to *other* Christians. And *each* Christian ought to assume responsibilities and commitments to a *particular* group of other Christians - Hb. 10:24,25.

II. SOME SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHER CHRISTIANS

A. Attitudes to maintain.

1. *Concern, care* - 1 Cor. 12:25,26; Phil. 2:20.
2. *Humility, lowliness* - Rom. 12:3; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3,4; 1 Pt. 5:5,6.
3. *Peaceableness* - Rom. 14:17,19; Eph. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:13; Jas. 3:17,18; 2 Pt. 3:14.
4. *Appreciation* for others and their work - e.g. Phil. 1:3-5; 1 Thess. 1:2,3. True appreciation will eliminate destructive criticism, gossip, factiousness, etc.
5. *Willingness to cooperate, work together* - 1 Cor. 12:21.
 - a. "It marks a big step in a man's development when he comes to realize that other men can be called on to help him do a better job than he can do alone" (Andrew Carnegie).
 - b. "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success."
6. *Friendliness, warmth, openness* - e.g. Ac. 2:44-47. Cf. Philem. 7.
7. *Gentleness, meekness* - Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Tit. 3:2.
8. *Forbearance, longsuffering, patience* - Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12,13; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 6:11.
9. *Forgiveness* - Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.
10. *Love* - Jn. 13:34,35; Rom. 12:10; 13:8-10; 1 Pt. 1:22. Cf. Jn. 15:12,17; Eph. 1:15; 4:2; 5:2; Phil. 2:2; Col. 1:4; 2:2; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; Hb. 13:1; 1 Pt. 2:17; 3:8,9; 1 Jn. 3:23; 2 Jn. 5.
 - a. Love of God implies love of one's brethren in Christ - 1 Jn. 4:20-5:2. Cf. 1 Jn. 3:10,11,14-18; 4:7,8,11,12.
 - b. Love *edifies* - 1 Cor. 8:1. Cf. Gal. 5:13,14.
 - c. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above" (Fawcett).

B. Things to do.

1. *Identify as a member* of a faithful congregation, "place membership." Cf. Ac. 9:26.
 - a. Drifters, "floating" members, "members at large," etc. are missing an important aspect of Christianity.
 - b. The same goes for passive "spectators," those "just along for the ride," "permanent visitors," etc.
 - c. One places *membership* with the intent of being an actual, functioning *member* — not a mere "appendage" to the body.
 - d. Real *commitments* are involved.
2. *Pray for other Christians*, especially those of one's own congregation - e.g. Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-11. Cf. Col. 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:25.
3. *Submit to the congregation's elders* - 1 Thess. 5:12,13; Hb. 13:7,17.
4. *Attend and participate in the assemblies* of the congregation.

