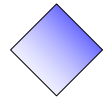


The Voice of Truth



June 8, 2014

What Is A Christian?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Those who live for the Lord are called by many different terms in the scriptures: brethren, saints, disciples, and children of God. Perhaps no term denotes one who is "of Christ" or belongs to Christ, better than the term "Christian". The term Christian appears three times in the New Testament (**1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28**). But, "What Is A Christian?"

A Christian is a disciple of Christ (**Acts 11:26**). A disciple is a learner (**2 Timothy 2:15**). God's people were always required to learn God's ways (**Deuteronomy 5:1; 31:12**). Christ tells His disciples to be learners of God's word (**Matthew 11:29**). Paul tells us to learn in what is written (**1 Corinthians 4:6**). Christianity is a taught religion (**John 6:44-45; Matthew 28:18-20**). One does not become a Christian through dreams or visions (**John 8:30-32**) or by direct working of the Holy Spirit. If conversion is produced by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the sinner, then obviously men do not need a Bible. If men can be converted without the Bible, then they can be converted without faith (**Romans 10:17**). The process of becoming and being a Christian is a learning process (**2 Peter 3:18**).

What is a Christian? He is a follower of Christ! Jesus left an example of life to be followed (**1 Peter 2:21**). Christians are "To walk, even as he walked," (**1 John 2:6**). The life Christ lived is not just to be admired, talked about, or sung

about, but is to be followed. Christ left us example in all things: obedience (**John 4:34; Hebrews 5:9**); purity (**1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 1:9; 1 John 3:3; Romans 12:9**). Jesus is our example in serving others (**Matthew 20:28**), in forgiving others (**Colossians 3:13**), in the work of saving souls (**Luke 19:10**), and in His love for His fellowman (**John 13:34**).

What is a Christian? A Christian is one who is not ashamed (**1 Peter 4:16**). He is not ashamed of the Lord's word (**Mark 8:38**). He is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (**Romans 1:16**). I'm so afraid that the church today is stepping back from what Paul said in **Romans 1:16**. Today we are finding people that are ashamed of it. And someone will say, "Not me, I'm not ashamed of it." Why aren't you living by the truth? Why aren't you practicing truth? One cannot be saved if he/she is ashamed of Christ. To be ashamed of the gospel is to be ashamed of God, Who is the Author of it. He is not ashamed to be part of the religious minority (**Matthew 7:13-14**).

The Christian is one who glorifies God (**1 Peter 4:16**). He is not ashamed for the world to know where he stands and for what he stands. The song "I'm Not Ashamed To Own My Lord," expresses the true sentiment of the Christian. ♦

GOD HAS A RIGHT

Author unknown

- God has a right to a definite part of your time
 - He has the power to take all of it.
- God has a right to a definite part of your money
 - He has the power to take all of it.
- God has a right to be glorified through your tongue
 - He has the power to take all of it.
- God has a right to be honored through your influence
 - He has the power to take all of it.
- God has a right to your life
 - He has the power to take all of it. ♦

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“Increasing In Strength”

By Jarrod Jacobs

Spiritual growth is something that is required of all children of God. Unlike our involuntary physical growth, one can control his/her spiritual growth, and does so on a daily basis. In fact, the Bible even commands men and women to grow spiritually. The apostle Peter wrote, *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen”* (**I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 3:18**). In the book of Hebrews, the Jewish Christians were chastised and rebuked for not growing as they should. They were told, *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (**Heb. 5:12-14**).

Based on these passages, we can learn some vital points concerning spiritual growth. We learn that spiritual growth: **1)** Begins at an early spiritual age. Those who are new babes in Christ can and must “grow.” **2)** One grows through a diet of “milk” (or “the first principles”) and then later advances to the “meat” of God’s word. **3)** One grows from a babe in Christ to mature in Christ through “exercising” and using the senses. **4)** One’s growth and maturity in Christ is seen as one is better able to discern “both good and evil.”

