

What Is a Christian?

Text: Acts 11:25, 26

Last week we gave a message on friendship using Barnabas as our prime example of a godly friend, connecting people together and advancing the kingdom by his ministry of consolation (Acts 4:36). Barnabas found Saul and brought him to Antioch and together they won people to the Lord and disciplined them. Acts 11:26: "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Let's talk about that beautiful word that is both a noun and an adjective. Just what is a Christian?

I. A CHRISTIAN HAS A GENUINE FAITH

Jude 1:3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The faith that we preach is not new; it is the original saving faith preached by our spiritual ancestors from time immemorial.

Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We must believe that God is who He said He is. Here are some basic tenants of our faith:

- A. The Bible is God's Word. His Word is true. Psalm 119:160: "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."
- B. God is One and Triune (I John 5:7).
- C. Jesus is God's Son and Yet God, the Son (John 20:31; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:8).
- D. There are two resurrections that bring two different results (John 5:28, 29; Matthew 25:46).
- E. Saving faith is genuine and works as well now as when these words were written: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). Here's a definitive acrostic: F.A.I.T.H. (For All I Take Him, or Forsaking All I Take Him).

You do not have to know all of the fine-tuned nuances of the "...faith once delivered." The danger and damnation comes when we deny the faith and the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2; Luke 12:8, 9; I John 2:22, 23).

II. A CHRISTIAN IS DEPENDENT UPON GRACE THAT IS TOTAL

John 1:17: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

- A. Grace is the unmerited favor of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 5:15)
- B. Any admixture of works into salvation nullifies saving grace. Romans 11:6: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Here's an acrostic that reminds us what grace is: G.R.A.C.E. (God's Riches At Christ's Expense, or God's Righteousness at Christ's Expense).

III. A CHRISTIAN'S REPENTANCE IS REAL

Mark 2:17b: "...They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

- A. Repentance is a change of mind. Ezekiel 14:6b: "...Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." Ezekiel 18:30b: "...Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."
- B. Repentance is not that you are sorry you got caught sinning; repentance is sorry that you sinned. II Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
- C. Repentance ignored brings damnation. Luke 13:3, 5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
- D. Repentance brings joy to Heaven (Luke 15:7, 10, 24).

IV. A CHRISTIAN HAS A TESTIMONY THAT IS TRUE

In Acts 11:27-30, the Christians give a beautiful testimony of the saving grace and faith of God.

- A. A Miraculous Prophecy. Agabus stands up and gives a prophecy that a great famine was going to hit throughout the world. So the disciples acted upon the prophecy and sent relief as they were able. The Bible was far from completion at that time, therefore many of the miracles, signs and wonders were to accompany the proclamation of the Gospel to verify the veracity and truth of our message. Mark 16:15, 17: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues." I Corinthians 14:22: "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."
- B. A Reason to Believe. Especially before the canon of Scripture was complete miracles and signs were everywhere. After Lazarus had been risen from the dead, we observe John 12:11: "Because that by reason of him (Lazarus) many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus." So the testimony of miracles and wonders were glowing testimonies that these prophets in Macedonia had relationship with the True and Living God.
- C. A God-Given Love for Each Other. The giving spirit of the disciples one for another was a very strong testimony. John 13:34, 35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

CONCLUSION:

Acts 11:26b: "...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." In German, "Christian," means "miniature Christs." When the citizens of Antioch saw the lifestyle of these disciples, they called it as they saw it: here is a group of men who are what they are, and do what they do because they are Christians.