

Today we begin a new series called the Christian Way of Life. In this study we will undertake the task of defining the obligations, the objectives, the lifestyle, and the privileges which are unique to those who are classified as Christians.

Immediately a question arises: What constitutes a Christian? It is imperative then, before we begin the analysis of the Christian way of life, that we adequately define who is a Christian, for it is impossible to execute the Christian way of life if you aren't one.

Our first objective then is to make it perfectly clear who is a Christian and to determine how one attains that title.

In order to advance on such a heavy subject, it might be best to lighten up for a moment with a little humor. Here is the definition of a Christian from:

**Bierce, Ambrose. *The Devil's Dictionary*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958:**

*Christian, n. One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin.*

Unfortunately, there are far too many serious definitions of what constitutes a Christian, but this is not to be understood as a failure on God's part to adequately articulate His requirements but rather a reflection of Satanic disinformation designed to confuse the issue.

As we are about to discover, God is crystal clear about what makes a person a Christian. It is a part of the plan of Satan to keep this message from gaining widespread acceptance.

One of the reasons that the Satanic definition of a Christian is so widely popular is because it so closely follows the thinking of the unregenerate human thought process.

In a nutshell here is what you must do to become a Christian: you must be saved, and that salvation must be by means of faith in Jesus Christ.

To this you may respond: what must I do to be saved? The answer to that question is the subject of today's lesson.

Throughout the history of mankind, the human mind has pondered eternal life, the hereafter, heaven, Valhalla, Nirvana, Elysium or some similar concept defining one's environment following physical death.

And through the centuries the human mind has concocted quite a number of theories of how man might participate in such a future existence. All the major religions have developed theologies by which they hope to convince converts of the divinely accepted process and procedure.

I hesitate to classify Christianity as a religion because it isn't. More about that later, but for the moment we will permit that assumption. And in the Christian religion there has been quite a number of ideas put forward on how one may accomplish salvation. Here are a few:

“Unless you are baptized, you cannot be saved.”

There is even an ongoing debate among proponents of baptism as to which method of baptism is efficacious for salvation: some saying sprinkling is sufficient while others contend that total immersion is required. The debate continues.

“Unless you persevere in good works, you cannot be saved.”

This condition for salvation has been popular in Christendom from its inception. It is the one most commonly utilized by Satan to prevent people from being saved although it has been presented under a multiplicity of different titles. This century it has been called Buckmanism, Moral Rearmament, and presently, lordship salvation.

Lordship salvation claims that a commitment to obedience must be a part of true spiritual conversion. From this follows the premise that if Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. This is expressed by yet another format for salvation:

“Unless you yield your life to the Lordship of Christ, you cannot be saved.”

These assertions sound noble and well-intentioned, but they all accomplish the same result. they introduce human works into the divine formula for salvation which is itself characterized by total grace.

A form of “works salvation” became an issue in the early church and is expressed in:

**Acts 15:1 - And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."**

Who are these guys? They were called Judaizers:

A party of Christians in the early church who thought it was necessary that Gentile converts to Christianity should be circumcised and observe the Jewish law-in fact that they should become Jews in order to become Christians.

Acts 15 records the taking up of the issue at the Council of Jerusalem and the decision that such requirements should not be made of the Gentiles.

**Douglas, J. D. (ed.). Dictionary of the Christian Church. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978, p. 554.**

*The Scriptures teach that salvation is appropriated by faith alone in Christ alone. The Judaizers taught that faith in Christ was fine but one must be circumcised in order to be saved. Acts 15:24 indicates that the Apostle Paul and his associate Barnabas never communicated such a doctrine.*

**Acts 15:24 - We have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words.**

Apparently, these false teachers had falsely borrowed the power of the true apostles in order to lend credibility to their false gospel. Not denying faith in Christ as a part of salvation, these Judaizers went on to insist that salvation also required submission to the Mosaic Law and its ritual.

This is similar to the present-day counterpart known as lordship salvation which accepts the premise of faith in Christ as necessary but then makes the claim that if there is not a change in one's behavior, then the faith which one depended upon for his salvation was ineffective and was never really expressed.

Saving faith, according to them, can only be considered a reality unless it results in a form of overt obedience. Thus, only by the performance of human works can a convert have assurance of his salvation.

Self-righteous arrogance presumes that if salvation is free without any requirement for the performance of good deeds, then converts will feel equally free to engage in lawlessness and sin.

Apparently, the Judaizers of old and the lordship crowd of today make the judgmental assumption that if shackles and chains are not bound upon the new convert, he will never leave his lifestyle of sin and evil.

This may or may not be true, but it doesn't change the fact that salvation, according to the Scriptures, is based solely upon one's faith in Christ-nothing else. Because new converts continue a life of sin doesn't alter what God has done for their souls. In fact, it is normal for new converts to continue a life of sin. Sin is the violation of Biblical commandments. And the new convert is ignorant of most Biblical commandments and is thus in constant violation of them. But this situation is entirely between he and the Lord not other believers, and certainly the content of the Gospel should not be altered in order to supposedly solve this problem.

New converts are commanded to undergo an alteration in their lifestyle, but that transformation is accomplished not by behavioral change but by a change in their thinking.

**2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

A growth process takes time, and the growth mentioned here deals with one's knowledge of the Scriptures. To transform one's thinking to that required by God takes time-time which God is gracious enough to allow.

Yet, the Judaizers and the current proponents of lordship salvation both insist that works of one description or another are necessary for the acquisition of eternal life and for the assurance of the believer.

By assurance I refer to a mental attitude of the convert which is characterized by a confidence of his eternal future, a future which cannot be altered, changed, or canceled by any thought, decision, or action performed by him.

Assurance means that one is sure of his salvation and is confident his soul will enter heaven at physical death. However, what the human mind is assured of has little bearing on what God has assured. If God saves the soul of a person because of His faith in Christ then the new convert's assurance of that fact is of no eternal importance.

Thus, the conclusion is that works of the law can in no way guarantee eternal life but rather faith in Christ.