

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A Christian and a Lost World

The great mass of people make few, if any claims to being religious, but such irreligious people need to be brought to Christ. This is necessary if their lives are to have real meaning and if they are to have hope of eternal life. Amid the great mass of people who are lost there are Christians who sustain a relationship to them. This relationship is treated in the book of Philippians, and it is to this that this article directs attention. What is a Christian in relation to a lost world?

First of all, *Christians appear as moral discerners* (Philippians 1:9-11). Necessary to his moral discernment, a Christian must abound in knowledge. This necessitates diligent study and meditation. This understanding and knowledge of truth enables a Christian to be in the position of distinguishing things that differ, so that he may put his approval on the things that excel in their value. Being thus filled with knowledge and discernment, a Christian can have the wonderful fruits of righteousness. When one makes the proper differentiation relative to matters of moral or spiritual nature, he, the Christian, can be sincere (pure), void of offense (not stumbling oneself nor causing others to), and filled with the fruits of righteousness (the state of heart and life resulting from yielding to God's will). A Christian is a debtor to the extent that he should demonstrate to the lost world that moral and spiritual discernment makes life mean what God intended it should.

Next, *Christians' lives must be consistent with the gospel* (Philippians 1:27). The expression manner of life refers to one's conduct; it must become the gospel of Christ. One will be met with fierce opposition at times, but he must be controlled by the gospel in such times. When one, as a Christian, is not frightened in the face of determined opposition, but lives the gospel under such conditions, his conduct is an evident token or sign of the opposer's loss of well-being and of the believer's deliverance or salvation. Because a Christian is a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20), he cannot, consistent with this heavenly citizenship, mind earthly things (Philippians 3:19). Consequently, he must set his affections on things which are above -- where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1-3). If we hope to show the lost world the way of truth and righteousness, we must live what the gospel demands of the believers.

Christians are also lights in the midst of a lost world (Philippians 2:12-18). God works in Christians, to will and to work for His good pleasure. This happens when one yields himself to the mold or pattern of the gospel (Romans 6:17). The world in which the Christian lives is crooked (curved; refers to moral matters) and perverse (distorted or twisted in a moral or spiritual sense). For this reason, Christians should do everything without murmurings (showing one's displeasure or complaining) and questionings (reasonings within oneself, a mental rebellion against God). This lack of murmurings and questionings is necessary if Christians are to be blameless (without fault), harmless (unmixed in the sense that evil or sin is not consistently a part of their lives), and unblameable (without moral blemish or spot). If one's life is thus adorned, he will be a light in the world. Literally, the word light means light-giver, shining in the spiritual darkness of the world. As the will of Christ is obeyed in one's life, he shows to the world that light which causes men to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). Thus a Christian holds forth the word of life. He makes men see the word that gives life to men. One illumined by the word of life becomes a light-giver to the world. This is what God intended, for He prepared good works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10).

Christians should also give themselves to prayer (Philippians 4:6-7). Problems face every person, but a Christian has a different attitude than the person who walks without God. Christians are not distracted nor drawn in different directions, for their affections are above and their hearts are ruled by God. Consequently, in nothing are Christians anxious, but in everything with prayer and supplication they let their requests be made known to God. This they do with thanksgiving. Christians do all within their power, and then leave the rest to God, having made known their requests to Him. Why? Because they can cast all their cares upon the Lord, knowing that He cares for them (1 Peter 5:7). When one conducts himself according to this rule, he leaves the outcome with God, and inwardly he has the peace which passes understanding to guard his heart and thoughts in Christ (Philippians 4:7). This life of prayer and complete trust in God, with their consequent peace, have a tremendous effect on those who observe Christians. In relation to the lost world, each Christian should endeavor to show that calm, peace, and faith in God result in such a well-ordered and happy existence, even in the midst of trouble and trials that cause others to despair and faint.

- Clinton D. Hamilton (1924-1999), via Truth Magazine, April, 1961

Queries And Answers

Dear bro. Turner:

Does the church have a name? If so where may I find it?

Reply:

Webster says synonyms for "name" are "designation," "denomination," "appellation," "title," and "style." Name is the general term loosely embracing all the others. God's people are identified by such expressions as "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2) and, speaking of a plurality of congregations, "churches of Christ," (Romans 16:16). In these instances, the inspired writer saw fit to relate the "called-out people" (church) to owner or head (I doubt that a deliberate distinction was intended). In a loose and general sense, this gives God's people (collectively) a "name" — more than one name, in fact.