- a. The Christian enjoys and benefits from private and family worship every day — but he must not neglect God’s provision for collective, congregational worship, Bible study, etc.
 - b. Each aspect of the congregational assemblies is vital to the Christian.
 - 1) The Lord’s Supper - Ac. 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34.
 - 2) Praying - Ac. 4:23-31; 12:12; 1 Cor. 14:15-17; etc.
 - 3) Singing - Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.
 - 4) Preaching/teaching - Ac. 20:7.
 - 5) Giving - 1 Cor. 16:1,2.
 - c. Special assemblies of the church are no less important than the regular, weekly ones - e.g. Ac. 14:27.
 - d. The congregational assembly is an opportunity for three different involvements.
 - 1) Help in *providing* for the assembly (e.g. cleaning the building, preparing the communion trays, etc.).
 - 2) Actual *attendance* at the assembly. *One hundred percent* involvement here is critical.
 - 3) *Participation* in the assembly, to the extent of one’s opportunity.
 - a) Worship is not a “spectator” activity.
 - b) The crucial question is not “How did the preacher do?” but “How did I do?”
 - c) If one can do no more than listen, there is such a thing as *active* listening.
 - e. Assemblies of the congregation are not merely a routine to perform, but a God-given provision for our spiritual good.
 - 1) Our quibbles and questions about whether we *have* to, our complaints, our neglect, etc. reveal a tendency to take lightly the opportunity for Christians to be *together*.
 - 2) God is wanting to *give* us something in our assemblies — our involvement or non-involvement reveals something of how much we desire to accept what God has for us.
 - f. To minimize this aspect of Christianity is to jeopardize not only one’s own soul, but also that of others - Hb. 10:24,25.
5. *Contribute financially* to the work of the congregation - 1 Cor. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 9:6,7.
 6. *Engage personally and directly in the three-fold work of the congregation*. “Hiring it done” is no substitute for *personal* involvement in any of the following works.
 - a. *Evangelism* - e.g. Ac. 8:4; 11:19-21.
 - b. *Edification* - Rom. 15:14.
 - 1) Spiritual maturity is the goal for which Christians aim - Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1:28; etc.
 - 2) Edification is the process which produces maturity, and Christians are duty-bound to edify *each other* - Rom. 14:19; 15:2. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:29; 1 Thess. 5:11,14; Hb. 3:13.
 - a) It is not enough to *grow*; we must help *others* to grow! Cf. Lk. 22:32.
 - b) It is not enough to *be* faithful, zealous, interested, etc.; we must help *others* to be so! Enthusiasm is indeed infectious, but there must be some contact.
 - c) It is not enough to bring others *to* Christ; we must help them be strong *in* Christ!
 - 3) The older, more mature spiritually have a special responsibility here - e.g. Tit. 2:3-5.
 - 4) *All* need nurture:

- a) Strong, faithful Christians - Rom. 1:12.
 - b) New converts - 1 Thess. 3:1-3.
 - c) Those who have failed to develop and achieve full usefulness in Christ - Hb. 5:12-14.
 - d) Weak, erring Christians - Gal. 6:1,2; 2 Tim. 2:24-26.
- 5) Each Christian is “leaven.”
- a) The only question is whether that influence will be for good or ill.
 - b) Cf. 1 Cor. 5:6.
- 6) As we edify others, we must also *receive* edification for the blessing it is. Cf. Prov. 27:6.
- 7) We must stand *together* against the weakening influences that surround us, or we probably will fall - Hb. 10:23-25.
- 8) We must take care not to underestimate either our ability or opportunity for strengthening and influencing for good other Christians — our *example* itself is more powerful than we think. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:12.
- c. *Benevolence* - e.g. Ac. 2:44,45; 4:34,35; etc.
7. *Help maintain unity in the congregation* - Jn. 17:20-23; Rom. 15:5-7; Eph. 4:1-3. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:1,2; etc.
8. *Participate in the discipline* of the congregation, instructive as well as corrective - 1 Cor. 5:4,5; Gal. 6:1,2; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6,14,15.
9. *Extend courtesy and hospitality* - Rom. 12:13; Hb. 13:2; 1 Pt. 4:9.
10. *Find an individual role and fill it* - Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5.

III. THE NEED FOR INVOLVEMENT

A. The nature of involvement.

1. Words which describe the congregational relationship: participation, cooperation, collaboration, teamwork, joint effort, etc.
2. The crucial need of the congregation: *involvement*. Cf. engagement, interrelation, interconnection, interaction, etc.
 - a. *Involve* is derived from Latin *in* (in) + *volvere* (roll, turn) = to enwrap. Cf. revolve, etc.
 - 1) Involvement means being “enwrapped” as a participant, enmeshed in a joint undertaking.
 - 2) The Christian is “intertwined” with his brethren — e.g. the strands of fiber in a rope.
 - b. What is needed is *total* involvement by the individual Christian.
 - c. Arbitrary limitations on congregational involvement, even seemingly “insignificant” ones, convey a strong negative message to our fellow Christians, children, neighbors, etc.
 - d. There is a double result of congregational involvement.
 - 1) The congregation as a whole is stronger.
 - 2) The individual is not as likely to be separated from the Lord and the Lord’s people. Consider the strands “involved” in a rope!

