

What Makes Christians Different From Everyone Else?

By Pastor Art Watkins

In Acts 11:26 the Bible says that *the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch*. They were called Christians because they stood out from ordinary people. Everyone knew who they were because they were different from everyone else. They did not blend in with ordinary people. Their name made them separate and distinct from the world around them. It was a derogatory name, but they wore it as a badge of honor.

In that day Christians were separate and distinct from ordinary people and the world around them knew it. The name Christian had a greater impact in that day than it does today because we live in a day of compromise when Christians have become conformed to the world. They bend over backwards to be just like the world. But in the Bible true Christians were separate and different from most people. They were different because Christians are supposed to be different. When you call yourself a Christian you are separating yourself from other people who are not. It's a name that separates the true people of God today from those who are not. But what makes Christians different and distinct from everyone else? What separates them from ordinary people and the world around them?

Their Birth

Christians are born not made. Good football players and baseball players are made not born. Winning race car drivers are made not born. But Christians are different because they are born and not made. You become a Christian by birth, but the birth of a Christian is different from everyone else because they have two births. The ordinary person is born once, but Christians are born twice. They have a physical and spiritual birth. They are born of the flesh and the Spirit. True Christians have a rebirth, a second birth or a new birth. In the Bible the rebirth of Christians is also called regeneration (Titus 3:5) and the quickening of the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:1)

Why are Christians born twice? Because they are convicted and convinced by the Lord that their first birth disqualifies them from entering into the

kingdom of God. In John 3:3 Jesus said: ***Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*** If we must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God then something must be wrong with our first birth. True Christians seek a second birth because they know something is terribly wrong with their first birth. But what is it? When you were born the first time you received from your parents three things that condemned you and made you unfit to enter into the kingdom of God.

You inherited *their life which was temporal life*. But you cannot live in the kingdom of God with temporal life, because it is an everlasting kingdom. The only people who can possibly live in the kingdom of God are those who have eternal life, not temporal life.

You inherited *their spirit which was dead* in trespasses and sins. You can't live in the kingdom of God with a dead spirit.

You inherited *their nature which is corrupt and fallen*. You cannot live or enter into the kingdom of God with a corrupt fallen nature.

Our first birth condemns us and makes us unfit to enter into the kingdom of God and this is why true Christians are born again or born twice.

The second birth qualifies us to enter into the kingdom of God. The second birth makes it possible for us to enter into the kingdom of God and live forever with God. When a person is born the second time they receive three things from their new Father who is God, that makes them fit to live in his kingdom.

You receive *his life which is eternal*, for you must have eternal life to enter into the kingdom of God.

You inherit *his Spirit which is Holy*, for you must have the Holy Spirit of God living in you to live in the kingdom of God.

You inherit *his nature which is holy and divine*, for you must have a divine nature to enter into his kingdom.

You also receive the blessings and benefits of God's only begotten Son when you are born again. You receive the blessings and benefits of his death and shed blood. Christ's death on the cross is counted as the death of all those who are born again. This means that God counts his Son's death as the full and complete payment for your sins, for no one can enter

into the kingdom of God with unforgiven sins. Plus, God counts the righteousness of his Son as yours making you as righteous as he is, for no one can enter into the kingdom of God who is unrighteous.

True Christians are born twice and their second birth makes them different from everyone else. Not just anyone can say they have the *Life, Spirit and Nature of God* living in them, but every true Christian can make that claim for when they are born again they receive all three. Being born twice they have a guaranteed place reserved for them in the everlasting kingdom of God.

Their Faith

The faith of true Christians is totally different from the faith of the world around them. What makes it different? They have no faith or trust in themselves. Paul said true Christians: ***worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*** (Philippians 3:3)

True Christians have no faith or confidence in themselves. This is why their faith is different, because the world says believe in yourself, trust in yourself, have faith in yourself and be self confident. The faith the world has comes from pride and a false belief about their so called strength, abilities and work. This is why it is hard for a self confident man to be saved and to become a true Christian.

To become a real Christian you must renounce all your faith and confidence in yourself, abilities and works. Instead, you must put all of your faith, trust and confidence in someone else's work, strength and ability; The Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what separates true Christians from the world and false Christians too. A true Christian renounces all of his faith and confidence in himself and in his works and trusts Christ alone to save him and Christ alone to keep him saved. Why? Because true Christians believe their so called righteousness are filthy rags and all of their works are bad and they know there is nothing they can do in the flesh to save themselves and keep

themselves saved. That is why their total faith, trust and confidence are in Christ and him alone to save them and keep them saved.

