

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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What Is a Christian?

One is sometimes shocked by the use of the word Christian. People are called Christians who do not believe in Christ. On one occasion I heard someone say that Gandhi was a Christian! This use of the term shows that men often have erroneous views of its significance. Sometimes men contemplate no more by the term than moral goodness or outstanding concern for the welfare of men.

A name designates. Names in the Biblical record had great significance as the following indicates: Adam, man; Eve, mother of living; Samuel, asked of God; Isaac, laughter; Abram, exalted father; Abraham, father of a multitude; Bethel, house of God. The word Christian designates a person in his relation to Christ.

This name was not given in derision, as some are wont to say, but rather is God given and determined. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Paul disowned a term of derision when it was applied to him. He was charged as being a ringleader of "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5), but in

answering the charge, he said, "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call, a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets" (Acts 25:14). He served the Lord in the Way, but he refused to accept the sect designation.

Later, when Agrippa by implication called him a Christian, Paul accepted the designation. "And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these bonds" (Acts 26:28-29). When in derision Paul was called a Nazarene, he disowned the designation, but he accepted the name Christian when it was applied to him. It follows that the name was a divinely appointed one, for Paul knew how it was first used; he was at Antioch when the disciples were first called Christians.

"Called" in Acts 11:26, is the same term used of Divine actions in other passages. Joseph was warned of God in a dream to take Jesus from Egypt to northern Palestine (Matt. 2:22). Simeon looked for the Christ and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:26). An angel warned Cornelius in a dream to send for Peter (Acts 10:22). Noah was warned about the impending flood that would destroy the world (Heb. 11:7). All these terms are from the same word in the original. We are forced to the conclusion that when men were called Christians, the calling was by divine appointment, not by human contempt.

It was noted that disciples were called Christians. As a disciple, a Christian is viewed from the standpoint of a learner or follower in relation to a teacher. Jesus is the teacher from whom we receive instructions and seek to be what He is.

Christians are also called saints when considered in the light of the manner of life they conduct. Saint is from the term which means set apart to the service of God, consecration involves purity of heart and conduct. Numerous passages refer to disciples as saints (I Cor. 1:2, Rom. 1:7, et. al.).

The New Testament is called the faith (Jude 3) and in relation to this body of truth Christians are sometimes referred to as believers (Acts 4:32, 5:14, 2 Cor. 6:15). Jesus is the object of our faith (John 20:30-31), but what we believe is revealed in the New Testament (Rom. 10:17).

In relation to one another, Christians are called brethren (I Pet. 1:22, I Thess. 4:9, I John 3:14). Being sons and daughters of God, Christians sustain to one another the relation of brethren (2 Cor. 6:17-18, I John 3:1-3), and in this family Jesus is the elder brother (Heb. 2:11). Love should be characteristic of the feeling and conduct we have toward one another as brethren.

In relation to God, Christians are children (I John 3:1). God is the Father and head of this spiritual family which is His House (I Tim. 3:15). In this family, the children are subject to the Father through Jesus, whom he has appointed over His house (Heb. 3:6).

Christians have service and sacrifices to perform before God, and in this capacity they are designated as priests. "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5). When they were loosed from their sins by the blood of Christ, Christians were made to be a kingdom and priests (Rev. 1:6). Consequently, they are referred to as a royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:9).

How does one become a Christian? He is begotten by the word of God through obedience to the truth (I Pet. 1:3, 22-25). He becomes obedient to the Christ (Heb. 5:8-9) in believing, repenting of sins, confessing the name of Jesus, and being immersed in His name for the remission of sins (Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, Rom. 10:10, Acts 2:38). No one who has failed to render obedience can properly be called a Christian.

- Clinton D. Hamilton (1961)

Still Smoking?

As a former smoker, I know how easy it is to ignore messages from the news media and the pulpit that discourage smoking. It is difficult for most of us to be objective in considering that which condemns what we want to practice. As someone as well noted, Affection is a briber of the judgment; and it is hard for a man to admit a reason against the thing he loves, or to confess the force

of an argument against an interest." Convincing Christians to give up tobacco wouldn't be nearly so hard if they could first be convinced to face the issue objectively and with an open mind. And yet, of all people, the Christian should recognize the difficulty of dealing with prejudiced and closed minds. As a follower of Christ, he knows that personal preferences must be subordinated in seeking to please the Lord. The smoking Christian owes it to himself and to the Lord to consider the evidence relative to smoking.

When he does, he will certainly consider such facts as those recently released by the Surgeon General's office in *The Health Consequences Of Smoking*. In The Forward section of that report, Dr. E. N. Brandt, Jr., Assistant Sec. for Health, writes: "Cigarette smoking is the major single cause of cancer mortality in the U.S. Tobacco's contribution to all cancer deaths is estimated to be 30 percent... Cigarette smokers have total cancer death rates two times greater than do nonsmokers. Heavy smokers have a three to four times greater excess risk of cancer mortality... There is no single action an individual can take to reduce action risk of cancer more effectively than quitting smoking..." According to statistics released from the Public Health Service research, lung cancer, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and coronary heart disease are the principal causes of death attributable to cigarette smoking, but they are not the only ones. They have concluded that the rate of early death from all causes ranges from 40 to 120 percent higher for smokers than nonsmokers, depending upon the amount smoked daily. It is not without good reason that the word "Warning" appears on the cigarette package. Those who are told

to glorify God in the body (1 Cor. 6:20) should seriously consider the health hazards of smoking.

Equally important for the smoking Christian to consider is the possibility of enslavement to tobacco. To be brought under the power of a habit is to violate the principle of 1 Cor. 6:12. For the smoker who wants to know, "What about the glutton, the coke-holic, the coffee-holic?"— the same principle applies equally to them! With Paul, every Christian must resolve, "...I will not be brought under the power of any." Rather, "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage..." (1 Cor. 9:27).

Finally, the Christian smoker must consider the possibility that smoking may hurt his influence. Shouldn't every Christian be "an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life..."? (1 Tim. 4:12) Justified or not, many are offended by the smell, the pollution, and being forced to inhale second-hand smoke. Honestly now — everything considered, wouldn't it be better if Christians didn't smoke?

- Dan S. Shipley (1982)

Wanted - People:

Who are as interested in the church on Sunday and Wednesday nights as they are for Sunday morning.

Who are as liberal with their money as with their advice.

Who are willing to deny themselves in order to serve God.

Who love God more than pleasures (II Timothy 3:4).

Who are not only church members but also church workers.

Who are willing to let church work interfere with their work and pleasure.

Who can be half as enthusiastic about a gospel meeting as about the Super Bowl or World Series.

Who are as anxious to tell others the good news of the gospel as they are to tell them the latest gossip.

Who are willing to practice in their lives what they say and believe in their hearts.

Who aspire to be leaders in the church purely for the good they can do for others and the greater service they can render to God.

Who can object to something without becoming objectionable, and who can disagree without becoming disagreeable.

> You can't give to others what you don't have yourself.

> You can't lead others where you haven't been yourself.

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Marvel of the Scriptures!"* (text: Psalm 19:7-11); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*

OUR GOSPEL MEETING: July 27 – Aug. 1, Sunday through Friday, with Jeremy Paschall preaching. Sunday at our regularly scheduled times, and Monday through Friday at 7:00 p.m.