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Do Others Know I Am A Christian

By Mike Pace

Have you ever considered the way others view your life? Oh, I know that there are some people (even Christians) that would respond to a question like that by saying something like, "I don't really care what others think about me." Or, "I'm not trying to impress anyone else." Or perhaps others might answer by saying something like, "It doesn't bother me what others think about my life, just as long as God is pleased with my life."

Certainly a person who lives his life always concerned about what others are going to think about their life, ever mindful of the looks of others, and attempting to live a life to please other people, will live a miserable existence upon this earth. Our Lord often rebuked those who were living about Him while He was upon this earth when they demonstrated their intense concern about what others might think of their lives, especially when they were trying to "impress" others. John 12:43 records these words, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Those whose lives are a constant effort to gain the admiration of others are sharply rebuked and encouraged to live a life of servitude to God Almighty. The apostle Paul expressed this same attitude when he said, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Our Christian lives must be dominated with an incessant desire to please our Creator.

By the brief comments that we have made up to this point, it is rather obvious that a Christian is to live a life pleasing to God at all times and in all situations and circumstances. If circumstances are ever such that we are placed in a situation where we must say or do something that will either please our heavenly Father or please others, there really is no choice at all for the Christian -- "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). There

are many things that a Christian can and should do in life that will gain the admiration of men, and at the same time gain the approval of God. Benevolent acts towards others almost always is respected and admired by all mankind, and is at the same time endorsed by God. "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10). So the design of life affords numerous opportunities to please God and man simultaneously. But we must ever keep in mind that as Christians our primary concern must be that of living a life that will please our God.

It is interesting to note also that scripture instructs us that as Christians our lives are always on review by the rest of the world. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:13-16). We cannot as Christians avoid the eyes of the world. When we profess loyalty and allegiance to Christ, it automatically places our lives on the reviewing stand of life. Others are continually aware of our claim to be Christ-like people. Since that is a God-stated fact, then there is a sense in which we should be concerned about what others think of us. Not to win their praise or glory. In fact, quite the contrary is stated in Matthew 5:16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Our Christ-like lives must be a demonstration to others of Christ living in us, not

for our glory, but rather that God might be glorified.

If you are a child of God, you cannot avoid the scrutiny of the world. As the apostle Paul stated in Romans 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." In other words, no person can live upon this earth without affecting the lives of others; and no one can even die without making an impression upon someone else's life. A faithful child of God cannot, will not, attempt to alienate his Christ-like example from the rest of the world. While never striving to please men as opposed to pleasing God, there is a real sense in which Christians must be concerned about what others see in their life.

Now let's focus upon the question proposed by the title of this article. "Do Others Know I Am A Christian?" Do others about you know by the lifestyle that you project that you are a Christian? Remember, you are the SALT of the earth, and the LIGHT of the world! This is unavoidable to a child of God. We cannot live without others observing who we are, what we are and what we represent. Since we are the SALT of the earth, all that we do, say and think affects the rest of the world; and since we are the LIGHT of the world, everyone sees and witnesses our lives as Christians.

In consideration of this fact, that all Christians are on display to the world, let's ask ourselves some mind-searching, soul-rendering questions. Does your postman know that you are a Christian? Does the checker at the grocery store suspect that you are a Christian? If your hope of going to heaven depended upon the testimony of your next door neighbor, would you make it? Do the people you work with know you are one of God's children by the way that you talk? Do others know you are a Christian by the way you live, or do they have to ask you if you're a Christian?

