

*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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You're not a Christian just because ... [5]

By: Steven Harper

As we close out this series of studies on some faulty views about how one may rightly be called a Christian, let us make an honest self-examination of the things that have been spoken, in light of Scripture, and determine to do the things God has commanded we do to become His children and then resolve to continue in those things without fail. All of these faulty conclusions we have seen [along with the one today] will give false impressions to others and false comfort to ourselves if we believe them true. I again urge you to 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 one more faulty association or belief about who is a Christian:

You Are Not A Christian Just Because: You Are A "Good Person." According to polls, even those who profess faith in Christ believe that a person who 'generally does good' will enter into heaven [around 80% of professing believers in various denominations]. This idea may be seen in the words of a blogger who made the following quote: "To say that those who do not believe (*sic*) in our Judeo-Christian concept of God go straight to Hell troubles me. If a Buddhist (*sic*) is a good person I see no reason for him not to go to Heaven. The only 'law' he broke was not taking Jesus as his savior, however he was a good person so why should he be damned." This idea, while not necessarily taught **directly** within churches, is a result of a message that has been compromised and watered down

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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through the years, to the point that now it seems no one is condemned by their disobedience to God's will, as long as they are 'a good person' — and **that** is always open to interpretation. When preachers started saying "it doesn't matter which church you go to," then eventually someone was going to ask why they had to be a part of **any** church or why they had to be a Christian [as opposed to being a Buddhist or an Islamist]. Some religious leaders would not say obedience to Jesus Christ was an option, but others did and now we have many so-called 'Christian' preachers teaching what might rightly be called universal salvation [no one will be condemned, in the end].

But when it comes down to this question of being 'good' or not, we must admit that this is a very arbitrary term; it is usually defined **only** by the person who is making the claim to be 'good.' I have yet to meet anyone who said this who would allow me [or even God] to define what 'good' is. If we are all allowed to define 'good' for ourselves, who would ever face punishment?

But this fallacious idea about one's goodness is not new, and neither it has ever been acceptable to God. Once, when Jesus saw some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous ['good'], He told of two men who went up to the temple to pray. The first man, a Pharisee, stood and prayed and basically bragged to God about 'good' he was. He said in his prayer to God, "*God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get*" (**Luke 18:9-12**). Meanwhile, the tax collector would not so much as lift up his eyes, but beat his own breast, saying, "*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*" (**v. 13**). Jesus said the second man went to his house justified, and not the first man. So much for thinking of myself as 'good'!

Consider also a man named Cornelius; here was a man of whom it was said was "*a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God*" (**Acts 10:2**). Would we not all agree that this man could be called 'good'? But was he saved as he was? No. Later, when Peter recounted his meeting with Cornelius, he told of how Cornelius had been told to send for Peter, who "*will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household*" (**Acts 11:13, 14**). As 'good' a man as Cornelius was, he was not saved; he had to first hear the gospel message that told about how Christ had died for his sins, and he had to believe and obey to be saved. As 'good' as he was, it wasn't 'good' enough!

Please understand that the **only** way we may be truly called 'good' in the sight of God is by our obedience to the will of Jesus Christ. We know that God made Him the sacrifice for us and our sins (**1 Cor. 15:3**), but we should also know that it was that sacrifice that allows us to be called 'good' in God's eyes (cf. **2 Cor. 5:21**). Outside of Christ, we are without God and without hope in the world (**Eph. 2:12**). We will not get to heaven of our own 'goodness' and there is simply no 'good' deed we could do to earn an entrance into the eternal home.

Which brings us to our final comment:

You Are A Christian Because:

> **God showed grace toward us.** Without a doubt, no one will be saved without God's grace. Paul made it plain we are saved by grace (**Eph. 2:5, 8**) and that we are justified freely by His grace (**Rom. 3:24**), so arguing against grace's part in our salvation would be foolish. *Grace* is defined as *unmerited favor*, so we understand our salvation is a favor of God that we did not earn! But God's grace was not simply a matter of ignoring or overlooking our sins; no, God had a plan!

> **God established a plan for our salvation.** Yes, God showed grace towards undeserving man, but how? Paul wrote that the gift of God [His grace] was not *faith*, as many teach, but eternal life itself (**Rom. 6:23b**). God's gift to man was a means of being forgiven!

Today's Sermon:

*Happiness is
the Lord*

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:11

Without His grace, we would all be lost and still looking for a way out of sin, but God—because He knew we could never devise such a plan—established one for us! It was a plan established **before time began** (2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20)!

> **Jesus died for us.** The plan of God, established before time, was that Jesus would die for our sins. In that act, we see the love of both God and Christ shown to us (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16).

> **You have faith in Jesus as Christ.** Of course, that plan had to be revealed to man [and it has been, first through the apostles and prophets and to us now through the written word]. Without the word of God, there could be no faith (Rom. 10:17); those who hear the word and believe will be saved (Mark 16:16). Please note that it is **through faith** we have access to God's grace [His plan for our salvation]; God said so (Rom. 5:1, 2). Many men teach we have access to faith by God's grace; that is backwards!

> **You repent of past sins.** When the gospel was first preached, repentance was demanded (Acts 2:38); Paul taught the same thing whenever he preached (Acts 26:20) and made it clear that God has commanded that all men must repent (Acts 17:30).

> **You willingly confess Christ.** Paul also said our confession of belief in Jesus as the Christ and that God raised Him from the dead leads to salvation (Rom. 10:9, 10). Jesus said denial of Him will cause us to be denied before God (Matt. 10:32, 33).

> **You were baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins.** In every case of conversion in God's word, the believers were baptized. **Every** case. Peter preached it (Acts 2:38), Paul was told he had to do it to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16), and Peter tells us it saves us (1 Pet. 3:21). You can argue all you want about it, but you will be arguing against God, and as long as you refuse, you can never honestly call yourself a Christian!

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