

DO I REALLY BELIEVE?

March 23, 2014

An ABC news poll found that 83 percent of Americans identified with Christianity (<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=90356&page=1>). According to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, a Christian is someone who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ. That is a very important statement because if one professes belief in Christ they will, of course, want to be obedient to His teachings.

There are those in the religious world that claim to believe in Christ, yet they do not follow His teachings. Some of those people claim that Christ is not deity, but that He was created by God. Some claim that they were given additional scripture by the hand of angels, yet their teachings quite openly contradict New Testament teachings. There are organizations that revere their leaders as if they were gods themselves and refer to him as Christ's vicar on earth (a vicar serves as a substitute for Christ on earth). There are groups of people that claim today that they can perform the same miracles that we read of in the New Testament, yet they choose not to raise the dead, heal those with missing or withered limbs, or feed thousands with just a few fish. They also ignore Paul's clear statement that the miraculous would end with the completion of the New Testament (1 Cor. 13).

Recognizing that many spread false teachings, it would be a fair question to ask those individuals, "Do you really believe in Christ while teaching things that He never did teach?" John recorded Jesus saying, "**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**" (Jn. 15:14). As people who want to be followers of Christ and obedient to His wishes, we have to be obedient to His commandments. If we are not obedient to His commandments, one could fairly ask, "Are you a true believer?"

Abraham was called the friend of God because he did all that God commanded him to do (2 Chron. 20:7). James said that Abraham believed God (Js. 2:23) and his belief led him to obey God and do what he was commanded to do (Heb. 11:8-10). If Abraham had claimed a belief in God, yet did not leave Ur to go to the land to which God would guide him, it could not be said that he was the friend of God.

Likewise, if we claim to believe in Jesus Christ, yet we do not accept the things that He has taught us to do, it cannot be said that we are His friends (Jn. 15:14). If we will submit to His will and do the things that He asks us to do, then we can truly claim a friendship and a fellowship with the Son of God and be considered faithful in His sight. In our actions, others will be able to see our obedience to Him as we fulfill the duties He has given all Christians!

The secular definition of Christian simply states that a Christian is one that claims a belief in Jesus. The Biblical definition of a Christian is much different. According to the scripture, a Christian is a "follower" of Christ. Being a follower of Christ entails certain things which include obedience to Him initially and then continued obedience throughout life.

Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). It is paramount that we understand what it means to believe! Paul is not talking about a mere mental agreement that Christ is our Savior! When we believe in something, we do the things necessary that are associated with it.

A believer accepts what Christ taught concerning salvation beginning with faith (Jn. 8:24), repentance (Mt. 8:24), confession (Mt. 10:32-33), baptism (Mk. 16:16), and completing His commandment of faithful living (Mt. 24:13; Rev. 2:10)? Without the fulfillment of those commandments, it is not possible to say we believe. There is no reason to lose out on eternal life because of a refusal to do something that is so easy to accomplish. Christ has not asked us to do anything that is impossible to complete.

Let each of us ask ourselves, “Do I really believe?” Paul commanded Christians to “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). May we all examine our lives and come to the proper conclusion of whether we are in the faith or not. If we are not, then it is of the utmost importance to change those things and become friends of Jesus through obedience to His gospel plan of salvation and faithful living.

Never take the word of a man or woman over the word of Christ and the inspired writers of the Bible, who were led by the Holy Spirit. We can know whether or not we keep His commandments and by that we know we are saved (1 Jn. 2:3). God has not left to chance the salvation of His creation because He has given very clear commandments on how we can attain it!