Would you be called a Christian if everybody knew your secret thoughts and feelings? We don't always know what one another thinks or feels, but if others knew your feelings and thoughts, would

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EDITOR Mike Pace
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DO OTHERS KNOW I AM A CHRISTIAN? continued from page 1

they identify you as a child of God? One thing is for certain, God in heaven knows our thoughts and feelings. *"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man . . ."* (Psalms 94:11). Would others call you a Christian if they heard every word you speak? It's a shame, but some that call themselves Christians aren't very consistent in their speech. They sometimes use different language apart from other Christians than they do in the presence of other Christians. We should always be very cautious in the use of our tongues. Read very carefully the instructions pertaining to the use of our tongues as is recorded in James 3:1-12. Our speech is always to such that would become a child of God. *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt . . ."* (Colossians 4:6). In other words, our speech, our conversation must be at all times, under all circumstances, kind and gracious. *"Seasoned with salt"*, suggests that when we speak as Christians, our speech should be such that would be wholesome, not corruptive. Just as food that is seasoned with salt and made pleasant and palatable, we as Christians should speak words to others that are pleasant, pure and wholesome. Titus 2:8 tells us that we are to speak *"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed (embarrassed in his stand) having no evil thing to say of you."* Exercise caution, Christian, in the way you use your tongue so as not to give any unbeliever just cause to think evil of you because of your speech.

There is a poem that most appropriately expresses the concern that we as God's people ought to have for the example we

set before others. I don't know who the author of this thought provoking poem is, but as you read it, make the application to your life. How do others see you? Are you consistent in what you do and what you say; what you preach, and what you practice?

"WOULD I BE CALLED A CHRISTIAN"

Would I be called a "Christian",
 If everybody knew
 My secret thoughts and feelings,
 And everything I do?
 Or could they see the likeness
 Of Christ in me each day?
 Or could they hear Him speaking
 In every word I say?
 Would I be called a "Christian",
 If anyone should know
 That I am found in places
 Where Jesus would not go?
 Or could they hear His echo,
 In every song I sing?
 In eating, drinking, dressing,
 Could they see Christ my King?
 Would I be called a "Christian",
 If judged by what I read?
 By all my recreations,
 And every word, thought, and deed?
 Could I be counted Christ-like
 As I now work and pray,
 Unselfish, kind, forgiving
 To others every day?

How do you measure up Christian?
 Can you humbly say as the Apostle Paul,
"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Galatians 2:20.

MIXED MARRIAGES

Bobby Key, who has preached for the church in Miami, Oklahoma, for 20 years has compiled some interesting facts on marriage. We have long stressed the importance of Christians marrying Christians and this information shows how important it really is.

"143 Christian young people in the Miami congregation have married during the past 20 years. Seventy-nine married non-Christians; of these, 57 left the church with 25 being divorced. Twenty-two are still faithful and 14 have converted their mates. Sixty-four married Christians, and of these, 59 are still faithful to the Lord. Two marriages ended in divorce." (Via Four-State Gospel News, Nov. 1977)

Young people, take another look at these facts and be impressed with the fact that your chances of being faithful as a Christian, and your chances of making

your marriage a successful one, are greatly increased when you marry a Christian. So, look again:

CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO NON-CHRISTIANS

79 - total
 57 - left the church
 22 - faithful as Christians
 14 - converted their mates
 25 - divorced

CHRISTIAN MARRIED TO CHRISTIAN

64 - total
 5 - left the church
 59 - faithful as Christians
 2 - divorced

These facts speak loudly. In the words of Brother Key, "Let us continue to stress the importance of Christians dating and marrying those of like precious faith. It is hard enough to live the Christian life when both husband and wife are trying to serve the Lord; however, it becomes increasingly difficult when one is trying to pull the whole load." (Church of Christ, Derby, Kan., Vol. 25, Nov. 1980, No. 48)

Speaking In Tongues

By Glenn V. Purdy

PROMISED

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak in new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover", (Mark 16:17-18).

PROMISE FULFILLED

In Acts 2:1-11, we learn that this promise was fulfilled. There are four things about this that we should note here: (1) *"There came a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind, and (2) It filled all the house where they were sitting. and (3) there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them"* (verses 2 and 3). (4) *"Every man heard them speak in his own language"* (verse 6). So today, should this miracle be repeated, we could hear it come, see the fire like tongues, and everyone present, regardless of his mother tongue, he would understand what was being said!

