

## **THE GIFT OF SALVATION**

The “Salvific” Life

March 1, 2009

The Characteristics of a Christian

Romans 12: James 1:19-22; 2:8-12; I John 4:11, 19-21

What makes a Christian, Christian? Is it the clothes they wear, the church they attend, the language they use, or the books they read? Is being Christian wearing a crucifix around your neck, owning and carrying a large Bible, or sporting a “W.W.J.D.” bracelet or anklet? The answer is while Christians may do none, some, or all of those things, none of those things makes one a Christian. A Christian isn’t Christian because they look a certain way, say a specific thing, or worship at a particular place. Yet, when you meet them, especially if you are a Christian yourself, there is something so unique and distinct about them that you end up asking each other, “Are you a Christian?” This has happened to me more times than I can remember. What is it about that person or those people that suggests to me that they may be Christian just from a short encounter in time with them?

Without going to the extremes that I have seen in the past, there should be something about you that separates you from this counter-Christian culture. In a world that is so anti-Bible and anti-Christian, people who adhere to the ways of the Bible and attempt to be Christ-like should stand out like a new car in a junk yard and not be camouflaged on the canvas of this culture. I’ll never forget a fellow manager telling me (when I should have been somewhere preaching) that as a manager, I was like a square peg in a round whole. I was offended at the time, but in retrospect it was my Christian characteristics convicting my co-worker who had no conscious or compassion and whose only motivation was climbing the cut-throat ladder of corporate competition. I am reminded by I Peter 2:9 that I am supposed to be different. I am part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a “peculiar” people, and a holy nation; that should show forth the praises of Him that has brought me out of darkness into the marvelous light. Have you ever thought about it? What makes you, or should make you, so Christian?

### **Christians operate from a different mindset.**

The apostle Paul begs every believer, that knows what God has done in and through them by Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us, to return the favor. That in return for Christ dying for us we should not count it robbery to live for him. To be living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, is the least we can do. We make an exchange. We receive the blessing and payment for punishment and penalty that His life represents and in return we use the balance of our days in His service. Since Jesus bought us with His blood, we belong to Him. We are no longer in charge of what we do, where we go, what we say, or how we act. We give that up because that is our reasonable service for all that Christ has done for us.

Since He is now in control, and we are His servants, we do our best impersonation of Him. Since we have access to His spirit, we pray that His spirit will fill us and control us. We seek to do his will and not our own. We strive to bring glory and honor to the name and person of God and not seek glory for ourselves. We love others like he loves us. We forgive the unforgivable.

We return evil for good. We esteem others higher than ourselves. In essence, a good rule of thumb when it comes to following God for most people is doing the opposite of what you would normally do. Since you have the mind of Christ you don't think the same thoughts. You don't see people the same way, nor listen like you use to. But now it's all filtered through the word of God. We really do consider what Christ would do in any and every situation. We now take our cues from the scriptures and not from the streets. Christ becomes our example, not culture. Not only would you do the opposite of yourself, but do the opposite of what you see. If you see hate and neglect, then maybe you should give love and affirmation. If you see selfishness and self-serving then you should be selfless and a servant of all.

The most wonderful aspect of living for God is knowing that you are in His will. First of all, it means you are being an obedient child to a loving Father. But it is also good because, God blesses things, according to His will. Paul reminds us that renewing our minds towards the things of God will ultimately place us in God's pleasing and perfect will. There is nothing more Christian, more Christ-like than pleasing God the Father and living constantly in His perfect will.

### **Christian living is guided by spiritual principles.**

Living for God is so radically different that living for yourself. When you make the switch from living for yourself and your flesh to living by the power of God's spirit, it is obvious to everyone who knew you before. This is what I have found to be true: it takes God and His power to be a Christian. No one would do the things God asks us to do without God. You wouldn't feed, love, or pray for your enemy. You wouldn't bless those who curse you. You wouldn't repay good for evil. You wouldn't offer a person another opportunity to slap you on one side of the face after they have already slapped you on the other side. Only by God's spirit and God's word do these principles ever even come to mind.

Even with God's help, obeying God's instructions can be difficult. To which I supply the following suggestion of advice. Always keep in mind that anything God asks us to do, God has already done it. God never asks us to do anything He hasn't done. God continues to love, bless and pray for His enemies. The Bible is clear that God shines on the just and the unjust, because God shows no favoritism. God returns evil for good. If you're asking when or how did God do this, take a long look in the mirror. The reason why you can act Godly to others is because God used others to act Godly towards you. Better still, God loved, helped, blessed, bled and died for you while you were an enemy of God. That is a spiritual principle. We can love God by being obedient to him and living spiritual lives according to spiritual principles because God first loved us. Oh, how he loves you and me. He gave his life. What more could he give. Oh, how he loves you and me.