We are saved by faith, but the faith that saves us is not faith and trust in ourselves or our works. Saving faith is total and complete trust in Christ's work on Calvary to save you and keep you saved forever.

This sounds strange to most people because it demeans the flesh. If you do not trust and rely on yourself and your works to save you, this means you have no faith and confidence in yourself. If you have no faith and confidence in yourself then you must believe there is nothing in you that merits salvation. This flies into the face of the world. The world says; if we do our part, God will do his part and both of us working together will save us. They believe God made the down payment on salvation and they pay the notes by good works. True Christians say all my works are an abomination to God. I am spirituality bankrupt and so I am going to trust Christ and his work alone to save me.

Their Life

The life of a Christian is not like any other for a true Christian spends his life serving and pleasing someone other than himself. The world says; live for yourself, don't deprive yourself, pamper yourself, please yourself and love yourself. You only have one chance to live so spend your life, time, and money pleasing and satisfying yourself.

But, the life of a real Christian is not a self centered life. It's a life spent for someone else. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul defines the true Christian life. He wrote: ***For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.***

A Christian lives, but he does not live for himself; instead he lives for someone else. Who? The one who died for him and rose again. The Lord Jesus Christ.

We have heard preachers say we ought to live for the Lord, but I don't believe most people really understand what that statement means so let

me use an illustration to help us understand it. Let's say that I take a blank piece of paper and sign my name at the bottom and I hand it to God and I say to him whatever you fill in above my name is what I will do. So God takes the blank paper and fills it in and hands it back to us and from that time forward we spend the rest of our life obeying what he wrote above our name.

That illustration is not farfetched because God has written down what he expects of us when we become Christians in Romans 12:1-2 which says: ***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.***

This is what God expects out of every true Christian. God expects all of us who call ourselves Christians to present our bodies unto God as a living sacrifice and not be conformed unto the world any more. What does that mean? How can something be dead like a sacrifice and living at the same time? It means we die to ourselves and live the rest of our lives totally for the glory and benefit of the Lord. We put our life and plans on the back burner and God's plans and will on the front burner and God's plans and God's will become ours till we die.

Paul is an example of what it means to present your body unto God as a living sacrifice. When God saved Paul the first thing he said was: ***Lord what will you have me to do?*** That is when Paul handed that blank piece of paper to the Lord with his name signed at the bottom and the Lord filled it in and he spent the rest of his life doing it. When Paul was saved his life was turned completely around. Paul died, that is he no longer lived for Paul. He spent the rest of his life doing what God wrote above his name.

The life of a true Christian is spent doing the will of God. He finds out the will of God and then dedicates his life to doing the will of God. When he gets up in the morning he says: Lord what will you have me to do today? What are your plans today? What can I do today that will bring you the maximum praise and honor? How can I use my body to glorify you today?

The life of a true Christian is not a selfish life. He does not live for himself. He sacrifices his life, time, body, money, his all for the benefit of Christ and Christ alone. This is why true Christians put up with inconveniences and interruptions in their lives for the sake of Christ and his work that others

would not. They do it because the love of Christ constrains them. They make sacrifices in their lives that others will not make. They do it to further the work of Christ. They are willing to suffer if necessary to do the will of God. They are willing to pay any price with their lives so that God and Christ receive the maximum glory from their lives.

True Christians are not self centered people. They don't believe the world revolves around them. Their world revolves around God and Christ. God and Christ is the center of their world and their lives.

True Christians do not expect God and Christ to wait on them and to serve them. They spend their lives serving and waiting on God and Christ.

True Christians do not treat God as if he is the great cash register in the sky either; True Christians give up and sacrifice their life, time and bodies for the sake of Christ.

The life of a true Christian is unlike the lives of most people; They sacrifice their life and their body and their time, their money, their comfort, their pleasures, their goals, their ambitions and everything they have for the benefit and blessing of someone else.