Now that we understand these points, let us study about one specific case of spiritual growth in the New Testament. Saul (Paul) is a prime example of one who grew spiritually, and grew fairly quickly in the faith. We find the record of his conversion in **Acts 9**. There, Christ told him to go to Damascus and it would be told him what he “*must do*” to be saved (**Acts 9:3-6**). Saul entered the city, and for three days and nights fasted and prayed before God (**v. 9, 11**). Once Ananias told him what he must do, Saul was baptized for the remission of his sins (**v. 17-18**). Then, “*he took food and was strengthened*” (**v. 19**).

Following this, we see Saul with the disciples at Damascus. Notice what happened then: *“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in*

Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (**Acts 9:20-22**).

Notice that in the text of **Acts 9:19-22**, the words “strengthened” and “strength” were used in reference to Saul. Do these words refer to the same thing? No. One time, Saul “*was strengthened*” after having received food. Remember, he had gone without food or drink for three straight days (**Acts 9:9**). The next time the word was used, we find Saul increasing “*the more in strength*” as a result of his preaching Christ (**v. 20**), and confounding (baffling) the Jews (**v. 22**).

Now, what was the difference between the first use of the word “strength” or “strengthened” and the second? The difference was that Saul was strengthened physically the first time, and spiritually the second time.

How did Saul increase “*the more in* (spiritual) *strength*”? It came through his learning and then his proclaiming the truth concerning Christ. Two, it came through his obedience and standing for the truth even when it contradicted his former lifestyle (**Acts 9:21**). It also came through controversy, i.e., confounding the Jews concerning Christ. What we read in **Acts 9:20-22** is a specific application of **Hebrews 5:14** which tells us spiritual growth requires us having our “*senses exercised to discern both good and evil*.”

A problem that is plaguing the Lord’s church in many places today is a lack of maturity on the part of Christians. Too many congregations have 20, 30, and 40 year-old babies when it comes to spiritual growth. These people cannot teach, they cannot lead the worship services, they cannot talk to someone about their soul one-on-one, they have little interest in spiritual matters, they know very little about the Bible, (other than what the preacher has said) and they certainly want nothing to do with controversy or with having to maintain the lines God has drawn against sin and error, i.e., “*discerning good and evil*” (See also: **Ezek. 22:26**)! It seems rather than increasing “*the more in strength*” as Saul did, they are satisfied to be baptized, and then “live and let live.” They are spiritual weaklings (some call them “spiritual invertebrates” — no backbone!); spiritual babies who need to be rebuked for their lack of

Continued from Page Two, "Increasing In Strength"

growth (**Heb. 5:12-14**).

Brethren, we cannot have this attitude if we are going to be what God wants us to be. Let us have the fire and zeal of Saul. In fact, he would later write to Titus and say that Christ died *"that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"* (**Tit. 2:14**). He wrote the Romans that Christians must be, among other things, *"fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"* (**Rom. 12:11**). We will not be what God wants us to be if we do not have that fire and fervor to stand for God's word, to proclaim it far and wide, and let the chips fall where they may!

It is past time that we got busy on our spiritual growth. Brethren, this is not something that you wait for like a teenager's "growth spurt." Spiritual growth is something we must work at on a daily basis.

Why did Saul increase *"the more in strength"*? It was not because someone else did his work, nor because he let people think what they wanted to about Christ and His church. He did not grow as a result of "taking his seat" and waiting for strangers to walk in the door at Damascus or Jerusalem. He did not grow by saying that he and the Jews were "worshipping the same God." Saul stands out as a good example for all of us, because when we do what he did, we will grow as he did!

Was this all Saul did in order to become strong spiritually? Of course, not! We see Saul (Paul) consistently in prayer with God (**Eph. 1:15-23, 3:13-21; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3; I Thess. 1:2; II Tim. 1:3**). We see sacrifices Saul (Paul) made for the Lord (**Acts 15:25-26, 16:22-23, 21:13, 23:12-13; II Cor. 11:8, 23-28, 12:15; Col. 4:10, 18**). We also find Saul (Paul) concerned about his brethren, and being a good example toward them (**II Cor. 11:28; I Thess. 2:2-12**). All of these things played a part in Saul's spiritual growth; and in **Acts 9:20-22**, we find a living example of

Hebrews 5:14.