B. The benefits of involvement.

1. These include:
 - a. Friendship, companionship.
 - b. Strength, encouragement to do right.
 - c. Admonition, correction, reproof.
 - d. Instruction, knowledge.
 - e. Prayers offered for us.
 - f. Benevolent help when in physical need.
 - g. Comfort in sorrow, help in troubled times.
 - h. Assistance in difficulty.
 - i. The joy of congregational assemblies.
2. The benefits are mutual.
 - a. Cf. Rom. 1:12.
 - b. The congregational relationship is the Golden Rule exemplified - Mt. 7:12.

Conclusion

- A. Nowhere is the *wisdom* of God more beautifully displayed than in the relationship of Christians *together*. Cf. Eph. 3:10.
- B. In the local congregation, Christians may come to understand Paul's feelings about his brethren in Christ - e.g. 1 Thess. 2:19,20.

The Significance of Being a Christian

(8) REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AS A CHRISTIAN

Introduction

- A. Jesus spoke realistically about the potential hardships of discipleship - Lk. 9:57-62; 14:25-33.
- B. Without a balanced, clearheaded view of what he is “in for” as a Christian, a person is apt to be overwhelmed. When the “bubble” bursts, his failed expectations can be not only frustrating but spiritually deadly.
- C. In 1 Thess. 3:1-5, Paul sought to break the *chain of disillusionment*:
 - 1. Disenchantment.
 - 2. Disappointment.
 - 3. Disaffection.
 - 4. Departure from the faith.
- D. What “advice” would we give to a person ready to become a Christian? Our answer will reveal something of our own understanding of the nature of Christianity.
- E. Understanding what it means to become a Christian involves a sober, down-to-earth awareness of what it is really *like to be* a Christian.

I. LOOKING SENSIBLY AT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

- A. *Outside* the church.
 - 1. What can disillusion us.
 - a. Minority status - Mt. 7:13,14.
 - b. Bewilderment of those who are non-Christians - 1 Pt. 4:3,4.
 - c. Scoffing, mockery - Hb. 11:36; 2 Pt. 3:1-3; Jd. 18.
 - d. Reproach - 1 Pt. 2:12; 4:4.
 - e. Hostility, enmity - Mt. 10:22; Jn. 15:18-21; Phil. 3:18,19; 1 Jn. 3:13.
 - f. Injustice, mistreatment - 1 Pt. 2:18-23.
 - g. Rejection by family - Mt. 10:21,34-39.
 - h. Persecution.

- 1) The Christian ought not to be surprised or “shaken” by persecution - 1 Thess. 3:1-5; 1 Pt. 4:12-19. Cf. Jn. 16:1-4.
 - 2) Persecution “goes with the territory” - Mk. 10:30; 2 Tim. 3:12.
2. What we can do to avoid despair and defeat.
- a. Live above reproach - 1 Pt. 2:11,12,15. E.g. Tit. 2:9,10.
 - b. Lead a quiet life, etc. - 1 Thess. 4:11,12.
 - c. Exercise wisdom in relation to outsiders - Col. 4:5,6. Cf. Mt. 10:16.
 - d. Live “in” the world without being “of” the world. Cf. Jn. 17:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:9,10.
 - e. Never be ashamed to be counted as one of Christ’s people - Mt. 10:32,33; Ac. 5:41.
 - f. Rejoice, recognizing the result of hardship - Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pt. 1:6-9; 4:13.
 - 1) The Christian not only expects, but glories in tribulations - Rom. 5:3,4.
 - 2) Cf. Mt. 5:10-12; Phil. 1:29; 3:10.
 - g. Rely on *God’s* strength and help - 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 2 Tim. 4:17,18; 1 Pt. 5:6-11; 2 Pt. 2:9. Cf. the message of Revelation - e.g. Rev. 2:10,11.