ONLY THE APOSTLES WERE PRESENT WHEN THE SPIRIT CAME

Every pronoun must have an antecedent, or a noun for which it stands. The

"theys" in the beginning of Acts 2, have their antecedent "Matthias and the eleven apostles" of Acts 1:26. This is too simple to misunderstand! Peter stood up with "the eleven" (Acts 2:14). He did NOT stand up with the "hundred and twenty", for they were not there at this time! LATER, the multitude came together (verse 6). There were no miracles or speaking in tongues by anyone else for some time. "The apostles" did "many signs and wonders", (verse 43), but no one else at this time. The next persons to have the ability to do signs and wonders, were those in Acts 6:1-6, on whom . . . "The apostles laid their hands", (verse 6). These could now "do" signs and wonders as Philip did in Samaria (Acts 8:6, but he could not give this ability to someone else, see Acts 8:14-17), for Peter and John (Apostles) had to go to Samaria and lay their hands on the new converts that they might have this power. There were only two ways in which "tongues" could be received, (1) Baptism of the Holy Spirit which the apostles had, and (2) the laying on of the apostles hands! There was no other way!

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES?

"Tongues" were "a sign to them that believe not" (I Cor. 14:22). The purpose of the tongues as shown in Acts 2, is very plain. This "sign", like the other "signs and wonders" which the apostles did, was for the purpose of "speaking in the language of each one present", so that those who "believed not", could hear and understand the Gospel of Christ, that they might obey it and be saved! It accomplished the purpose! About "three thousand" of these who "believed not", through the sign for the unbeliever, became believers and obeyed God and were added to the Lord's church that day! (Acts 2:47).

HOW WERE THESE SIGNS USED IN THE CHURCH IN THOSE DAYS?

There was no such thing as "an unknown tongue" in New Testament times. The word "unknown" has been "added" to the Bible by the translators and is shown in italics, that you may know that it was not given in the original! This has contributed much to the confusion of "tongues" today. As has been shown, those who spoke in "tongues" could always be understood by the hearers. They were forbidden to speak in the assembly (when the whole church came together in one place, I Cor. 14:23) if they were not understood (I Cor. 14:

26-28). Not all could "speak in tongues", only those who had been given this gift by the apostles. When the apostles spoke, every one heard in "His own language", but when the apostles gave the gift of "tongues" to others, they also gave some the gift to "interpret" (or explain the speaking to the audience). When there was no interpreter, they were forbidden to speak in the church, but were commanded to "keep silence in the church" (I Cor. 14:28) Nothing could be plainer! You see, the Purpose of these "tongues" (the ability to speak in languages which they had not learned), was to teach those who believe not, so if they could not be understood, the purpose was voided and God forbid such! God also commanded that they speak one at the time, (I Cor. 14:31) that the hearers might learn, (I Cor. 14:31). More than one had been speaking at the time and God condemned such (I Cor. 14:26), for no one was being edified! This was "confusion" and "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints", (I Cor. 14:33). Isn't this plain when we read it from God's Word! We can sure understand this if we want to! So today, where there is this kind of "confusion" present, you may know that God is not the "author" of it! Paul said that he had rather speak "five words" that could be "understood", than "ten thousand" that could not be understood (I Cor. 14:19). You should read the entire fourteenth chapter of I Corinthians.

HOW MANY OF THESE "SIGNS AND WONDERS" WERE THERE?

Please keep in mind that only the apostles could do "all these signs and wonders" and only they had the power to give the gifts to others. These gifts consisted of the following: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues, discerning of spirits, and interpretation of tongues, (I Cor. 12:8-10). You see, even in New Testament times, it would have been a grave ERROR to think that every convert to Christ could speak in tongues and heal people! Or to think that when the apostles "gave gifts" that one man had them all and could speak in tongues, heal and perform miracles.