In the same vein, if I mistake not, the people of God are called (named?) "the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). In Hebrews 12:23, God's people are spoken of as "church of the firstborn" — and "firstborn ones" are under consideration — those who are born-again, NOT Jesus Christ, who was "first born". Here, characteristics of the people are emphasized. But I find, neither in these, nor in those names given in my first paragraph, an official label, or trademark, which God's people (collectively) must wear.

If there is any lesson here, with respect to "label", it would be that (a) we should describe God's people with accuracy, "calling" them only what they are (not after Luther, John the Baptist, etc.); and (b) God gives no one label for His church.

"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Does this argue that God's people must wear the title, "Church of Christ"? The "name" given here in context (vs. 10) is "Jesus Christ of Nazareth". By what right do we shorten it? The context further shows that it was "power" (or source of power) that was questioned, (Acts 4:7, 9) not some spoken "name". We have nothing here about a church name.

"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus — " (Colossians 3:17). Does this label the church? If so it is the "Church of the Lord Jesus". But the context shows this refers to (a) letting the word of Christ dwell in us; (b) singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord; (c) wives, submit to husbands, as it is fit in the Lord; (d) children obey parents, to please the Lord; and (e) servants, fear God, and work as to the Lord. This passage does not require a "label" on all we do, but calls upon us to live our whole life, "as unto the Lord" "to His glory".

Communication, especially in this day of "church" confusion, demands some means of identification. I speak of God's people as the church (called-out people) of (belonging to) Christ (the Lord) because I believe this accurately designates these people. "Of God" would be equally scriptural, but to the non-Christian public would be less exact. I do not switch about, using various scriptural designations, for this would be even more confusing to the public (Consider the problems of postal service, advertising a public meeting, etc.). In preaching, I emphasize identity, not some label.

- Robert F. Turner, Plain Talk, June, 1969

ONLY ONE THING IS NECESSARY

In telling mankind about the ministry of Christ, the New Testament informs us of the names of a few very close friends of Jesus who lived in Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem: Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha (John 11:1-5). During one of the Lord's travels, Martha welcomed Him into her home. Martha was "distracted with all her preparations" while her sister, Mary, "was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word." Evidently bothered by the fact that her sister was not helping her serve the guests, she spoke this to the Lord: "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." The Lord quickly gave her a lesson in priorities: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42). Most certainly her desire to be a good hostess was felt. But those concerns were causing her to miss something of much greater importance.

However many troublesome and distracting things there are in life, there is only ONE thing that is necessary, and her sister Mary had chosen that; it was a wise choice. Nothing could compare to the importance of listening to the words of the Lord! Later in life, as the two sisters remembered the events of this day with its opportunities, Martha would remember her distractions of serving family and guests, while Mary would remember sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word. Mary could cherish the activity that excelled ANY other in importance!

The primary importance of learning and obeying the word of God is often emphasized throughout the Bible. For example, when the Israelites suffered under the oppression of the wicked nations around them because of their own rebellions against God, they began clamoring for an earthly king to lead them, thinking that course would prevent their sufferings. But notice that the prophet God had sent to them instructed them "in the good and right way" invoking the "only one thing is necessary" rule: "Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away." (1 Samuel 12:24-25). Once again, the distractions of living, in this case their over-concern regarding political affairs, the drive for a new king, and the encroachment of neighboring nations, prompted them to abandon the one and only essential standard of life. What good would be accomplished when they failed to fear the Lord God and serve Him in truth with all their hearts? In their failure they would be "swept away."

It is quite common for people to gradually lose determination and dedication required to retain priority for spiritual precepts in their lives. Adam and Eve allowed this failure to destroy them, and it has continued in the world since their time. It is easy to allow the distractions of life, even necessary tasks, to trouble us and increase our anxiety (see Matthew 6:19-34) such that we lose our devotion to God and His word. Jesus Christ continues to call us back to the only one essential thing that will make everything else as

it should be: "and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30).

Friend, are you in the Lord's church today, where assembling with other Christians provides needed encouragement to love God and His word above all? Have you experienced the great benefit of this fellowship? We would love to help and encourage you today!

- Gary Smalley

- * "What you are going to be tomorrow, you are becoming today!"
 - * "God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, and acts with a hand that never fails!"
 - * "Someone has divided church members into three general classes: the wishbones, the jawbones, and the backbones. The wishbones languidly hope that the church will prosper without them. The jawbones do the criticizing. The backbones get under the load and carry it along. Which one are you?"
 - * "Happy is the person whose conduct does not raise a question in the minds of others as to where he stands!"
 - * "To be a Christian is to be transparent and truthful and vulnerable and brutally honest — it's not pretending to be someone you aren't!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)