

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,*

*holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Are You a Genuine Christian?

I have often pointed out that there is a difference between being a child of God and being a genuine Christian. As strange as it might sound, not all who are God's children are Christians, although one must be in God's family in order to be a Christian. To enter God's family one must obey the gospel of Christ. Obedience to the gospel involves hearing the gospel, believing its message, that is, that Jesus is the Son of God, repenting of one's sins, confessing one's faith with the mouth, and being buried in baptism. To substantiate these requisites as being a part of obeying the gospel, look at the following passages: John 6:44, 45; Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38.

Anyone who will follow these passages will be added to God's family. However, many, who become God's children, do not live as they should after entering God's family. Paul summed up the Christian's responsibility after being baptized into Christ in Rom. 6:4 where he writes that we should "*walk in newness of life.*" Genuine Christians do not pick up their same old life style after obeying the gospel. They put off the old man and put on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24). They become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Those who refuse to walk worthy of their new vocation, as Paul urged (Ephesians 4:1), really are not Christians. Oh yes, they are in God's family, for once one becomes a child of God, he will always be a child of God, at least while here on earth. However, this does not mean that one is in fellowship with God when he is living contrary to God's will (1 John 1:5-7). Who has fellowship with God? Christians, i.e., those who are walking in the light. It is not the case, though, that all of God's children who profess to walk in the light, are actually doing so, and those who are not walking in the light, are not genuine Christians. So, what are some things involved in being a genuine Christian?

### ONE WHO LOVES THE LORD

There is no way for a person to be a Christian without truly loving Christ. A Christian is one who trusts and obeys the Lord. He is one who has resolved to follow in His footsteps, that is, to imitate His way of living, or to pattern himself after the great example set forth by our Lord (1 Peter 2:21). Who will follow one whom he does not love? Such a following, void of admiration, respect and love, would only be temporary. When things are not just the way this follower wants them to be, he will simply quit following. Do you remember those who followed Jesus after He fed them miraculously? They followed Jesus for the wrong reason. They followed Him, not because they loved Him, but because He filled their bellies (John 6:26). So, when Jesus said some things that these followers did not like, they ceased following Him. John said, "*From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*" You see, they really did not love Him. This will most likely be the end result of all those who love not the Lord. Their following will be temporary.

### ONE WHO OBEYS THE LORD

Obedying the Lord goes hand in hand with loving the Lord because a lack of obedience is a sure sign of a lack of love. Jesus Himself declared, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). It is these people who love and obey Jesus who are true Christians. They are the ones who shall reap the joys of eternal life. The Hebrews writer said that Jesus is the author of eternal salvation for all that obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). The Hebrews writer understood that salvation was only promised to the obedient, for those willing to obey Jesus

are the genuine Christians in the world. As far as the disobedient are concerned, the only promise they have is to be punished with an everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). Will there be some in the family of God who shall experience that dreadful fate? Yes! Will there be genuine Christians who experience everlasting destruction? No! Why? Because true Christians obey God.

### ONE WHO IS A SERVANT OF CHRIST

Finally, a genuine Christian is one who willingly serves Christ. I know that obeying Christ and serving Christ sound redundant, but actually there is a difference. Serving has to do with one's attitude, and one's attitude has a lot to do with whether or not a person is a Christian. A person who realizes that he is a servant of Christ will strive to serve Christ in every way. He will not simply obey direct commandments from the Bible, he will go the extra mile in trying to further the cause here on earth. Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ. Thus, he served Christ by serving others because he knew that it was in the best interest of the cause of Christ to do so. Paul had the mind of Christ, and it was that mind that truly made him Christ-like.

Are you a genuine Christian? If not, why not become one while there is still time to do so?

*Don*

## What Did She Just Say?

**T**hat was my reaction when I first heard what Victoria Osteen recently said in a sermon she preached. Yes, even though Mrs. Osteen is a woman, and even though the scriptures command that women are not to teach or usurp authority of a man (1 Timothy 2:11-12), she is the co-pastor of the large church where her husband, Joel, preaches. What is it that she said? Here it is:

*"I just want to encourage every one of us to realize when we obey God, we're not doing it for God—I mean, that's one way to look at it—we're doing it for ourselves, because God takes pleasure when we're happy. That's the thing that gives Him the greatest joy. So, I want you to know this morning: Just do good for your own self. Do good because God wants you to be happy. When you come to church, when you worship Him, you're not doing it for God really. You're doing it for yourself, because that's what makes God happy. Amen?"*

Mrs. Osteen, like her husband, is obsessed with "positive preaching." Their strategy is to make everybody feel good and to have a real positive experience when they go to their services so that they keep coming back. As a result of this, they preach things like "God wants you to be happy," and, "God takes pleasure when we're happy." Now, there could be some truth to that, depending on one's concept of happiness and on what a person is doing to be happy. There is no doubt that God wants us to have joy in our life. After all, joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). However, our happiness isn't on the top of God's priority list. God would rather that we be holy and saved than to be happy and severed from His Son. Furthermore, it is true that nothing we do can benefit God for He is totally self-sustaining. Remember, we need God, not the other way around. Still, when we worship or serve God in any way, our mind should not be on self and what we benefit from it, it should be on God and giving Him glory. To say that when we obey God we are doing it for ourselves, not for God, is to confuse the benefit of serving God with our motives for serving Him, and it

reduces our worship to a humanistic form of serving by which we become the center of attention instead of God. This is the kind of preaching, though, that one can expect when pleasing man becomes more important than pleasing God. Denying self is the true way of Christ (Matthew 16:24; Philippians 2:1-3).

*Don*