B. *Inside* the church.

1. What can disillusion us.
 - a. Those who set a bad example for us in the public worship assemblies - e.g. 1 Cor. 11:17-22; 14:26-40.
 - b. Those who are confused doctrinally - 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1,2; etc.
 - c. Those who are fainthearted, weak, etc. - 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6,11.
 - d. Those who do not love Christ as they ought - Rev. 2:4. Cf. Mt. 24:12.
 - e. Those who are lukewarm - Rev. 3:15,16.
 - f. Those who are hypocritical - Gal. 2:11-13.
 - g. Those who only wear the name of Christ, without the reality - 1 Jn. 2:3,4.
 - h. Those who exclude us - Jas. 2:1-9.
 - i. Those who betray us - 2 Tim. 4:10,16.
 - j. Those who are selfish and dishonest - Ac. 5:1-11.
 - k. Those who are motivated by ego and ambition - Phil. 1:15,16; 2:21; 3 Jn. 9,10.
 - l. Those who are immoral - 2 Cor. 12:21; Jas. 4:1-4.
 - m. Those who act worse than the world - 1 Cor. 5:1,2; 1 Tim. 5:8.
 - n. Those who completely renounce Christ - Hb. 6:6; 10:29; 2 Pt. 2:21,22.
 - o. Those who pervert the faith of others with error and unsound teaching.
 - 1) Jesus warned about false teachers - Mt. 7:15-20.
 - 2) Jesus’ apostles did the same - 2 Thess. 2:3-5; 1 Tim. 4:1,2; 2 Tim. 4:3,4.
 - 3) The revelation of Jesus Christ constitutes a *standard of truth* - Jn. 8:32; Eph. 1:13; 1 Pt. 1:22-25.
 - a) That standard can be deviated from - 1 Cor. 4:6; Jas. 5:19,20; 2 Jn. 9.
 - b) It had been deviated from even before the close of the New Testament period - Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 1:6 (cf. 6:20,21; 2 Tim. 2:18); 1 Jn. 2:18,19. E.g. 1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Tim. 2:17,18; etc.
 - 4) To succumb to false teaching is:
 - a) To have one’s mind “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).
 - b) To be troubled by a perversion of the gospel - Gal. 1:7.
 - c) To be bewitched - Gal. 3:1.

- d) To be hindered from obeying the truth - Gal. 5:7.
- e) To be cheated through philosophy and empty deceit - Col. 2:8.
- f) To be defrauded of our reward - Col. 2:18.
- g) To be made a captive - 2 Tim. 3:6,7.
- h) To be subverted - Tit. 1:10,11.
- 5) The seriousness of false teaching is indicated by its description as a “cancer” which destroys the victim’s faith - 2 Tim. 2:17,18.
- 6) Times of error and apostasy are “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Cf. “perils among false brethren” (2 Cor. 11:26).
- 7) The *insidiousness* of false teaching multiplies its damage - 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Pt. 2:1-3. Cf. Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 Jn. 2:26; Jd. 4; etc.
- p. Those who are unwilling to live and work peaceably with other Christians.
 - 1) Dissension among Christians takes many forms:
 - a) Unfortunate, but necessary doctrinal conflict - e.g. Ac. 15:1,2.
 - b) Sharp differences of judgment - e.g. Ac. 15:36-40.
 - c) Mere carnal strife — divisiveness, factionalism, etc. Cf. Rom. 16:17,18; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:14; Tit. 3:10,11; etc.
 - 2) Contemplate the potential for disillusionment of new Christians at Corinth! E.g. 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4; 6:1-8; 2 Cor. 12:20.
 - 3) Discord is demonic in origin (cf. Jas. 3:13-18; etc.), and Jesus knew the devastating effect it would have on potential disciples - Jn. 13:34,35; 17:20,21.
- 2. What we can do to avoid despair and defeat.
 - a. Go and make other disciples - Mt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15. Those who are actively involved in personal evangelism somehow have less time and inclination to bicker with their brethren.
 - b. Test for truth, and hold it at all costs - 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Jn. 4:1.
 - c. Be wholesomely independent, not excessively concerned with the approval of “important” persons, institutions, etc. - Eph. 4:14. Contrast Jn. 5:44.
 - d. Keep our own lives in order - Mt. 7:1-5; Gal. 6:4. Contrast Mt. 23:4.
 - e. Be genuinely forgiving and concerned to *help* our brethren - Mt. 18:21-35; 2 Thess. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:25,26.
 - f. Endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).
 - g. *Love* our brethren genuinely - 1 Pt. 2:17; 4:8; 1 Jn. 3:18.
 - h. Rely on *God’s* strength and help - 2 Cor. 3:4,5.