I know this description of true Christians sounds strange because for years we have been taught a watered down version of what a true Christian's life is supposed to be. Most people don't have a clue of what a true Christian is really like and what they are supposed to do with their life once they get saved. I blame that on the preachers. They do not teach people the Bible definition of what a real Christian looks and sound like. God's people are not taught the whole council of God concerning salvation and the meaning of being a Christian. They have a distorted view of what real Christians are and what salvation is all about.

A few words about salvation and the Christian life.

Salvation is not a vacation or exemption from work.

Salvation does not give us the liberty to live our life as we please.

Salvation is not a part time job.

Salvation is not freedom from demands and restraints on our personal lives.

Salvation is not a license to sin.

Salvation is not just a fire escape out of hell.

Salvation is not a one time commitment.

Salvation does not mean that God becomes your errand boy or sugar daddy.

Salvation is not your ticket to health, wealth and prosperity.

Every true Christian should understand that when you get saved and become a Christian you go to work for God and spend the rest of your life working for him. It's not a part time job, its full time. You should understand God now owns you and he has every right to your body, time, money and everything you have and it's his to use as he pleases. You should understand you have one career now and it's called the work of the ministry. This is your one and only occupation if you are a Christian. You should understand your life ended at the cross and for this time forward your life is to be spent bringing as much glory and honor and praise to God and Christ as you possibly can. And you should try your best to get everything out of your life that dishonors God and brings shame to his name.

Their Death

The death of Christians makes them different from everyone else. They die, but their death is not the same as others. There are two major differences between the death of a Christian and a non Christian. Christians die once not twice. And their death is not a curse, but a blessing.

Revelation 14:13 says: ***Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.***

Instead of death being a curse, it's a blessing to true Christians. How can something as bad as death be a blessing? It's not a blessing to everyone for it says blessed are the dead which die IN THE LORD. The only people whose death is a blessing are those who die in the Lord. Why?

*Because when they die they are absent from the body and present with the Lord. They leave this world and enter into the eternal world. What is so bad about that?

*Because when they die they put off this corrupt, weak body of sin, sickness and disease and put on a new body in heaven. What's so bad about that?

*Because when they die their battle with the world, flesh and the devil are over. What is so bad about living in a place where there is no sin, no devil and no world to tempt you and make you fall?

*Because when they die they will see the one they have heard about, sung about, thought about, read about, studied about, but have never seen; Jesus Christ. What is so bad about being in the presence of Jesus Christ and all the holy angels?

*Because when they die they will be united with their loved ones who died in the Lord. What is so bad about that?

This is why it says blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. The death of a Christian is unlike the death of most people. Death to most people will be tragic and horrible for the moment they die their soul and spirit will enter into hell and begin an eternity of suffering and pain with no hope of getting out. And then they will suffer a second death in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14-15 says: ***And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.***

Are you a true Christian? Have you truly been born again for it's by the second birth from God that a person becomes a true Christian. Sad to say many people today are Christian in name only for they have never had a second new birth. They are still dead in trespasses and sins and they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

If you profess to be a real Christian who is your faith and confidence in? Do you have faith and confidence in yourself or is all of your faith and confidence in Christ alone to save you and keep you saved? If you have faith in anything other than Christ to save you then you are not a true Christian. You can talk, act, dress, and say you are a Christian but if you have the slightest faith in works to save you and keep you saved you are as lost as an atheist who has no faith at all. It's not Christ and your works that save. It's Christ minus your works that save. Christ did not die to help you get saved, he died to save you and keep you saved because you were beyond help and without hope.

If you are a Christian have you obeyed Romans 12:1-2? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? How much glory and honor does God get out of your body, time, money, home, and your personal life? Have you signed your name at the bottom of the page and agreed with God to do what he writes above it? What are you doing now in the way of good works that men can see that causes them to glorify your father in heaven? (Matt.5:16)

If you are a Christian what are you doing now in view of your coming death? When you die what kind of testimony will you leave behind? What kind of works will you take to judgment? When you get to the end of your life and death is at the door will you be pleased when you look back over your life? Is everything in your life right with God now, or will you be ashamed when you face God in judgment after you die. It says: ***It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)***

Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last. This life is the only chance you have to serve and work for God. This is the only chance you have to reap rewards and crowns and blessings for eternity. Don't waste your life and time on things that will not matter at the judgment. Redeem your time and life and use it wisely so you will have no regrets when you die or when the Lord comes again.

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