

Christendom And Christian By Kent Heaton

Words are the vehicles that exchange thoughts descriptive of the perceived meaning in any given circumstance. Throughout the centuries of man's history words have defined his place with his fellow man and with Jehovah God. Often words have changed in their meaning and importance. Words define who we are.

The word "Christendom" is a word that describes "the part of the world where Christianity prevails" (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary). The idea of Christendom is where all Christian people are considered as a group. The word "Christian" means "one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ; a disciple" (ibid). It would seem that while Christendom is not a common word in the language of the masses that more people profess to Christendom than to the ideals of being a Christian. Being under the umbrella of Christendom suggests a passive view of ones place in relationship to Jesus Christ while taking on the name of being a Christian demands a devotion to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Christendom does not demand allegiance but rather appeals to a general acceptance of Jesus Christ. There are many people who believe that Jesus is real and that he walked among men two millennia ago. They may even go so far as to accept the idea that he is the Son of God. But to commit ones life to the principles, teachings and commands of Jesus Christ is far beyond the scope of what they are willing to do. There were disciples of Christendom in the days of Jesus. "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).

Jesus demanded separation! His teachings were not for the faint of heart nor the uncommitted. Believing in Him was not enough. To be a disciple of Christ demanded loving the praise of God over the praise of men. Living the life of a Christian requires being different from the world (Romans 12:1-2). Paul exhorted the Corinthians to live separate (2 Corinthians 6:11-18) and come out from among the world. Ironically, Satan wants us to have a faint sense of Christ in our lives but without commitment. The young man in Matthew 19 wanted eternal life without obligation. We find often in our lives the ease of simply living under Christendom and not living as a Christian.

The word Christian is found three times in scripture (Acts 11:26; 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16). It is Peter's use of Christian that shows the striking difference in what people perceive the disciple of Christ to be and what the Lord expects. The context of 1 Peter 4:16 begins in verse 12: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." He goes on to describe the life of a Christian as one that is "reproached," "blasphemed," and who "suffers" and judgment beginning "at the house of God" (verses 13-17).

Living with a veneer of Christ is not enough. To be a follower of Jesus Christ takes more than a passive title describing a generic system of belief. True Christians are those people who bear a cross, fight the fight, run the course, walk worthy of the calling, confess the name of Christ before men, crucify themselves, separate themselves, sanctify themselves and do the will of the Father in Heaven (Matthew 7:21-

23). Be a Christian as God desires disciples to be. Live for Jesus. Serve the Lord. Do the will of the Father.

Wisdom from a Warrior

"We have too many men of science; too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living." (General Omar Bradley, Armistice Day Speech, 1948)

Thelma's Fourth Husband

Thelma was an energetic, outgoing person who took life's little setbacks in stride. However, when she was widowed at the age of 75 for the third time, she went into a state of gloom and sadness that just wouldn't go away. She wouldn't eat, she wouldn't go out; she seemed to care for nothing anymore. In despair, her children finally put her in a senior assisted living facility until the time would come that she would pass away, too. Instead, she gradually began to take an interest in life. Daily she went from room to room, visiting and talking with the residents who were bedfast. She organized and directed activities, and encouraged all of the seniors to get involved at some level.

In appreciation, the nursing home threw a large surprise birthday party for Thelma when she turned 80. During the birthday dinner, she noticed a new man sitting at the end of the table, and she started to stare and to become very quiet. All through the meal, and the cake, and the presents, she kept looking at this fellow as if she had seen him before, but forgotten who he was. Eventually, she got up and walked over to him and said, "Pardon me for making you so uncomfortable. I just couldn't help staring at you all evening. You look so much like my fourth husband."

"Fourth husband!" he said. "How many times have you been married?"

"Three," she replied, with a smile spreading across her face.

The wedding was a few weeks later.

Three lessons taught by Thelma:

- 1) Regardless of our environment and circumstances, we can find a way to make life meaningful. (Phil. 4:11)
- 2) We find our greatest joy and fulfillment when we are serving others. (Mark 10:45)
- 3) Take advantage of opportunities. (Matt. 9:37-38; Col. 4:2-4; Acts 17:16, 34)

A Moments Wisdom

It is impossible to break out of God's will without breaking into God's judgment.

The light that shines farthest shines brightest nearest home.

Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted.

It is a sad religion that is never strong until its owner gets sick.

Meeting house keys open the door to a successful week.

A friend is one who can put his finger on our faults without rubbing it in.
You can't change the past; but, you can ruin a perfectly good present by worrying about the future.

A man can be judged by the things at which he laughs.

Wild oats take something out of a man's life that no system of crop rotation can restore.

God is more interested in making us what we ought to be than in giving us what we think we ought to have.