

RECEIVING REDEMPTION

"What's It Mean To Be A Christian?"

Acts 14:5-7; 16:1-3; 17:13-15

INTRODUCTION:

What **DOES** it mean to be a Christian? Is it any **more important** than being an Elk? Or a Rotarian? Or any other service-oriented lodge member? *WE'RE ALL AWARE THAT BEING A CHRISTIAN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN OUR LIFE ... the ONLY WAY we can serve God acceptably here on earth!* The designed purpose of this lesson in the Bible classes today was that the *"students will choose to develop habits that will help them grow spiritually!"*

Today's lesson focuses particularly on **Timothy**, for the purpose of our understanding what it meant **TO HIM** to be a Christian. Paul probably converted Timothy on his first preaching tour, then he trained him to be one of the Lord's best servants. Many different things were incorporated into his training --- so he could be *most potent* in serving God! [READ TEXTS].

Acts 14:5-7-*"And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, 6 they [Paul & Barnabas] became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. 7 And they were preaching the gospel there."*

Acts 16:1-3-*"Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek."*

Acts 17:13-15-*"But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed."*

I. IT MEANS YOU HAVE BEEN BORN AGAIN, WITH ALL THE ATTENDANT BLESSINGS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND WOES!

A. The preaching of the gospel in the first century was for the purpose of **MAKING DISCIPLES** of Jesus Christ, **SAVING THEM** from their past sins, and **GIVING THEM A TASTE OF THE BLESSINGS** of God!

1. **DISCIPLING:** that's **just how Jesus commissioned** the apostles: Matt.28:18-19.
 - a) It doesn't matter **what actions we engage in**, if we're **NOT DOING IT** to be followers [*disciples*] of Jesus **WE'RE JUST NOT ACCEPTABLE** to GOD! Col.3:17; 1 Jno.2:3-4.
 - b) The Lord's designated path of obedience leads the one being discipled **into the Kingdom of God!** Jno.3:3-5.
2. **SALVATION:** that's *what the gospel was preached for:* 1 Cor.1:21-*" it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."* Rom.1:16.
 - a) It's as we defined it in our study last week: *"Salvation is a quality relationship granted in the mind of God when we are forgiven and BY WHICH we gain entrance into His family, or His church!"* Acts 2:47.
 - b) A Christian has been **released from the guilt of those past sins** [SAVED] which caused him to be separated from God ... *so now he is RECONCILED to God!*
3. **TASTE THE BLESSINGS:** that's why we're brought into relationship with God, that our **love might increase** into a life of delightful service, to the **obtaining of that eternal home!**

- a) **1 Pet 2:1-3**-*"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."*
- b) **Heb 6:4-6**-*"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God AND THE powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."*
- B. **Being a Christian** means we understand that the Bible sets exemplary actions on the part of its **HEROES** like Abraham, or David, **AND ESPECIALLY JESUS HIMSELF**, to show us what a right relationship with God will **vitalize in us!**
- The apostle Paul also used illustrations of the **olympic games** & of **boxing** & of **soldiers on duty** to impress the responsibilities and the perseverance needed and necessity of competing in the right realm and what it takes to WIN THE CROWN.
 - SO**, our using the illustration of the conversion of TIMOTHY and his development as a Christian is neither far-fetched nor foreign to the teachings of the NT, especially when WE'RE to be impressed to be trainees, IS IT?
 - And to be disciples of Jesus, you and I don't have to be great leaders like Joseph or Moses, nor bravely head an army going into battle like Gideon did!
 - We can just be an unobtrusive hero like Timothy was!**
 - WHAT MADE TIMOTHY A HERO OF THE FAITH?**
 - He **knew** the holy scriptures from an early age and **practiced** their precepts.
 - Although he may have been somewhat fearful or tempted to stay home, he took risks in doing the Lord's work, which even resulted in his imprisonment!
 - Timothy was one of the most caring people that Paul associated with. **Phil:2:19-21**-**"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, ... 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus."**
 - But while he ambitiously & eagerly sought to serve the Lord, one of his greatest attributes was his own realization of his need to continue to learn so he was a **ready & willing student** for Paul to **teach to grow in the faith!**
- C. **Being a Christian** means the "**ordinary**" people of God, those "**less than spectacular**" heroes of the faith, like Timothy [**and me, and perhaps you**], are important to God as those whose everyday activities, though NOT SENSATIONAL, **ARE consistent**, and **productive**, and **glorifying** to the Father!
- It's when efforts are consistent with abilities and opportunities and joys are based on a right relationship, rather than accomplishments or "productivity".
 - Being a Christian **allows the power** to overcome Satan's temptations and life's bitter struggles and maintain the courage to persevere!