C. With *self*.

- 1. What can disillusion us.
 - a. Residual doubt as to “the certainty of those things in which [we] were instructed” (Lk. 1:4).
 - b. The continued presence of sin in our lives.
 - 1) Satan does not merely give up on us - 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; 1 Pt. 5:8. Cf. Lk. 4:13.
 - 2) Old habits die hard. We will not completely negate years of conditioning at once.
 - 3) We will succumb to temptation and sin, perhaps frequently at first - 1 Jn. 1:8-2:2.
 - c. The difficulty of the new.
 - 1) A certain amount of apprehension attends most new endeavors.
 - 2) It is somewhat uncomfortable to “break in” new habits.

- 3) Radical changes in lifestyle, routine, time use, and even weekly schedule are not always easy to make — e.g. the situation of the person who has never attended church services regularly.
 - 4) The vast number of new things to learn and do may seem overwhelming.
 - d. Fluctuation of feelings.
 - 1) We may find it difficult to “feel” forgiven.
 - 2) We may not “feel” religious, spiritual, etc.
 - 3) We may find we do not always “want” to do what is right.
 - e. Perplexity, difficulty of discerning what is true, right. Cf. 2 Pt. 3:16.
 - f. God’s chastening - Hb. 12:5-11.
 - g. The possibility of setbacks, serious lapses - e.g. Ac. 8:9-13,18-24.
 - h. The possibility of complete apostasy from the faith - Mt. 13:20-22.
 - 1) The Christian is in danger of “drifting” - Hb. 2:1; 4:1; etc.
 - 2) Such departure from the faith may begin surprisingly quickly - e.g. Gal. 1:6.
2. What we can do to avoid despair and defeat.
- a. Maintain a sane, pragmatic attitude.
 - 1) *Cautiousness*.
 - a) Watchfulness, soberness - Mt. 26:41; 1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pt. 1:13.
 - b) Heedfulness - 1 Cor. 10:12.
 - c) Guardedness with respect to the heart - Prov. 4:23. Cf. Mk. 7:20-23.
 - d) Prudence - Mt. 10:16. Cf. Lk. 16:8.
 - e) Circumspection - Eph. 5:15-17.
 - 2) *Introspection*.
 - a) Spiritual-mindedness - Mt. 6:19-21,24 (cf. Lk. 12:20,21). Cf. Mt. 16:23; 22:21; Lk. 2:49; Jn. 6:27; Rom. 8:5,6.
 - b) Self-examination - 2 Cor. 13:5.
 - c) Meditation - Phil. 4:8.
 - d) “Consideration” of Christ - Hb. 12:1-3.
 - b. Live for God one day at a time - Mt. 6:33,34.
 - 1) Whatever the future may hold, we can serve God faithfully until bedtime today.
 - 2) Today’s duties will be no greater than we can fulfill.
 - c. Aspire to excellence, not mediocrity.
 - 1) Not merely followers, but *close* followers. Cf. Lk. 22:54.
 - 2) Not merely hearers, but *doers* - Mt. 7:24-27.
 - 3) Not merely learners, but learners *growing* in obedience - 1 Tim. 4:15. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:7.
 - 4) Not merely sowers, but *bountiful* sowers - 2 Cor. 9:6. Cf. Gal. 6:7,8.
 - d. Ask, seek, knock - Mt. 7:7,8.
 - e. Take time for what matters most - Lk. 10:38-42.
 - f. Persist in prayer - Lk. 18:1-8.
 - g. Rely on God’s strength and help.
 - 1) God will provide our defense against Satan’s assaults.
 - a) We are not helpless before Satan - 1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 6:10-13; 2 Thess. 3:3; Jas. 4:7. Cf. Eph. 4:27; 1 Pt. 5:9.
 - b) The Christian is on the side of victory over evil - Rom. 16:20.
 - 2) God displays His strength through our weakness and need.

