

What Defines Your Christianity?

by Bill Willis

There is a trend in many Pentecostal, Full-Gospel, Holiness and other similar groups of denominations. I have seen this all of my life, having been raised in the Congregational Holiness church. In the last couple of years, though, it has become more obvious to me.

I am talking about the tendency of ministers in these denominations to define one's Christianity by what they do or how they act in the church service. They define one's Christianity by whether or not a person will shout, say "Amen", run, dance in the Spirit or be slain in the Spirit – all of which are perfectly acceptable and in most cases desirable in the church service. Unfortunately, those who do not manifest these specific characteristics in the church service are considered by many to be less spiritual, lacking the baptism of the Holy Ghost or simply not saved. On the other hand, those who do manifest these characteristics are considered to be model Christians. It is my intention to challenge this notion.

While those who are physically active in the service may very well be model Christians, their behavior does not guarantee it. On the other hand, those who are not physically active in the service may very well be spiritually dead, but their behavior also does not guarantee it. You see, the quality of a Christian cannot be judged by the way that they behave in the church service. It is defined by what we do when we go back outside the doors.

The word 'Christian' means Christ-like. While it is true that Jesus visited the synagogue from time to time, the majority of his last three years was spent among those who were oppressed by sin, sickness, demon possession and other similar afflictions. The "Christianity" of Jesus was defined by what he did outside of the church, just as ours is. Christians can no longer greedily seek their own blessings at the expense of those outside of the church walls who need to be ministered to.

Please keep in mind that the purpose of this article is not to condemn those who are simply teaching the traditions that their fathers and grandfathers taught them. The purpose here is to encourage all Christians to concern themselves less with how people act in the church service and concentrate more on doing the work of a Christian and demonstrating Christian characteristics out in the world.

If you are wondering what I mean by demonstrating Christian characteristics, you need only to look at two passages of scripture to get a good start. First, the fruit of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
(Galatians 5:22-23 KJV)

And second, the Spiritual gifts:

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.
(1 Corinthians 12:7-11 KJV)

Anyone who exhibits these Spiritual fruit and gifts will not have to tell anyone that they are a Christian – it

will be no secret. I have heard some who say, “Wouldn’t it be great if when people looked at us, they saw Jesus.” If they do not, it is because these fruit and gifts are not seen by others – just as Christian works are seldom seen. It is important that we perform the tasks that the Master has laid before us. To get an idea of what kind of work that we have to do, consider the following passage.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

(Matthew 25:31-46 KJV)

The group on his left hand will include those who manifest physically in church and those who don’t, just as the group on his right hand will.

Please keep in mind that it is not our job to mold Christians into what we think they should be. The Holy Ghost is perfectly able to mold them into what God wants them to be. We must share Jesus with the lost and show Christ’s love and power to all men and women.

So, you see, it’s not what you do inside the church that counts, it’s what you do outside.