

Characteristics of True Christianity # 3

Characteristics That Define Our Actions

Our Expectations Produce Actions

We all have expectations of what we **“EXPECT”** to happen on the job, in our marriages, our church, our vacations, whatever!

- We plan and act (**take Action**) according to our expectations.
- A deer hunter will find a spot (**take action**) to wait for his prey in a place where he **EXPECTS** the deer to travel.
- A golfer will look down the fairway, pick out a spot 200 yds ahead (**take action**) and **EXPECT** to hit the ball to that spot.

I've learned a long time ago:

If someone is not moving forward and making progress in the Lord:

- It's usually because: **They don't expect to change**; No Action Taken!
- They don't want to change, No Action Taken!
- They don't believe things can change! No Action Taken!
- So, **They don't take action nor do they expect much!**

James 2:17-18 - 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

True Faith Always results in changed lives and good deeds!

- True faith **always** results in good deeds, but the deeds **do not** justify us.
- Faith brings us **salvation**; **active obedience** demonstrates that our faith is genuine.

Loving service **does not** substitute for faith in Christ, but rather, it verifies one's faith in Christ.

In this series of messages, we have been looking at

The characteristics of true Christianity. In the first message we looked at:

Characteristics that define the transformation process in our lives.

In the second message we looked at those: **Characteristics that define who we are in Christ.**

We have been using **Peter**, one of Christ's early **followers** and **disciples** as our example and illustration of **true Christianity**.

Peter's life was transformed from *a profane fisherman* to ***a mature Christian***, who had **all of these defining characteristics** operating in his life.

Peter was not perfect, yet we see him as ***one who as striving to walk in*** these **Christ-like characteristics**.

In this message today, ***I want to look at those characteristics that define our actions as Christians***. These are **marks of a true Christian**.

Characteristics That Define Our Actions

1. **We Are Called to Serve** - The classic example of **our call to serve** is the illustration ***Jesus used of Himself when He washed His disciples' feet***.

We **must be like Jesus** and put on the servant's apron:

John 13:14-15 - 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

A nineteenth century painting shows a long row of beggars waiting in a soup line. They are all ragged and sleazy looking. But around the head of one, barely perceptible, is a halo. One of them is Christ! You may see **no halo** around the heads of ***your brothers and sisters in need***, yet ***to serve them is to serve Christ***, for the King is hidden in them.

Matthew 25:35-40 - 35 When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, 36 and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me."

37 Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, "When did we give you something to eat or drink? 38 When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear 39 or visit you while you were sick or in jail?"

40 The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."

- God has given to each one of **gifts and talents** that are **to be used in our service** to one another.
- **We are all called to serve** the Lord and one another in various ways.

Peter was exhorted by Jesus to be a humble servant using his gifts to feed the sheep and the lambs. Now Peter after fulfilling his calling in his own life exhorts us as fellow believers to do likewise.

1 Peter 4:10 - Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well.

What is the meaning of life?

Is it how long we live, how famous we become, or how rich we are at retirement?

Jesus says that the measure of life is in our service, the good we do for others. *Out of this spirit has come every* Christian college and school, orphanage and beneficial work in the world.

"It is not the talents one has that makes him great,* however many and brilliant they may be; **it is not** the vast amount of study that gives mental enrichment to the mind and life; **it is not** in shining social qualities; **it is not** the large accumulation of wealth that secures peace and honor. ***In none of these measured by God's standards does greatness reside.**

True greatness consists in the use of all the talents one has in unselfish ministry to others."

2. We Are Called to Sacrifice

We are called to live our lives in a manner that shows that we are continually giving of ourselves and **laying our lives down as a living sacrifice.**

This is our reasonable service. It is a very important characteristic **that determines how much fruit we produce** for Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Sacrifice entails picking up our cross and following Jesus wherever He chooses to take us. It involves being at that place **where He sees the need.**

Matthew 16:25 - For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

John 12:26 - Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

Peter's life was continually a living example of this kind of sacrifice.

- There were many places that **the Lord led him**, of which were a **personal sacrifice to him**.
- After being released from prison by the angel, he had to leave the comforts of his home in Jerusalem and **go to areas he was not** totally familiar with.
- He was led to **the house of Corneilus** to help bring them **into the salvation experience**.
- ***This was a sacrifice to him***, because he was not comfortable being around Gentiles.

3. We Are Called to A Walk - We are called to a walk that consists of many areas **that bring us into greater maturity as true Christian believers.**

Ephesians 4:1 - Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ - 4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to **live a life worthy of the calling** you have received.

2 Corinthians 5:7 - For **we walk by faith, not by sight.**

Galatians 5:16 - Walking in the Spirit - I say then: **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Ephesians 5:15 - Walk in Wisdom - 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

2 John 1:4 - Walk in Christ's Commandments - I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

1 John 1:7 - But **if we walk in the light** as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Again, if you **look at the life of Peter** you see that **he exemplified these areas**. He was a man who walked by faith in the Spirit, walked in the light. **You never see where he went back to live in Capernaum.**

- 4. We Are Called to Spiritual Warfare - Ephesians 6:10-13 - The Whole Armor of God** - 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the [a]wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [b]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

As I CLOSE this message, let me leave you with this story about heavyweight boxing champion Joe Lewis.

Joe Lewis was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. He fought, if I recall correctly, 71 times professionally; he lost only once. During the decade and a half, he held his title, he defended it 25 times.

Bill Stern, the voice of American sports on radio, decided toward the end of the Brown Bomber's career that he would interview him and find out ***the technique or the secret that Lewis employed in fighting his opponents*** and how he could win over people who were at times much larger than he.

His answer was very simple "I study my opponent. *I plan my fight very carefully.* The results are always the same.

- I'm never surprised, and I stay on the offensive.

That's pretty good counsel for dealing with the devil.

Satan wins many of his attacks and victories because he surprises us.

- We continually live shocked.
- The believer has no reason to be shocked, intimidated or surprised by the attack of the enemy – none whatsoever.

In conclusion, we can see that there are four major characteristics that define our actions as Christians:

We are called to serve, we are called to sacrifice, we are called to a walk, we are called to spiritual warfare.

These are very important characteristics that must be developed in all our lives as Christians.

Characteristics That Define Our Actions - Our Expectations Produce Actions

We plan and act according to our expectations

If someone is not moving forward and making progress in the Lord:

- It's usually because: They don't expect to change; Time for Action!
- They don't want to change, Time for Action!
- They don't believe things can change! Time for Action!
- They don't take action, nor do they expect much! Time for Action!
- Time to expect much!

Corrie ten Boom once said that if the devil can't make you sin, he'll make you busy.

There's truth in that.

Both sin and busyness have the exact same effect—they cut off connection to God, to other people, and even to your own soul.