

*In
Search
of*

Truth and Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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"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." Philipians 4:8 (NASB-U)

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Christ**

You're not a Christian just because ... [3]

By: Steven Harper

In the interest of helping us all to make an honest self-examination, for the past few weeks we have considered some faulty ideas some people have about what it means to be a Christian. As has been stated, those faulty associations, and others we will cover today and next week, will give false impressions to others and false comfort to ourselves if we believe them true. Please take the time to consider these faulty associations and see ***why*** the association is faulty that you may understand what it means to ***truly*** be a disciple of Jesus Christ [a Christian]. If you, the reader, are holding any of these faulty associations and assumptions about what it means to be a Christian, my hope is that you will honestly examine these things and choose to do what **God** says you must do to become a child of God.

That said, let us now take a look at some more faulty associations or beliefs about who is a Christian:

You Are Not A Christian Just Because: You "Go To Church."

Through the years, I have met many people who, in defense of their own, weak spiritual lives, made a point of strongly emphasizing they "go to church regularly." I have to tell you that of all the people who have made this point, the term "regularly" mean vastly different things to those who used it; some meant ***once or twice a year*** [every year, they add], while others insist their once-a-week visit with the brethren at the building was sufficient to be able to say they were "regular" in their attendance.

Let me also make it clear that this "regular" attendance of some sort of religious assembly was offered up as a defense for their faithfulness before God. But let's make a simple observation that shows how weak this argument really is, shall we? Let's be logical for a

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

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minute.

If mere attendance is a determining factor in faithfulness or even whether or not one is a Christian, then an atheist who shows up as "regularly" as the one who makes this claim could also say that he or she was a Christian! Would we concur? If not, how could we argue against it?

Please keep in mind that "regular" attendance—while certainly desirable and even spiritually beneficial if you are worshipping as God intended and learning more about God's will— is not the end-all to defining faithfulness and certainly not whether one is a Christian or not. Men have for centuries based their determination of "rightness" in God's eyes this way and they have for centuries been **wrong** in doing so.

Consider an example from the Old Testament, first of all. In the text under consideration (**Ezek. 23:38, 39**), we find God is angry with His people — for coming to the temple! What? God was angry for the people coming to the temple, His sanctuary? Yes, He was! But the reason He was angry was because they had first gone and killed their children in sacrifice to their false gods, then later **in the same day** they dared come to His holy house.

I hope we all understand the righteous anger of God in this case because He did not just want the people to come and make sacrifices to Him; He wanted their hearts and He wanted their faithfulness. As it was, they were spiritually unfaithful to Him and they had committed heinous acts before coming in His presence, and yet they expected God to accept them! Let us not think that we can come together to God's house [the church, not the building] to worship God with sin in our lives and expect that God will accept us; let us also not think that we can come and worship God in the way **we** think is acceptable while ignoring God's plain commandments and what is approved by God's revealed word, the Bible.

Consider also an example from the New Testament. In this text (**Matt. 15:1-9**), Jesus is questioned about why His disciples do not wash their hands according to the traditions of the Jewish fathers. In answering them, Jesus pointed out that they had set aside the commandments of God that they might keep their traditions and rightly called them hypocrites. He then pointed to the words of Isaiah and applied it to them, saying, *"This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* Can we see that God wanted their hearts and not just their presence? Can we see that God wanted their hearts, and not just their words of praise?

It is good to want to worship with faithful brethren, but more importantly, it is good to be a member of the body of Christ— His church—where you are truly right in the sight of God and forgiven of your sins. Only believing, obedient disciples are a part of that church (cf. **Acts 2:41, 47**).

You Are Not A Christian Just Because: You Have Been Baptized. With this statement, I must first explain some things about what constitutes true baptism because this is often a reason in itself why one is not a Christian.

First of all, let us admit that man has a difference of opinion on, and even definition of, **baptism**. Many dictionaries define the word **baptize** as *to immerse in water or sprinkle or pour water on*. God's word does not so define the word, however. In the original Greek, the word is [*baptidzo*] which, by definition, means *to immerse; to submerge* [Thayer's]. Furthermore, in all accounts of New Testament baptism, we see that it was done where *"much water"* was (cf. **John 3:23**). In consideration of your own baptism, you must first determine whether it was truly baptism at all. But we have other concerns!

For what reason were you baptized? Since many religious groups "baptize" infants [again, not true baptism, according to the definition], could any of those infants say **why** they were being baptized? If so, I would like to hear the explanation! But even those

Today's Sermon:

*Happiness is
the Lord*

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11

who are older must be honest in examining the ***purpose*** of their baptism. Many religious groups baptize individuals merely as a means of entrance into the local church or the denomination as a whole; they teach that one is saved already but the baptism is what puts them into the church. You will not find such teachings in the written word of God, however. This practice of baptizing "saved believers" [as they say] comes from the erroneous doctrine which teaches we are saved by faith only. Those who promote this doctrine denounce the idea of baptism's place in salvation, but practice it as "an outward sign of inward grace" [a testimony to the world you are a saved person]. Again, you will not find this taught anywhere within God's word. If this was your baptism, you must be honest in examining your own heart and the reason why it was done and determine to do what **God** would have you do.

But still others are baptized for ostensibly the right purpose and in the right way, but cannot be truly called Christians. Oh, we humans may see them as such and even ***they*** may be convinced they are, but God sees it differently because He knows the hearts of all men. Those who are baptized to please their parents, to please a spouse [or potential spouse], or for any other reason than sincere obedience to the will of Jesus Christ, have done it for the wrong reason and they will not be recognized by Jesus Christ as one of His disciples though all men may do so.

If our baptism is not done as the beginning step of a new life in Christ, it is nothing more than a useless demonstration of how to get completely wet and we are no more a Christian than one who is grabbed off the street and dragged to the baptistery and dunked underneath the water against his will. God wants more than just your body to be immersed in water; He wants your heart to be in it, too. Only then will He do the work of washing away your sins (**Col. 2:11-13**) and only then can you be called a Christian.

Final article on this series next week.

News N Notes

Remember these in your prayers:

- Trudell Tennant
- Lucille Harless, Dave Harless' mother
- Blake Headen, Alberta's husband.
- Blake Swanson, Dorothy Lancaster's grandson
- Virginia Malick, Peggy Miller's mother
- Roy Rhodes, Peggy Miller's brother
- Merl Frey
- Tammy Garrison, Zeda Goddard's daughter
- Audrio Gaudio, Nancy Morris' great-granddaughter
- 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

Shut-ins:

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