II. BEING A CHRISTIAN ALSO MEANS ENDURING CARE TO SPIRITUAL DETAILS ARE REQUIRED FOR A GOD-SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIP!

- A. In order to become His children we, personally, put forth the efforts to become a part of the family of God --- **DO WE WANT TO REMAIN AS SUCH? It's a determination WE MUST DESIRE!**
- We were led to obey **what we felt in our own hearts**, complying with the **REQUISITES** of God! **Rom.6:16-18; Matt.7:21.**
 - We obeyed GOD**, and that's what got us into His kingdom!
 - We must **VOLUNTARILY continue our activity for God** if we want to **STAY** in His kingdom!

2. We have to **persevere** in meeting ***HIS requirements*** if we're going to **CONTINUE TO BE ACCEPTABLE HEIRS** in His family! Consider some pertinent questions:
 - a) What do you **have to do** to make a "sports" team? Do we really think we can "make the Lord's team" **WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING?**
 - b) What would happen if you quit practicing [or, trying] once you made the team?
 - c) One of the greatest attributes of an athlete is discipline! Does that have anything to do with our spiritual training?
 - d) What are some ways we can "***grow in our knowledge of God***"? **2 Pet.3:18.**
 - 1) Primarily, by having a sincere desire for spiritual growth! **1 Pet.2:1-2-**"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, **2** as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,"
 - 2) By a regular schedule of Bible studies and prayers.
 - 3) By associating with and paying attention to those who talk about spiritual development, who'll show how they're doing it, and who'll take others along to "share the knowledge"!
- B. Being a Christian means **recognizing our need for continued growth and development!**
 1. The principles we all recognize in the physical realm are also pertinent in the spiritual realm!
 - a) "I've eaten and exercised enough to get me to the age of - 30, 40, 60, 80, so that means I don't need to eat/exercise any more!" **W-R-O-N-G!**
 - b) Death is the only ***terminator*** of our ACTIVITIES: PHYSICALLY OR **FOR GOD!**
 2. Spiritually, food & exercise are both necessary ingredients for a good healthy life for Christ!
 - a) Sports teams have training camps to help the total person get into shape ... **what kind of "training camp"** would be necessary for us to ***serve Jesus Christ?*** **AND ISN'T THAT JUST WHAT A LOCAL CONGREGATION IS TO BE TO EACH MEMBER?**
 - b) How did Paul train Timothy? Truth/ Encouragement/ Assistance/ Cooperation/ Help.
- C. Being a Christian means **bearing up under discouragements**, and **not yielding when tempted**, and **being strong when persecuted**, and **being aggressively FOR the Lord and His cause!**
 1. Defensively, we must be prepared, with the shield of faith, to quench those fiery darts of the wicked one! **Eph.6:16.**
 - a) For our protection, God gives the ***strength to withstand*** any oppression. **1 Cor.10:13.**
 - b) Also defensively, just realize that anything that happens to Christians is common to all of them, and we're not ***"enduring more than anyone"***! **1 Pet.4:12-13-** "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; **13** but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."
 2. Offensively, we must train so that ***WE'RE ABLE TO PRODUCE RESULTS!***
 - a) The best defensive team in sports **CANNOT WIN** if *all they do is keep the other team from scoring!* **They must score themselves!**
 - b) As a Christian *we can have a long list of negatives* [I don't steal/ lie/ cheat/ do immoral things/ et al], **BUT OUR USABILITY FOR THE LORD IS DETERMINED BY OUR FRUIT!** **Matt.7:20-**"wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them!"

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, **what's it mean -- TO YOU -- for YOU to be a Christian!** Don't try to lay any responsibilities or burdens or guilt trips on **ME** ... just consider, personally, **what would it truly**

mean for you to be a *God-loving, sin-hating, Christ-following, church-serving, heaven-bound Christian?*

ONE FINAL QUESTION: *Do you realize you can be a Christian before you leave this building today? If that's a desirable option for you, why not obey Christ right now, while we stand and sing?*