

WHO SHOULD BE CALLED A CHRISTIAN ?

by Elder Bob Allgood

"If ye be reproached for the NAME OF CHRIST, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a CHRISTIAN, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" I Peter 4:14-16

The word Christian is not a Biblical name that should be tossed around in a loose manner without respect. It is the NAME OF CHRIST applied to one of his "followers". It describes a child of God as a "follower of Christ" who is "Christ-like" in his beliefs and actions. The word is used only three times in all of Scripture. It is never designated as, or intended to be, a name for every member of God's family. It is not a name given to every new born child of God. It is not a name given to everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ. You can not find in the word of God where Jesus or any of the Apostles ever called a child of God a Christian. The name was given to the Disciples first at Antioch (probably) by the Gentiles in order to distinguish the "true followers of Christ" from the unbelieving Jews.

No where in the word of God can you find where a child of God ever calls himself a Christian. Any child of God who thinks he deserves to be call himself a Christian should read the words of Paul who said "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners; of whom I am chief". Paul thought of himself as a "wretched man" and said "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18-25). If Paul, who was a true "follower of Christ" never called himself a Christian, who should call himself a Christian ? The answer is none ! Why then do we find this name being so misused and abused today ?

Paul told King Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29) that he knew that he BELIEVED the prophets. If Paul knew what he was talking about (and he did), then King Agrippa was a BELIEVER, and as such a child of God. Since the natural man can not receive or believe the Word of God or the things of God (see John 8:47, 10:24-27, and I Cor. 2:14) King Agrippa must have had spiritual understanding of the prophets in order to believe them. But King Agrippa was not a Christian ! He said to Paul "Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian (to be a follower of Christ). Here we have a "believer" who is not a "Christian". Why then should we call all believers Christian ?

In Acts 8:9-20 the Bible tells about Simon the sorcerer who "himself believed also" and was baptized. He then tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter told him "Thy money perish with thee". Simon was a baptized believer, but he was not a "Christian". In Acts 5:1-11 we are told of Ananias and Sapphira, who were both believers and baptized members of the church. They lied to God. Peter did not say "Now you Christians are going to be punished because of your sin". Jesus spoke of those who would say "Lord, Lord", speaking and doing many wonderful things in the NAME OF THE LORD. But he said to them "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus did not call everyone who names the name of the Lord a Christian. Why then do we find so many ministers using the name Christian so loosely ?

"The disciples (pupils, learners of Christ) were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). These disciples were MEMBERS of the TRUE CHURCH of the living God and LEARNERS of the word of God. In order to be a MEMBER of the TRUE Gospel church one must give testimony to having been born of God's Spirit; confess that they are a Believer in Christ and the grace of God; and FOLLOW CHRIST in the act of Scriptural water baptism. Scriptural water baptism can only be administered by the authority of the TRUE Gospel church. Therefore children of God who are not MEMBERS of the TRUE church can not be called Christian, since they have never followed the Lord Jesus Christ in Scriptural water baptism. Why then do we find so many ministers, and even some Primitive Baptist Elders, calling UNBAPTIZED professing believers, CHRISTIANS.

In our text Peter indicates that suffering in the NAME OF CHRIST or in a "Christ-like" manner will warrant the use of the adjective Christian. This fact alone eliminates ninety nine percent of those who are falsely called Christians. Peter also tells us that suffering as a thief or evildoer is not suffering as a Christian. A thief is one that takes that which is not his. Many who claim to be children of God try to take from God his glory by adding their own works of righteousness to his free grace. Most, who are erroneously called Christians, say they had to accept Jesus; do this or do that in order to become a child of God. What did Christ ever do in order to become the Son of God. He was born God's Son! If anyone tries to take glory away from God's grace he is a thief. How then can he be called a "Christian" ? If any man glory "let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor 1:31). It is EVIL to teach false doctrine! Christ did not teach lies and false doctrines? On what Biblical authority do men call teachers and believers of false doctrine "Christians"? Jesus condemned those who named the name of God and taught for commandments the doctrines of men as "Hypocrites"! Today they are called

Christians ! Is this not blasphemous to the precious name of Christ ? Is it not profaning the name of Christ our Saviour ? Yes it is, and it ought not to be so !

I can understand why the Arminians use the Name of Christ so loosely and call everyone "a Christian". On the other side we used the name Christian so loosely that it lost all of it's meaning. We talked about "Backsliding Christians" and even "Carnal Christians". That is like talking about holy devils or sanctified demons. We went to Christian Book Stores that sold all kinds of IDOLS and religious books that taught heresy. We went to the so called "Christian Movies" that were made in the Hollywood, the Devils playground. Everybody and anybody who gave lip service to God or Christ was called a Christian.

The precious name of Christ is continually blasphemed and profaned through the MISUSE and ABUSE of the name CHRISTIAN. You can hear it on religious television and read it in religious writings. The Arminian Universalist who deny the grace of God in favor of "Man's free will" are usually the ones who are guilty. But lately, I am sorry to say, I have noticed some Primitive Baptist Elders using the name Christian very loosely.

It is very sad to see this kind of thing creep into the Old Line Primitive Baptist Church. I am told by the older Elders that just a few years ago it was not so. Brethren, it should not be so today. Perhaps some of our dear Elders are reading too many Arminian books. Some may be leaving the Old Paths without realizing where they are going or what they are doing. My prayer is that they will "Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls". Remember when you call someone a Christian you apply the NAME OF CHRIST to them saying they are a "follower of Christ" or "Christ-like" in their belief and actions.

Written in love and concern. Brother Bob Allgood