

The Profile of a Christian

“Some false brothers have infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves,” Paul emphatically declared. He sent this message to the church in about 58 a.d.. ⁽¹⁾

In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Greece, Paul referred to men who are “false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.” ⁽²⁾

How could Paul so boldly and confidently make declarations about people’s identity? How did he distinguish between who is Christian and who is not? ***Paul understood the profile of a Christian!***

It is absolutely crucial that we overcome the modern day tendency to regard profiling as evil, unjust and typical of the undereducated, the unwise and the bigoted.

The Right and Wrong Kinds of Judging

Jesus forcefully condemned looking down on others in order to elevate ourselves in our own eyes. “Judge not,” ⁽³⁾ warns us against the human tendency to find fault with others in order to establish our superiority. “I’m better than you because you’re inferior to me,” is the kind of judging Jesus hated and forbade. This is the wrong kind of judging.

Shortly after commanding us to “judge not,” Jesus warned us: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” ⁽⁴⁾ If there is a false brother and a false prophet, there must be a true brother and a true prophet. In other words, Jesus told us to judge.

However, this is not a judgment that condemns others in order to justify ourselves. This judging simply identifies the truthfulness or the falsehood of a person’s claims. “By their fruit you will *recognize* them.” ⁽⁵⁾ We must distinguish between Christians who are true followers of Jesus and people who say they are Christians, but do not love our Savior. “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” ⁽⁶⁾ This is the right kind of judging.

Were the Crusaders Christian?

During the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries a.d. several European armies invaded the area we call Israel in order to free Jerusalem from Muslim control. During their trek from Europe to the Middle East these forces committed atrocities against civilians. Upon entering Jerusalem they murdered Jews, Muslims and anyone else who happened to live in or near the city.

After September 11, 2001, some people in America compared the Muslim terrorist to the Crusaders. “Christian Crusaders acted like terrorists so why be

surprised if Muslims terrorize Christians?”

This twisted thinking comes about when people define Bible words according to their standards. They can't identify a true Christian because they don't know what one is. To them everyone who says they are a Christian must be one. But the world's definition of a Christian is totally inaccurate, because it isn't based on the words of Jesus and the Bible.

The word “Christian” was coined in the Middle Eastern city of Antioch in about 41 a.d.. Christian means “Christ-like” and was applied to the disciples of Jesus because they sought to emulate their Lord's lifestyle, actions and behavior. Consequently, the word “Christian” cannot possibly apply to the crusading armies who ravaged and rampaged through the Middle East.

The First Christians Believed and Turned to the Lord

Bible type Christianity is not merely a set of beliefs. Bible type Christianity accepts Jesus as the Son of God who lived a sinless life. Sinlessness qualified him to pay the penalty for our rebellion against God. Belief in Jesus requires us to admit our guilt of rebelling against the Lord. Then, we rely only on his blood to remove our guilt. This belief in Jesus and forgiveness of our sins rescues us from the family of Satan and brings us into the family of God. “To those who believe in his name he gave the right to become children of God.” ⁽⁷⁾

Not only did the people in Antioch place their faith in Jesus, but they also “turned to the Lord.” ⁽⁸⁾ They performed what the military calls an “about face.” They renounced their faith in Greek and Roman gods and followed Jesus. They rejected trust in self-effort and placed their hope totally in Jesus' effort to bring us to God. True Christians look only to Jesus for eternal life, victory over sin, peace of mind and intimacy with God's Spirit.

The First Christians' Lifestyle Changed

The church in Jerusalem sent a fine brother to assist the new believers in Antioch. “When he arrived [he] saw the evidence of the grace of God.” ⁽⁹⁾ In other words, Barnabas witnessed the radical lifestyle change of these new Christians. Lifestyle shows what's in our hearts. It is outer evidence of inner contents.

The Spirit of Jesus empowered these new converts to gladly obey the commands of God. They were no longer hateful, but loving. Praise for Jesus welled up from deep within them and poured forth from their lips. They valued the Bible, enjoyed it immensely and observed its directions. Their behavior, words, mannerisms and interests corresponded to Jesus' likeness. Barnabas knew they were Christians in reality, not merely in name. They fit the profile of a genuine Christian.

Let the Bible Mold You into Its Image

Both Jesus and the Bible are absolutely essential to knowing God personally. Therefore, we who love Jesus must let the Bible mold us into its image. Its description, or profile of a child of God, must become ingrained in our thoughts and affections. As a result, we will not be deceived when people name themselves Christian without having the Spirit of Jesus in their hearts.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” ⁽¹⁰⁾

Footnotes:

1. Galatians 2:4
2. 2 Corinthians 11:13
3. Matthew 7:1
4. Matthew 7:15
5. Matthew 7:20
6. John 7:24
7. John 1:12
8. Acts 11:21
9. Acts 11:23
10. Colossians 3:16

