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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 un-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 unblamable (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 the 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

Share a Quote ...

Unfortunately, the practice of reading the Bible to the assembled congregation has largely fallen into disrepute, possibly for two reasons: (a) a lack of skilled readers (in an age when reading itself has come on hard times); (b) a deficit of interest on the part of many listeners who have become mesmerized by too much visual entertainment, and so are bored with mere reading. The informed Bible student can not but be reminded of that day, after Judah had returned by Captivity, when the law of Moses was read publicly from early morning until mid-day, and the people stood respectfully, and wept upon hearing God's word (Nehemiah 8:1-12). As an aside, we must add that the Christian parent who reads aloud to his children is bestowing a blessing upon them that will pay rich dividends in years to come.

- Wayne Jackson, *Before I Die: Paul's Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (1 Timothy 4:13; pp.127-128).

A Voice From the Past

There is a splendid example given to us as to how this work of caring for the poor is to be done. The funds were gathered from the churches which were able to contribute to the poor saints at Jerusalem. This money then was sent to the elders of the church at Jerusalem and thus distributed to the ones who were in need. There was not another organization formed to take care of this work, they did the work through the means that the Lord had determined. Hence, it was done without any extra cost, and every cent the people of Corinth and Philippi contributed went into the hands of the distressed. It didn't take one-third or one-half of it to "grease the machinery" for the organization which handled it.

- W. Claude Hall, "Charity Work of the Church of Christ" in *The Gospel Advocate*, November 10, 1932, p. 1210.

God is Spirit

John wrote what Christ said: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24). The statement concerning the nature of God is quite profound: "God is spirit". People greatly err when they attempt to represent Him or equate Him with anything physical or material, even gold or silver, no matter how specially crafted by artisans (Acts 17:29). He cannot be seen or touched by man. No scales can weigh Him, and no yardstick can measure Him. He cannot be confined to places (Acts 17:24), no matter how sacred a certain place is honored (cf. Matthew 24:2). Man cannot

satisfactorily relate to the God that has revealed Himself in the Holy Scriptures (cf. John 4:22; 1:18) in mere physical terms.

Under the Old Covenant, God's people were not to make, worship or serve any images. "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them;" (Exodus 20:4-5a). As time passed, Israel became caught up in idol worship, which was characteristic of the heathen nations around them. Because of the Lord God's abhorrence of these unholy practices and vain dedication, the most common metaphor used by the prophets refers to idolatry as sexual impurity (cf. Ezekiel 6:9). Idol makers worshiped their own creations (cf. Habakkuk 2:18). Why would man, with his capabilities of high intelligence, fashion an object with his hands that is somewhat less than human (Psalms 115:4-8), only to worship and pay homage to it?

Godless sensuality still entertains objects of adoration, such that one who is covetous becomes an idolater (Ephesians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 5:10). Idolatry is listed in the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), and fleshly desires such as sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed become idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

Israel even made images to represent Jehovah, the true and living God (Exodus 32:1-8)! Yet, the Son of God, by the Spirit of God, declares by the truth of Almighty God, "God is spirit". Consequently, any material image of Him is false. Anything said or done to detract from the reverence and honor due to God and esteem the idol is a lie. It is impossible for any material thing to represent the spiritual. Only deceived people worship idols (cf. Ephesians 5:5-6). Idols cannot speak, but God does! Idols cannot see, but God does! Idols cannot hear, but God does! Idols cannot know, but God does! Idols cannot reveal truth, but God has! Idols created nothing, but God did! Idols decay and waste away, but God never does! Paul stated, "there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one." (1 Corinthians 8:4).

"God is spirit". In recognition of this fact, let us worship and serve Him with our spirits. Let us produce fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;" (Galatians 5:22-25). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." We have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. We have taken it out of the way that we may "from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Galatians 6:8).

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17).

- Gary Smalley

- * "He who gives when he is asked has waited too long!"
 - * "If you can't be an "Onward Christian Soldier," at least don't pass the ammunition to the enemy!"
 - * "Jesus came to save us from our sins, not leave us in them!"
 - * "Instead of pointing a finger, hold out a helping hand (Isaiah 42:3)!"
 - * "If you cannot have what you like, like what you have!"
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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)