

*In  
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of*

# Truth and Right

*Tim Henderson, Editor*

**Vol. 02  
No. 16  
11/18/  
2007**

*"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Philippians 4:8 (NASB-U)*

A publication  
of the  
**Wellsburg  
church of  
Christ**

## *You're not a Christian just because ...*

*By: Steven Harper*

**Every so often, I see some article or poll** that claims a high percentage of people who claim to be believers in God or, more specifically, Christians. Recent articles and polls show about 90% of Americans claim to believe in God and about 75% claim to be believers in Jesus as the Christ. In addition to these articles and polls, various religious organizations seem to all cite the same statistics that claim there are over one billion Christians in the world [right along with about one billion Islamists]. If I were to believe these claims, I would not feel such an urgency in spreading the gospel to my neighbors, but I understand that just because someone claims to believe in God and Christ does not make it so; neither does some claim that one out of every six people in the world are Christians.

As strange as it may seem, I do not find joy in hearing people claim to be believers in Christ or God. I do not find joy in these pronouncements because I have met enough people in my life to know that not everyone who **says** he is a Christian **is** a Christian. Just because someone says they are does not make it true, any more than me claiming to be President would make it so. I would have to meet the qualifications of the office before I could make the claim; the same is true of anyone who claims to be a Christian. And the sad thing is, there are many who have some erroneous ideas about what "makes" them a Christian in the first place. Today begins a series of articles that addresses some of these erroneous ideas and gives an answer to those who may hold to them as a false hope. I want no one to rest on such false hopes, but desire that all have access to the **true** hope that is in Christ. To have that **true** hope, one must be truly **in** Christ and not just deceived by others or self into

TIMES OF SERVICES	
<b>SUNDAY</b>	
Bible Classes*	10:00 AM
AM Worship	10:45 AM
PM Worship	6:30 PM
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	
Bible Classes*	7:00 PM
(* Bible Classes for All Ages)	

This Bulletin is published by the:

**Wellsburg  
church of Christ**

which meets at:

**112 Sunset Ave.  
Wellsburg, WV 26070**

thinking they are saved when they are not. Let's take a look ...

**You Are Not A Christian Just Because: You Are An American.** Years ago when I was in a foreign country, I spoke with many young people about God's word and I asked them about their beliefs in God and Jesus Christ. One of the young ladies I spoke with [who was very well educated and who believed she was very knowledgeable of Western culture] saw Christianity merely as an **American** religion and that it was only as old as the United States; to her, it seemed strange that I should be trying to get her to believe in Christ because Christianity was—in her mind—**foreign**, and it was not the religion of her home country. When I showed her that her own language was based on Bible stories, only then did she understand that the Christian faith was not "American" and that just because I was an American did not mean I was a Christian, either.

Unfortunately, many religious leaders and well-intentioned people keep preaching the idea that America is a "Christian nation" or was founded upon Christianity, and the consequences are confusion and the name of God being profaned. America today is anything **but** a "Christian nation" [that is, we do not generally accept the tenets of Christ's teachings], yet many still persist in proclaiming it to be so. But when the world sees the movies that come out of Hollywood, hears the songs that come out of Los Angeles and even Nashville, they associate the ungodliness promoted in it all with "America" and, consequently, the Christian faith; when they see politicians who claim to be led by God's teachings involved in, approving of, and even **directing** some rather ungodly actions, they naturally associate the ungodliness and dishonesty of the individual with his or her faith. Is that what we really want?

Years ago, when this country was more moral and cared about right and wrong [and was not afraid to say which was which], people in other lands would have looked at the USA and they would have understood that if someone said America was based on the principles of Christianity, that meant we disapproved of all sinful activities and our laws manifested that distaste for evil. Some political leaders then actually cared about the moral direction of the country and they were not afraid to make public statements that exhorted holy living and condemned selfishness and ungodliness. Though some did not always live up to the standards they promoted, at least they promoted that which was truly good and enacted and upheld laws that manifested a desire to do the right thing. But we are no longer that country!

As much as I would like to believe that being an American equates with being a Christian, I know the cold, hard reality that such is far from the truth. America is not like Israel of old, where God's people were born into Jewish citizenship and they automatically enjoyed His blessings based on their nationality. America is **not** "God's chosen nation" - in spite of what preachers such as Pat Robertson or John Hagee say. Let us never forget Paul inspired words: *"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise"* (Galatians 3:25-29).

**You Are Not A Christian Just Because: Your Parents Were Religious.** Many very sincere people honestly believe their parents' faith automatically makes them a Christian and, thus, right in the sight of God. Very few of these same people, though, have ever investigated the beliefs of their parents, but simply accept it as truth. If they are shown Scripture that shows them that God's word does not agree with what their parents believed, the individual often argues that if it was good enough for their parents, it was good enough for them. I have often tried—mostly unsuccessfully—to convince such ones that what matters is whether or not it is good

### Today's Sermon:

*AM-Membership  
in a local church*

*Acts 9:26-28*

*PM-Morality-3  
Speech—James 3*

enough for **God**; unfortunately, many people love their parents more than they love Jesus Christ and will refuse to abandon the faith of their parents even when it is shown to them that their parents followed after error. I am convinced that some of our parents have followed after error while sincerely believing they were following the truth, but the fact they were **sincere** does not change the fact they were following error! Paul once thought he was doing God's will while murdering Christians (**Acts 26:9, 10**)!

To see the fallacy of this line of thinking, let's go back to the first century when the gospel was first being preached. Now, what if the faithful Jews—upon hearing the gospel for the first time—said, "Well, my family has been following God for centuries, and now you're telling me they were wrong all these years? I'm happy with the faith of my parents and if it was good enough for them, it is good enough for me!" What, do you suppose, would have been the result? Of course, we would have to admit they would be lost in their sins. We know the Jews had to be converted to Christ just as much as the unbelieving Gentile; salvation was in Christ, not in perfect law-keeping. If they had steadfastly refused to submit to Christ, they would have remained in their sins (**John 8:24**).

But is it any different today when we are speaking about people who **claim** to be following Jesus but who are, in reality, following error even while they believe Jesus is the Christ? No, it is no different because the end result is a lost soul; one who never believes in Christ is lost (**Mark 16:16**), but so is one who believes Jesus is the Christ but follows after error (**Galatians 1:6-9**). The Athenians were "religious" but their religion was idols (**Acts 17**); were they saved or not? Paul believed they needed to hear about Christ and about the true God.

## *News N Notes*

### **Remember these in your prayers:**

- Merl Frey
- Tammy Garrison, Zeda Goddard's daughter
- Audrio Gaudio, Nancy Morris' great-granddaughter
- Blake Headen, Alberta's husband.
- Blake Swanson, Dorothy Lancaster's grandson
- Scott Swanson, Dorothy Lancaster's son-in-law
- Virginia Malick, Peggy Miller's mother
- Roy Rhodes, Peggy Miller's brother is back in Intensive Care
- Mabel Fleming
- Ed & Marie Roberts, & Ed's father, Jim Roberts.
- Ila Marshall, Harold Marshall's mother
- Cary & Grace Lancaster

### **Nursing Home:**

- Hazel Carroll
- Pauline Sellers
- Rhea Henthorn

### **Shut-ins:**

- Ethel Mahan
- Josephine Clow
- Mabel Fleming
- Pauline Midcap