By the way, how is our growth? Are we still a ways off from where we would like to be as a Christian? I know of no person who would say they have grown as much as needed, do you? Therefore, let us get to work and be busy in our spiritual growth.

Let us follow the righteous example of Saul (Paul) who shows us what true strength is (**I Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17**). Let us not merely tolerate, but demand that the strong, sound preaching of the gospel thunder forth from the pulpit. Let us challenge ourselves to bring others to Christ by explaining the truth to them. Let us not back down from the devil when he rears his head and challenges us. Let us not apologize for controversy between truth and error. Let us, with a determined resolve, stand as Saul stood, and do what he did. Let us *"confound the Jews"* of our day and discern both good and evil that we might lead others to Christ. *"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."* (**Gal. 6:9**)

Conclusion

Who knows the untold numbers of people that came to the Lord as a result of Saul's (Paul's) work (**Acts 19:10, 28:23-24, 30-31**, etc.). But, he could have done nothing had he sat on the sidelines and been satisfied to occupy his space, and not challenge error in her strongholds and citadels. Had he not *"increased ... in strength"* in his early days as a Christian, he may not have done all that he did.

You may never (physically) grow more than five feet tall, but you (and I) can be giants for the Lord when we increase in our spiritual strength and grow as a Christian should!

"Not to know is ignorance, but to refuse to learn is pride." - L.E. Sloan Credit: The Old Paths - 11/28/10 ♦

HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

If you want friends — **be friendly.**
 If you want someone to smile — **smile.**
 If you want courtesy — **be courteous.**
 If you want knowledge — **study.**
 If you want a good name — **live right.**
 If you want to reap well — **sow well.**
 If you want to be a Christian — **obey God's word.**
 If you want to go to heaven — **live a Christian life ♦**

A pint of example is worth a barrel full of advice. ♦

"Show Me Your Faith..."

By Jonathan L. Perz

In exposing the folly of the idea of faith without works, James writes, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:17-18). Could not the same challenge be directed toward many professing Christianity today?

Do our works match our professed faith in Christ Jesus?

In one sense perhaps we could argue that they do. You see, despite the inspired teachings of Jesus, many have chosen to go their own way and subscribe to man's doctrines instead of putting their faith in the word of God (Rom. 10:17). For instance, many who profess a faith in Christ Jesus ardently oppose the idea that baptism (immersion in water) is necessary for salvation. Jesus plainly said it is necessary (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20). His apostles plainly practiced it as necessary (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21, et al). So, those who do not believe that

baptism is necessary are showing their faith by their works. Their faith is clearly in something other than the teachings of Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles.

On the other hand, many who say they have faith and who have been baptized also demonstrate their faith by their works, or lack thereof. Paul instructed Titus that "our people also learn to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:8, 14). He also stated we should always abound in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58), works which we were created for (Eph. 2:10). This is an unfortunate testimony on the status of faith in our day.

So, not only has the faith of many been rendered vain by the false teaching of men, the faith of others has been rendered dead by the absence of works to demonstrate their faith.

Don't just talk about your faith! Show your faith! Prove that your faith is indeed in Him and not in men!

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

The Nature Of The Kingdom Of God

IS NOT

- 1. Of This World (John 18:36).
- 2. Eating and Drinking (Rom. 14:17).
- 3. In Word (1 Cor. 4:20).
- 4. With Observation (Luke 17:20).

IS

- 1. In Power (1 Cor. 4:20).
- 2. Righteousness (Rom. 14:17).
- 3. Peace (Rom. 14:17).
- 4. Joy (Rom. 14:17).
- 5. Within You (Luke 17:21).
- 6. Unshakable (Heb. 12:28). ♦

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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How to Contact Us

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month