MIRACLES NOT FOR PERSONAL USE OF THOSE WHO HAD THE POWER

Paul could not heal himself (II Cor. 12: 7-9) and could not heal his brother in the Lord, Trophimus who was left behind in Miletum because he was *sick*, (II Tim. 4: 20) He did not *heal* Timothy, but instructed him to doctor himself (I Tim. 5:23).

HOW LONG WERE THESE "TONGUES" TO LAST?

Pauls said that "*But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away.*" (I Cor. 13:8) These are three of the "signs and wonders". When will they cease? When "*that which is perfect is come*". The signs and wonders which were "part" shall cease, (I Cor. 13:10). What is that which is perfect? It is the "perfect law of liberty", God's Word, the New Testament (James 1:25). The "signs and wonders" were to "confirm God's Word" (Mark 16: 20). God's Word has now been "confirmed" and there is no further need for new miracles to confirm it, (Hebrews 2:1-4). When the last apostle died, these gifts were no longer available, for they came only through the laying on of the apostles hands! So when the last man, on whom an apostle laid his hands to impart said gift, died; there were no more "tongues".

JESUS DID NOT SAY THAT ALL CHRISTIANS COULD DO "SIGNS"

Jesus said that these signs would follow the believer! The signs that Jesus did was to get people to believe that He was the Christ and believing have "life", (John 20:30-31). Just like when a person dies, his "work follows" him to the judgment, (Rev. 14:13). The "signs" which Jesus did through the apostles "follows" us, proving that the Word has been confirmed! Confirmed once and for all! No tongues today!

SPEAKING IN TONGUES WAS NECESSARY TO THE EARLY CHURCH

The Gospel of Christ is the "seed" of the church, or kingdom, of Christ, (Matt. 13, Luke 8). The Gospel of Christ had never been taught, nor written, so it was necessary that the Holy Spirit "*guide the apostles into all truth*" (John 14:26 and 16:13). So the Holy Spirit took over the tongues of the apostles, speaking through them. In languages which they did not know, a message which they had never learned. Now the truth has been given, confirmed and written, so we may study for ourselves now, (II Timothy 2:15). Yes we are even commanded to study!

SPEAKING IN TONGUES WAS NOT THE ONLY THING THAT THESE APOSTLES COULD DO

Remember, those who could speak in tongues, could also "raise the dead", and did (Peter raised Dorcas from the dead, Acts 9:36-42; Paul raised the dead, Acts

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SPEAKING IN TONGUES

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20:9-10; Jesus raised the dead, Matt. 9: 18-25). They could take up serpents and not be harmed, this Paul proved (Acts 28: 3-6). They could also drink poison and not be harmed. These "signs" all of them, were to follow the "believer", so if "tongues" are with us today, the other signs are as well! If not, where is the chapter and verse that says that some signs will cease and others continue? Think for yourself! Don't let someone else do your thinking for you!

FALSE PROPHETS

Hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 verse 24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect". While you are thinking for yourself, what do you think about this? The Apostle John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: Because many false prophets are gone out into the world"; (1 John 4:1). Jesus commended the Church at Ephesus, for trying "them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars". (Rev. 2:2). In I Kings 18, there were 850 false prophets and when God's prophet "tried" them and found them liars, he, under orders from God, killed them all! There is nothing on earth so dangerous as being a false prophet. Claiming to have powers which one does not have. Such a one will lose his own soul, but sadder still, all those who are misled will also be lost, because they did not "try" such a one! My friend, I am interested in your soul! Sudy the Bible, know the truth and obey the truth! Try all men and all doctrines by the standard of religious authority, the Bible!

CONTRIBUTIONS

INDIVIDUALS

Edna Laman	\$ 5.00
Ella Rogers	1.00
Lela Blue	10.00
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Clyde and Delphia Smith	30.00
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How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12: 2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matt. 3:8,

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

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 CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P. O. Box 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, ARKANSAS 72554