- a) There is more to the Christian's life than externals might suggest - 2 Cor. 4:8-10; 6:8-10. Cf. 4:16-18.
- b) When we are "weak," then are we "strong" - 2 Cor. 12:9,10.
- c) God is our Helper in time of need - Hb. 4:16. Cf. Phil. 4:13.
- d) In Christ, there is triumph and peace - Jn. 14:1,27; 16:33.

II. COUNTING THE COST

A. *Following Jesus.*

1. God invites "followers" - Jn. 12:26.
2. But many have started to follow, then changed their minds - Jn. 6:66.

B. *Following through.*

1. Jesus warned: "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62).
2. We would do well to "remember Lot's wife" (Lk. 17:32). Cf. Gen. 19:26.
3. It is not merely the beginning of the Christian life that matters — the end result is more important - Gal. 3:3; Phil. 1:6.
4. All's well that *ends* well!
5. Constancy, endurance, patience are required - Gal. 6:9; Hb. 10:35-39.

C. *Counting the cost.*

1. As with Jesus Himself, the Christian's glory lies beyond his cross - Lk. 14:25-27. Cf. 24:25,26.
2. Not to count the cost of discipleship is foolish - Lk. 14:28-33.

D. *Making the commitment.*

1. Becoming a Christian involves making the most radical commitment - Rev. 2:10.
2. The marriage commitment comes closest to illustrating the depth of the Christian's commitment to Christ. Cf. Eph. 5:22-33.
3. It has been suggested that Christ is asking:
 - a. Will you trust Me with your entire life? Cf. 2 Cor. 3:4,5.
 - b. Will you entrust yourself to My family? Cf. Rom. 12:5.
 - c. Will you "wear the towel"? Cf. Jn. 13:3-17.
4. For the Christian, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:7,8.

E. *Pressing toward the goal.*

1. Whatever the present "light affliction" may be, it does not compare with the "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).
2. The Christian's "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20,21).

3. Meanwhile, he must adopt a sound, reasonable attitude toward the exigencies of this life — and he must “press toward the goal” (Phil. 3:12-14).
4. We must look to “Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hb. 12:1-3).
5. Ultimately, the Christian looks to the victory of the resurrection - 1 Cor. 15:50-58.

Conclusion

- A. It is important not only for the prospective convert, but also for the Christian himself to contemplate *the significance of being a Christian*. In contrast to whatever he was before, the Christian is:
1. A *new* person, a new “creation” for whom all things have become new - 2 Cor. 5:17.
 2. A person who uniquely *belongs* to God - 1 Cor. 6:20.
 3. A person of *faith* who lives by trust in God - 2 Cor. 5:7.
 4. A *consecrated* person who lives a pure life - 1 Pt. 1:15.
 5. A *secure* person whose salvation is protected by God’s power - 1 Pt. 1:5.
 6. A person who *serves* God - 1 Thess. 1:9.
 7. A person with relationships and responsibilities to *other* Christians - Rom. 12:5.
 8. A *realistic* person who has counted the cost and made a true commitment - Lk. 14:27.
- B. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

AFTERWORD

If Christians themselves fail to understand what being a Christian is all about, trouble cannot be far off.

Long ago the apostle Paul prayed for his brethren in Ephesus: “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe” (Eph. 1:17-19).

There is surely nothing the Lord’s people need today any more than enlightenment about these very things. Like Paul’s brethren, we need a deeper understanding of what is involved in our *hope* as the saints of God. We need a more glorious vision of God’s *inheritance* in us. And we need a stronger perception of God’s great *power* toward us, His own special people.

We ought, continually, to pray and study our Bibles and meditate on what it means to wear the Lord’s name and be His disciples right now. If these outlines have prompted you to think more richly about who you are in Jesus Christ, then they have done what I hoped they might.

If you have any comment, question, or criticism regarding these lessons, I would be happy to hear from you.

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