

What is a Christian?

by STUART ALLEN

If this question was addressed to six people it is possible that six different answers would be given: one might say he is a good living man, another that he is a member of a church or chapel, or that he is a person who does charitable work in aiding needy people, and so on. Let us look at the word 'Christian' again, and suppose we pronounce it differently, calling it CHRISTian, it will remind us that such a person has some relationship to *Christ* in the first place.

If we ask in what way, we shall be wise if we turn to His own divine statements and give them serious consideration. The answer to our question is not to be found in the various opinions which come from the human mind; these will only lead us into error and disillusionment. What more reasonable than that we should turn to the 'fountain head' Himself? Why

'The Son of Man is *come* to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost' (Luke 19:10).

'I am *come* a light into the world, that whosoever *believeth on Me* should not abide in darkness ... *I came* not to judge the world, but to *save* the world' (John 12:46,47).

These words are surely clear. Christ came to dispel darkness and doubt and to give LIGHT. Christ came not to condemn but to SAVE. This being so, it is obvious that there must be a fundamental *need* in the human heart for enlightenment and salvation; but what is salvation? As you begin to consider this please put from your mind all thoughts of churches, reformation, ordinances, baptism, whether infant or adult, for in its essence the salvation which Christ spoke of has nothing to do with these things. Many there are around us whose idea of salvation is that it results from a way of living, moral or religious, and is intimately connected with some religious rite or ceremony. Multitudes have conceived their own conditions of salvation or have accepted the conditions laid down by others and, having fulfilled these requirements, they rest in the false security of self deception. They may have met the requirements of men, but they have fallen short of the requirements of God.

In this leaflet we wish to avoid theological language and to use great plainness of speech so that all who read can understand. The subject is so vastly important — actually there can be nothing *more* important — that at all costs we must avoid having our minds clouded by human opinion. Consequently, we shall turn away from men however good they may be and go direct to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the verse already quoted (Luke 19:10) He has stated that the purpose of His coming was to SAVE, and those to whom this work applies are described by Him as LOST. Let us add another statement of His regarding this purpose:

‘They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I *came* not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance’ (Mark 2:17).

It is clear from these words that Christ’s mission was not directed to *good* people but to the *unworthy*, those whom He described as LOST and as SINNERS. Now this is not flattering to human nature, but before you turn away from it, my dear reader, just ask yourself honestly whether, in spite of any good behaviour which you strive after, perhaps these terms truthfully describe you? It is not a question of big sinners or little sinners. *One* sin makes a sinner just as one lie makes a liar. Even if your self-control is so strong that you never commit any act or speak any word that is wrong (which is improbable), what about the *inside* — your thinking? Have you never indulged in sinful thoughts? Remember that of Christ it is said:

‘He knew *all men*, and needed not that any should testify of man: for *He knew what was in man*’ (John 2:24,25).

He sees *inside* and knows every thought, and while men may deceive one another with externals, *there is no deceiving Him*. Apart from this, as one looks around and considers the present appalling condition of world affairs with its mounting armaments and gigantic weapons of destruction, its terrible threat of war, suffering and death, one would have thought that these things of themselves would prove that there is something *radically wrong with the human mind*. There can be no doubt that salvation is a necessity and it was for this *express purpose that Christ came*. A sinner needs a saviour whether he knows it or not, but this saviour must be the one of God’s providing, and the one He has provided is the Lord Jesus Christ. Saving the lost is His business. He has never failed nor can He fail.

There are no exceptions in connection with sin and failing for ‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’ (Rom. 3:23) therefore *all* need a Saviour and that includes YOU. Do not turn away because this does not pat you on the back and flatter you. Do not indulge in wishful thinking, but be absolutely honest with yourself in this matter. You can settle the question of your own salvation by answering the following questions: Is the Lord Jesus Christ my personal Saviour? Do I as a sinner belong to Him? Have I put my trust in Him and in Him alone? If the answers are ‘YES’, you are saved, because you are linked by simple faith with Him who is the only Saviour of mankind. If the answers are ‘NO’, you are lost and the final condition of the lost is one of condemnation and perishing eternally.

‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not PERISH, but have everlasting LIFE’ (John 3:16).

'I am come that they might have LIFE' (John 10:10).

'He that *believeth on Him* is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already' (John 3:18).

So, in all solemnity, it is a question of LIFE or DEATH and that eternally. To be linked with Christ means life eternal for you; to be divorced from Him means eternal death. Note that salvation comes to you from Him by the avenue of *faith*. You are not saved by faith itself — it is the object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ that saves. Your faith is merely the channel by which His salvation reaches you and becomes your own possession. Faith, belief and trust mean the same thing. If you have faith in a man, you trust him. If you trust him you have faith in him. If you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you have all that God requires of a sinner in order to be saved.

It may be asked — is there no other way of salvation? In the words of Christ Himself the answer is NO.

'I am the door: BY ME if any man enter in, he shall be saved' (John 10:9).

'He that entereth *not* by the door ... but climbeth up *some other way*, the same is a thief and a robber' (John 10:1).

'I am the WAY, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but BY ME' (John 14:6).

Men may talk of working out their own way of salvation, but all such efforts in the light of these words must end in deception and death because they ignore the *only* way God recognises, i.e., Christ Himself.

There is a further question that may be put: How can God save me through Christ? It is entirely beyond the capabilities of the finite mind to grasp this in all its fulness, but the apostle Paul summed it up when he said:

'For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him' (2 Cor. 5:21).

There is a wonderful transference here. He takes your sin and bears it away and pays the penalty in your stead, which is death. Hence His atoning death on Calvary's cross. You take His righteousness by simple trust in Him and the free gift of eternal life in the place of condemnation and death; and not only this, but His almighty power which will enable you to live, in the fullest sense of the word, a life of peace and joy, in spite of all circumstances.

God's way of salvation then is plain. You are a failing creature, a sinner. You need a Saviour. There is only one Saviour, and He is Jesus Christ. When you put your trust in Him and rely entirely upon His all sufficient work and merit, you are saved and that for all eternity and the question which heads this leaflet is then answered as to what a real Christian is. *It is YOU if you have taken this one vital and necessary step.*

