

Characteristics of True Christianity Part 3

Characteristics That Define Our Actions

Ken Birks, Pastor/Teacher

I. Introductory Remarks.

James 2:17-18 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

In this series of messages we have been looking at the characteristics of true Christianity. In the first message we looked at characteristics that define the transformation process in our lives.

In the second message we looked at those characteristics that define who we are in Christ.

We have been using Peter, one of Christ's early followers and disciples as our example and illustration of true Christianity.

Peter's life was transformed from a profane fisherman to a mature Christian, who had all of these defining characteristics operating in his life. Peter was not perfect, yet we see him as one who is striving to walk in these Christ-like characteristics.

In this message today, I want to look at those characteristics that define our actions as Christians. These are marks of a true Christian.

II. Characteristics That Define Our Actions.

1. We Are Called To Serve.

The classic example of our call to serve is the illustration Jesus used of Himself when He washed His disciples feet. We must be like Jesus and put on the servant's apron.

John 13:14-15 *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*

A nineteenth century painting shows a long row of beggars waiting in a soup line. They are all ragged and sleazy looking. But around the head of one, barely perceptible, is a halo. One of them is Christ! You may see no halo around the

heads of your brothers and sisters in need, yet to serve them is to serve Christ, for the King is hidden in them. (*Matthew 25:35-40*)

God has given to each one of gifts and talents that are to be used in our service to one another. We are all called to serve the Lord and one another in various ways.

Peter was exhorted by Jesus to be a humble servant using his gifts to feed the sheep and the lambs. Now Peter after fulfilling his calling in his own life exhorts us as fellow believers to do likewise.

1 Peter 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

What is the meaning of life?

Is it how long we live, how famous we become, or how rich we are at retirement?

Jesus says that the measure of life is in our service, the good we do for others. Out of this spirit has come every Christian college and school, orphanage and beneficial work in the world.

George W. Truitt, the great Baptist preacher, said, "It is not the talents one has that makes him great, however many and brilliant they may be; it is not the vast amount of study that gives mental enrichment to the mind and life; it is not in shining social qualities; it is not the large accumulation of wealth that secures peace and honor. In none of these measured by God's standards does greatness reside. The true greatness consists in the use of all the talents one has in unselfish ministry to others."

2. We Are Called To Sacrifice.

We are called to live our lives in manner that shows that we are continually giving of ourselves and laying our lives down as a living sacrifice. This is our reasonable service. It is a very important characteristic that determines how much fruit we produce for Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

Sacrifice entails picking up our cross and following Jesus wherever He chooses to take us. It involves being at that place where He sees the need.

Matthew 16:25 *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

John 12:26 *"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*

Peter's life was continually a living example of this kind of sacrifice. There were many place that the Lord led him, of which were a personal sacrifice to him. eg. after being released from prison by the angel, he had to leave the comforts of his home in Jerusalem and go to areas he was not totally familiar with. He was led to the house of Corneilus to help bring them into the salvation experience. This was a sacrifice to him, because he was not comfortable being around Gentiles.

2. We Are Called To A Walk.

We are called to a walk that consists of many areas that bring us into greater maturity as true Christian believers.

Ephesians 4:1 *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a **walk worthy of the calling** with which you were called...*

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we **walk by faith**, not by sight.*

Galatians 5:16 *I say then: **Walk in the Spirit**, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

Ephesians 5:15 *See then that you **walk circumspectly**, not as fools but as wise...*

1 John 1:7 *But if we **walk in the light** as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

2 John 1:4 *I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your **children walking in truth**, as we received commandment from the Father.*

Ephesians 5:2 *And **walk in love**, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

Hebrews 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and **pilgrims on the earth**.*

Again, if you look at the life of Peter you see that he exemplified all of these areas. He was a man who walked by faith in the Spirit, walked in the light and definitely walked as a pilgrim on the earth. You never see where he went back to live in Capernaum.

3. We Are Called To Spiritual Warfare.

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

As I close this message, let me leave you with this story about heavyweight boxing champion Joe Lewis. Joe Lewis was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. He fought, if I recall correctly, 71 times professionally; he lost only once. During the decade and a half he held his title, he defended it 25 times.

Bill Stern, the voice of American sports on radio, decided toward the end of the Brown Bomber's career that he would interview him and find out the technique or the secret that Lewis employed in fighting his opponents and how he could win over people who were at times much larger than he.

His answer was very simple "I study my opponent. I plan my fight very carefully. The results are always the same. 1) I'm never surprised and 2) I stay on the offensive".

That's pretty good counsel for dealing with the devil. Satan wins many of his attacks and victories because he surprises us. We continually live shocked. The believer has no reason to be shocked, intimidated or surprised by the attack of the enemy – none whatsoever.

III. Concluding Remarks.

In conclusion, we can see that there are four major characteristics that define our actions as Christians:

1. We are called to serve,
2. We are called to sacrifice,
3. We are called to a walk

4. We are called to spiritual warfare.

These are very important characteristics that must be developed in all of our lives as Christians.