

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” (Romans 3:24-25).

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:28).

The Christian Life

Having been given a new heart, this does not mean that we become perfect straight away. We still have the old nature within us, of which Christians are all too aware that it drags them back into their old ways time and time again. But once the new heart has been put within us, we can at least begin to please God, and the Christian life from then on is one of nurturing the new heart and mortifying the old heart as we slowly grow in the Christian faith:

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Romans 8:13).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but

yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” (Romans 6:12-13).

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18).

The Word of God

How do we do this? We must stick close to the Word of God. Only by becoming familiar with the Bible and its contents can we wean ourselves off the vain philosophies received by tradition from our fathers (1 Peter 1:18), and onto the truths of Christianity. We must be careful however. So many churches call themselves “Bible-believing,” yet they all teach different things. We should not follow men, or movements, but the Holy Spirit will teach us and lead us into all truth. Stick close to the Lord and He will not let us be led astray.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26).

“But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” (1 John 2:27).

Becoming a Christian

Misconceptions

On the subject of becoming a Christian, there are a lot of misconceptions.

Many people believe that they are born a Christian. Everyone has a culture which they are born into, and this is usually based on some religion, whether it be a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist or any other religion. Many think that being a Christian is similar, and speak particularly about European and American countries being “Christian” countries, as though all those born in these places are automatically “born” Christian. But we only have to take a quick look at these countries to realise that this is not so. In such countries church attendance is very low, and the vast majority believe that we all evolved from monkeys, everything happens by chance and when you are dead that is the end. This is atheism, and not Christianity at all. So we can’t say that anyone is born a Christian because of the culture they come from. The best we can say is that a few people may have had a Christian influence in their upbringing.

Some people think that becoming a Christian is like joining a club – you just become a member if you want to. But why join a church? A lot of people do join churches because they want friends or a social life. But why not join the local Women’s Institute or go to a whist drive or something else instead, if that’s what you want? Christianity is not merely a social club.

Other people think that they can give Christianity a try, as a sampler to see if it works, so they start going to church and joining in church activities. Invariably, of course, it doesn’t work for them, so they come away, give up church

altogether, and become very bitter against Christianity, saying, “Well I gave it a try and it didn’t work.” But why should God bother with anyone who is not going to be genuine with Him? We can’t just “give Him a try” to see if it works, because He will make sure it doesn’t work for us.

Finally, many, many people think they can strut into heaven based on their own good works. But this attitude does not take into account the sinful nature we all inherited by the fall of Adam. We can never do enough good works to please God, our sinful nature drags us back all the time:

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:8).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

So, we have a problem – our sin. Consequently, becoming a Christian is far more than any of these things.

The Problem

The sad fact is that we are all lost sinners, who not only cannot save ourselves, but by nature we do not even believe we need saving from our sins. Our hearts have been so dulled to the reality of things:

“The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psalm 14:2,3).

We need to recognise this fact before we can even begin to see the solution. Our sinful nature, of course, tries to conceal this from us, so most people in this world continue

on totally oblivious to any problem. This is what Christ said would happen:

“Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14).

This is not helped by the fact that in the church there are many false teachers who pander to this sinful nature and deny the seriousness of the situation, because immediately after the above quote, Christ warns His people to:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” (Matthew 7:15).

Yes, even many church leaders will say that everything is all right, we should not be negative, sin is not a problem, God will save everybody, so just feel good about yourselves and be happy. But this philosophy is the way of this present evil world. It won’t work in the end, because it is totally opposed to what the Bible actually teaches us about human nature.

The Solution

Firstly we need to recognise the problem. We must see our need of a Saviour before we can come to Him. Christ said:

“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.” (Mark 2:17).

Those who think they have no need of the doctor, will never go to him. Similarly, those who think they have no need of a Saviour, who think they are righteous in

themselves, will never go to Christ. Only those who see their sins and therefore their need of Christ will have a heartfelt, sincere, genuine desire to seek help from God. This is what we need. Once we see our inability to save ourselves, we can cry to God for mercy. *Then* God can begin to work in our hearts, grant us faith and repentance (both of which are gifts of God, we cannot whip them up ourselves), and bring us to a true saving knowledge of Himself.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke about a new heart which the LORD can give us:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Christ spoke about being “born again” (sadly, a much misunderstood phrase today):

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3).

And if we truly come to Christ for salvation, we become a “new creature”:

“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This is what it is to become a Christian. Christians are all those who have truly been born again of the Spirit of God, had a new heart put within them, and have been saved from the consequence of their sins by the substitutionary blood atonement purchased by Christ on the cross: