

LENEXA EDIFIER

“and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)

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Just A Christian

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When people ask me what I am religiously, I reply, “a Christian.” If they want to know what kind, I reply, “I try to be a good one.”

Christians are disciples of Christ (**Acts 11:25-26**), followers and learners of Jesus Christ. Christians are *“in Christ.”* (**2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:3-12; 2 Timothy 2:10**) To get into Christ, one must be *“buried with Him through baptism into death”* (**Romans 6:3-4**) *“from the heart”* (**Romans 6:17-18**), i.e., with sincerity and understanding (**Ephesians 6:5-8; Matthew 13:15-16**). Baptism is unto the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). Thus, those and only those people who have with sincerity and understanding been immersed unto the remission of sins are Christians.

The word “denomination” is not found in the Bible. However, the New Testament mentions denominations a number of times under a different name. The Jews in the days of the Lord and His apostles were divided into *“sects”* (**Acts 5:17; 15:5**). A “sect” is “a division or group based upon different doctrinal opinions and/or loyalties” (Louw & Nida. 11.50). The sects of the Jews believed and taught doctrines at variance with each other and wore party names as an indication of sectarian loyalty (**Acts 23:6-8**). The Jews even considered Christians to be a sect of Judaism (**Acts 24:5; 28:22**) and derisively called them *“Nazarenes”* (**Acts 24:5**). Paul implied Christians were not a sect (**Acts 24:14**).

The same Greek word rendered “sect” is also translated *“factions”* (**1 Corinthians 11:19**) and *“heresies”* (**Galatians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:1**). The word primarily means “a choosing, choice...; then, that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially a *self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects...*” (Vine. 2:217).

Everyone has opinions, things he thinks are true but cannot prove by the Bible. If he treats his opinions as if they were divine revelation, by teaching them as divine truth and/or insisting that others follow them, he becomes an heretic (**Titus 3:10-11, King James Version**) or divisive man (New King James Version),

and must be rejected (Ibid). Heresies (sectarianism) is a work of the flesh that will keep one from inheriting the kingdom of heaven (**Galatians 5:19-21**).

The brethren at Corinth were dividing into factions (**1 Corinthians 1:11**). This was a reflection of carnality (**1 Corinthians 3:1-3**), which will cause one to be lost (**Romans 8:5-8**). They had sectarian loyalties demonstrated by their sectarian names (**1 Corinthians 1:12**). The apostle rebuked their sectarianism (**1 Corinthians 1:13**). He urged them:

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (**1 Corinthians 1:10**).

This verse contains the keys to being just a Christian. We must speak the same thing, have no divisions, and have the same mind and judgment. Doctrine does matter. Those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ lose fellowship with God and His people (**2 John 9-11**). The *“doctrine of Christ”* is not limited to the truth about the nature of Christ Jesus (**verse 7**). It includes all divine truth (**verse 4**). To truly be disciples of Christ, our faith, teaching and practice must be limited to those things clearly authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ (**Colossians 3:17**).

If we believe, practice and teach things unauthorized by the New Testament, we are sectarian (denominational). If we make our opinions, whether formalized as creeds or catechisms or unwritten, the standard by which we determine fellowship, we are sectarian.

Furthermore, we must not be guilty of sectarian loyalty as reflected by party names (**1 Corinthians 1:12**). As individuals, we may be called *“believers”* (**Acts 5:14**), *“disciples”* (**Acts 9:1**), *“saints”* (**Acts 9:13**), *“Christians”* (**Acts 11:25-26**) or *“members”* (**1 Corinthians 11:27**). As a group, whether local or universal, we may be called *“the church”* (**Acts 8:3**), *“the Way”* (**Acts 9:1-2**), the church of Christ (**Romans 16:16**), *“the church of God”* (**1 Corinthians 1:2**), *“the church of the living God”* (**1 Timothy 3:14-15**), or *“the general assembly and church of the firstborn”* (**Hebrews**

12:23-24, plural, indicating membership). All these names are used to include all scripturally baptized believers in their relationship to Christ and God.

If we have loyalty to a religious party, a group larger than a local church and smaller than the universal body of the saved, we are denominational. This party loyalty is reflected by party names. Sectarian names include the various denominational names (Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, etc.) but also names of less formal parties (Conservative, Liberal, etc.). We can also show sectarianism by insisting on only one divinely authorized name for God's people, whether as individuals or as a group, to the exclusion of others. Those who claimed, "*I am of Christ*," were also a party (**1 Corinthians 1:12**).

I'm just a Christian (believer, disciple, saint, member). I'm striving to be a good one. What about you?

Ever Learning But Unable To Know The Truth!

by Wayne Goff

Paul taught us that there are those who are "*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*," 2 Timothy 3:7. I wonder if that doesn't include those who delve deeply into "theology" while always escaping the pure truth of the gospel. Gospel preachers I have known once called denominational seminaries "cemeteries" because of their inability to convert the human mind to the truth. Country wisdom says it's better not to know so many things than to know so many things which are not so!

Adam Clarke made this comment on the above verse: "*Ever learning*. From their false teachers, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, because that teaching never leads to the truth;... There are many professors of Christianity still who answer the above description. They hear, repeatedly hear, it may be, good sermons; but, as they seldom meditate on what they hear, they derive little profit from the ordinances of God. They have no more grace now than they had several years ago, though hearing all the while, and perhaps not wickedly departing from the Lord. They do not meditate, they do not think, they do not reduce what they hear to practice; therefore, even under the preaching of an apostle, they could not become wise to salvation."

Stop and reflect on his statement because there is

much truth to what he says. You can hear the truth. You can believe the truth. But you must practice the truth, and continue in it. My father often said "Sitting in a church building won't make you a Christian any more than sitting in a hen house will make you a chicken!" One is required to "go to church," but that is just a small part of it. Transformation of lives is required of us all.

The CONTEXT shows us that Paul is speaking of those who "*have a form of godliness*" (v. 5). Jesus' description of the scribes and Pharisees of His day fits the bill perfectly, **Matthew 23:2-7**. They love to tell others what to do, but they will not do them. They act to be seen of men and not God. They put on a big religious show, but they are hypocrites! The "*woes*" of **Matthew 23:13-32** show their false teaching. If one practices what they preach, then he will be lost eternally as well just like his teacher!

Albert Barnes said of these people: "They may learn many things, but the true nature of religion they do not learn. There are many such persons in the world, who, whatever attention they may pay to religion, never understand its nature. Many obtain much speculative acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity, but never become savingly acquainted with the system..."

The IVP New Testament Background Commentary says of this verse that it refers to the widespread Jewish traditions which are not found in the Bible! It suggested reading segments from the Dead Sea Scrolls and Pseudo-Philo to get an idea of what Paul specifically has in mind. This concept has merit because Paul identifies Jannes and Jambres as two who resisted Moses with their falsehoods in the Old Testament. History tells us of the many, many Jewish sects with all their varying doctrines. Today we have Catholic and Protestant churches that teach things contrary to "*sound doctrine*." We must identify and avoid them too.

Finally, Matthew Henry's Commentary has this to say about **2 Timothy 3:7**. "In one sense we must all be ever learning, that is, growing in knowledge, following on to know the Lord, pressing forward; but these were skeptics, giddy and unstable, who were forward to imbibe every new notion, under pretense of advancement in knowledge, but never came to a right understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus." So let us *grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, **2 Peter 3:18**. But some professing to be followers of Christ have become instead great students of John Calvin, or Augustine, or some other great(?) theologian! They study deep and long on doctrines that

have little merit from a biblical standpoint but which seem to be pretty decent once the intellectual entanglements have been developed! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, beware of these men and women! They are all around us today, and they have an enticement through supposed education and have the financial backing of large institutions, but they are not of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several times Jesus chided the “scholars” of His day by asking the simple question: *“Have you never read?”* This must have chafed these men who prided themselves in knowing the Scriptures, but Jesus was telling them that they never really understood them! Be careful not to spend too much time reading from these kinds of teachers. They speak with great swelling words, but their meaning is empty.

Born of Water and the Spirit

Benjamin Franklin

There is but *one birth* mentioned or alluded to in the conversation with Nicodemus. There is but *one kingdom* mentioned or alluded to in the conversation.

The conversation is about one birth and entering into one kingdom. The whole is in the phrase, *“You must be born again,”* or the previous phrase, *“Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* This figurative expression *“born again”* is precisely the same, or includes the same as conversion. A man born again is converted. In being born again precisely the same agencies are employed, and the same thing is accomplished as when a man is converted. This is literally a man turned from darkness to light, from the world to God. This is not done by the agency of water without the agency of the Spirit. There is no such thing as a birth of water without the Spirit. A man is *“born again”*, not by water without the Spirit, nor by the Spirit without the water, but *“born of water and of the Spirit,”* no matter how many fine theories are spoiled. Nothing leads to more useless theories and speculations than attempts to build a theory on a figurative expression. The literal must always explain the figurative. The clear and unfigurative language of the commission has precisely the same in it as the phrase, *“born of water and of the Spirit.”* *“He who believes and is immersed shall be saved.”* Believes, in this passage, is literal. Born of the Spirit, or which is the same, *“begotten of the Spirit,”* is figurative. The meaning is the same as, *“I have begotten you by the gospel,”* or made you believers by the gospel. Begotten of God is made a

believer of God. Begotten of the Spirit is made a believer by the Spirit. It is in some instances ascribed to God in view of His being the Author of it. It is ascribed to Christ in view of it being through His mediation. It is ascribed to the Spirit in view of His inspiring the apostles or speaking in them, and thus making believers, and those thus made believers are said to be begotten of the Spirit, and, when immersed said to be *“born of water and of the Spirit.”* This is precisely all there is in it.

There is nothing about the resurrection in it, the first resurrection or any other resurrection, unless it be a resurrection to a new life. Nor is anything in the resurrection ever called “a birth of the Spirit.” We are perfectly aware that the dead will be quickened by the Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ will quicken their mortal bodies; that Christ was the *“first-born from the dead,” the first-born among many brethren,”* and that the dead will be raised at the sound of the trumpet, but there is not one word about all this or an allusion to it in the conversation with Nicodemus. Nor is there one word about or allusion to the everlasting kingdom in that conversation. We must not make something out of that conversation that is not in it.

Nicodemus was standing on his birthright, *“born in thy house,”* as expressed in **Genesis 17:13**, for membership. The Lord sweeps this away in one sentence. *“Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* His being born in the house or family of Abraham availed nothing. *“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”* No matter in whose family he was born nor whose blood coursed in his veins, a man must be born again, born from above, born of water and of the Spirit, or he cannot enjoy the kingdom of God. As the Spirit is the agent through whom the gospel is preached, and the gospel the instrument by which the Spirit makes believers, the agent is mentioned for the effect, which is belief - made believers, by the Spirit and baptized into Christ, into one body. It is of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of the apostles and by the word.

There is no such thing as the new birth without the Spirit, not any such thing as entering into the kingdom of God or the body of Christ. The faith, the work of the Spirit in preaching the gospel, through the apostles, and baptism, or, figuratively, *“born of water,”* must be present. The man who believes the gospel with all his heart and is immersed into Christ is *“born of water and of the Spirit”* in the sense intended by the Savior.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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SERMON: SPEAKING AND RECEIVING
THE TRUTH IN LOVE

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10