

What Saith the Scripture?

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How to Become a Christian

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Willingness to obey Christ is to be a Christian, where you can honestly say to God, "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Just as your willingness to obey Christ indicates your Christianity, your unwillingness to do so separates you "from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our LORD" (Romans 8:39). You became a sinner by your willing transgression of the Law of Love, "for sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4); and, it was that sin which separated you from God. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). Speaking only of *your* responsibility to God, your willingness or unwillingness to obey Christ must be at the seat of your acceptance or rejection *by* Christ, for "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath [e.g., you are accepted by what you are willing to do]" (2Corinthians 8:12). In other words, Christ looks upon and judges the supreme seat of your moral agency-- your heart. "I am He which searcheth the reins [Greek, *nephros*, inmost purposes] and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Revelation 2:23).

Make no mistake, you only deceive yourself that you are willing to obey Christ, if you do not immediately obey Him at every opportunity afforded you. "19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 1:19-20). It is simply a lie to profess your love of Christ, without a demonstration of your professed obedience. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4). You can debate with man whether or not you are willing, but not with God, for He has declared, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10). Alas, it is true what the All Knowing God has affirmed of you-- and, every human being-- "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Why should you lose your soul, because you refuse to renounce yourself and rest in Christ alone? "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

What does Christ expect you to obey? "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). What is the Gospel? "1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1Corinthians 15:1-4). Why such an emphasis upon Christ's death? "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1Peter 3:18). And, why the Resurrection? "4 Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5). Briefly, Evangelical Repentance is a voluntary

change of mind, of heart, of willing, of feeling, *and of life*, in respect to Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a New Creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Corinthians 5:17).

What does it mean to believe in Christ, i.e., "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31)? It cannot only be the intellectual affirmation that Jesus is God, that He lived a sinless life, that He was crucified, that He made a Substitutionary Atonement for the sins of mankind, or even that He bodily arose from the grave. "19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:19-20). Evangelical Faith is that trust or confidence in God, and in Christ, that commits the whole soul to Him in all His relations to us. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). Only a limited understanding of this would keep Christ from becoming the *very life* of all those who are truly Christian. "4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. 5 I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). Trusting Jesus must mean more than no longer being afraid of Hell fire; instead, the Spirit of Christ must teach us the fullest meaning of: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30). Since it is necessary for him "that nameth the name of Christ" (2Timothy 2:19) to persevere unto the end, i.e., "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22), we do well to trust as much of Christ as we can comprehend! "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). And so, the Spirit of Christ challenges us to lay hold of His Promises, e.g., "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Submission to Christ marks you as a True Christian, for True Submission is yielding obedience to God. "Submit yourselves therefore to God" (James 4:7). When God demands your submission, it is the highest possible evidence that you are capable of submitting, for "His Commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3). Charles G. Finney once said, "No person ever sought religion, and yet remained irreligious. What is religion? It is obeying God. Seeking religion is seeking to obey God. The soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the soul of a Christian." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Who has ever found a man, who has truly sought to submit himself to Christ, without becoming a Christian? "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). Christ may be found only with your whole heart. "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Make no mistake, your ability to refuse immediate submission to Him, likewise indicates His readiness to forsake you forever. But, why would you? "The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2Chronicles 15:2).

You will notice that the origin of the motivation for you to become a Christian, which is the Love of God, has not been discussed, but we will, if that will compel you to come speedily to Christ. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16). If God's Love moved Him to make His Sacrifice for us, why should you not cease your rebellion and place your utmost confidence in Him for time and

eternity? "6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth His Love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His Life" (Romans 5:6-10). If you value at all the Friendship of Jesus Christ, then you will submit to Him immediately as your Saviour and LORD. "13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:13-14).

Thus far, neither has mention been made of the "Grace of God that bringeth Salvation" (Titus 2:11); not because it is unimportant, but simply because we have attempted to limit our discussion to *your* responsibility in "How to Become a Christian." Still, it would be negligent for us to leave anyone with too large an impression of the agency of man in becoming a Christian. "5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace ye are saved;) 6 and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus: 7 that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His Grace in His Kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by Grace are ye saved through Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the Gift of God: 9 not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:5-9). The Almighty has been watching you since the Beginning. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in Love" (Ephesians 1:4). If you should ever repent and believe the Gospel, then you would find the Truth of Christ's Words: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). But, what hardness, if you would stiffen against the Love of God! "10 Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins... 19 We love Him, because He first loved us" (1John 4:10, 19). And, if you were to hide behind such truths as arguments against your immediate submission to Christ, then God labels you "reprobate [Greek, *adokimos*, rejected, castaway] concerning the Faith" (2Timothy 3:8). Mark it down, though Christ invites you to come to Him, i.e., "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), as a Just Judge, He would necessarily resign you to your damnation, i.e., "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), if you persist in your rebellion. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the Second Death" (Revelation 21:8).

Finally, do not confuse your ability to immediately obey Christ with the certainty that you ever will, unless of course, you submit to Christ even now. "To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7). No amount of Bible study or introspective prayer can take the place of heartfelt submission to God. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Do not delay turning to Christ, for "ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). May the reader of this tract find his name written down in the Book of Life! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Amen, and Amen.

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