

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

The word “Christian” is very widely used and misused. It means many things to many people. One would expect the word to appear frequently in the New Testament, yet it appears only three times. God’s definition is very clear and worth examining:

First, in Acts 26, the Apostle Paul explains his conversion experience to King Agrippa. He tells of the transformation in his life—from opposition to Christ and Christianity to a total commitment to the Lordship of Christ evidenced by a life of service and obedience to Him. In this context we perceive that *a Christian is one who has personally faced the reality of his sins before God* (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:19-23, 5:12). We must always remember that Scripture teaches that Christianity is a religion for sinners only—see Matthew 1:21, 9:13). It is also evident from the Apostle’s testimony in this passage that *a Christian is one whose sins have been forgiven in Christ* (Psalm 49:7-15; John 3:3-36; Acts 4:12; Romans 6:23).

Secondly, in Acts 11, we read that “the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Here, being a Christian is linked with discipleship. A disciple is a follower and a learner. Therefore, *a Christian is one who seeks to learn from Christ and follow Him, emulating His example and obeying His teachings*. A Christian’s life demonstrates consistent obedience to and love for Christ (Matthew 7:21; John 14:21-24; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:4). This is not possible in our own strength apart from God. But it is possible because He works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:27; Titus 2:11-14, 3:3-8).

Finally, in 1 Peter 4:26, we are told that Christians may have to suffer—not for their sins—but because of their faith in the One Who is despised and rejected by this world. A Christian is one who acknowledges Christ as Lord in every aspect of life and it is this public and private expression of one’s faith in Jesus that costs so much. Yet these momentary afflictions in the life of a Christian are but a single grain of sand in the hourglass of eternity. The price that was paid to be *forever* forgiven of sin and reconciled to God throughout all eternity far outweighs any suffering to be endured in this life for His Name’s sake. A Christian is one who is not ashamed of the cross of Christ.

We must ask ourselves: “Am I a Christian?” If so, we are privileged to enjoy our relationship with Christ and to glorify the eternal God daily.

If you are not certain you belong to Christ, trust in Him now. He alone is mighty to save! If you have questions or need further explanation, please feel free to call the Church Office and speak with one of our elders.