

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN

Acts 11:26

There are seven characteristics in the life of every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ which stand out with great prominence. Not one of these characteristics is missing in a life that is "complete" in Him. Some of them may not be so outstanding in each individual life, due to a lack of exercise on that definite point, but nevertheless, they are present in embryo at least.

I. He is a Believer in Faith.

There are many religions with their varied forms and creeds. There is, however, only "one faith". Ephesians 4:5. The believer is the possessor of that "one faith." That "one faith" is "the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ." "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:20-21.

Faith is the foundation of the believer's experience. It is "the root" of the tree of his salvation. It is the inward union of the soul with God. Here are some of the things that faith does and is:

1. Faith brings us to God "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Romans 5:1, and looks to the great sacrifice for pardon.
2. Faith apprehends.
"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:1-3.
3. Faith is a shield.
"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Ephesians 6:16.
4. The believer stands fast in faith.
"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." I Corinthians 16:13.
5. The believer in faith overcomes the world.
"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" I John 5:4-5.

"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.

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

John 3:36. Thus we see that the Christian is a believer in faith.

II. He is a Disciple in Knowledge.

Originally "disciple" simply meant "a learner," that is, a pupil. The Lord's conditions of discipleship are laid down in Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28-29. The believer then is a disciple or learner of the Lord. From the beginning to the end of his life he needs to learn, but one thing is sure, he never needs to fear nor to dread the morrow because he has a most faithful teacher.

"Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

"Thou canst not see to-day the hidden meaning
Of My command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest all shall be made plain."

One characteristic of the Lord's disciples or learners is that they never become heady nor high-minded. They learn of One Who is "meek and lowly in heart."²

III. He is a Saint in Character.

"Saint" does not refer to a person who has attained rare heights of sanctity, but rather, it is God's name for every believer in Christ. It refers to the standing of the believer in Christ. A saint is not a sinless person, but a separated person--separated to God in Christ. Saints are those who have taken the Lord Jesus as their wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption. They have been with Him to the Cross. In Him they have died, been buried, and now they live in Him through the power of God. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4. May we walk worthy of our lofty position in Christ.

IV. He is a Light in Influence.

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5. Since He is no longer here it is the duty and responsibility of the believer to be the Light of the World. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an 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." Matthew 5:14-16. The world is intensely dark, and will continue to increase in darkness. Believers are to be lights in this world in the way of duty and obligation. The object of all light is to disclose what would otherwise be unseen. It is the nature and property of light to radiate.

A sunbeam has no more power to shine if it is severed from the sun than a man has to give light in this dark world if he be parted from Jesus Christ. Cut the current and the electric light dies, slacken the engine and the electric arc becomes dim, quicken it and it burns brightly. Lights are not lighted to

look at. Their business is to shine and unless they do that they are of no use. It is needful therefore that believers let their lights shine, not only now and then, but always. The light never dictates where it is to be used. Its only responsibility is to shine.

V. He is a Soldier in Conflict.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." II Timothy 2:3. To be a soldier of Jesus Christ means to be engaged in conflicts. This is not the time for dress-parades. This is not the time to take life easy. The believer is in a stern battle with an enemy who is persistent and relentless. Our Captain has never lost a battle. What is more, He never will.

A true soldier is always ready to endure hardness. He expects nothing else. He is armed to suffer. At a moment's notice he is ready to go over the top. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." I Peter 4:12-13.

VI. He is a Friend in Communion.

In John's Gospel we have introduced to us a growing intimacy. In 13:13 we are servants and recognize the Lord as our master. In 15 we have advanced a stage and are no longer servants, but we are called friends. A servant knows not what his Lord does, but a friend is in closer relationship and known. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called your friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." John 15:15.

It is indeed wonderful to have the Lord Jesus as friend. He is not a selfish friend. He is not a jealous friend, but He is a true friend. In all the cases of friendship between Christ and man, the origination and initiation come from Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." Ye are Christ's friends if ye do whatsoever He commands you.

He is not satisfied to have us even as friends merely. He takes us still closer into His confidence and behold we are brethren. "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John 20:17.

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear;
What a privilege to carry,
Everything to God in prayer!"

VII. He is a Pilgrim in Progress.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." I Peter 2:11. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13. Pilgrims never feel at home. They find no

place that they can call their own; where they can reside as long as they please. They are constrained to go from place to place from day to day. Pilgrims feel very much alone in the world. They find but very few traveling their way. Pilgrims always feel themselves exposed to danger. They never know if they are safe. Pilgrims never think of turning back because of difficulties which they meet on the way. If they are lame or sick they stop only until they recover and then go forward. If the season be unfavorable, they wait only until it becomes better. True believers are not citizens of this earth but pilgrims. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Philippians 3:20-21. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:14-16.

"Home, Home, sweet, sweet Home,
To be with my Saviour, never to roam;
That will be glory as no tongue can tell,
To be with Him the One I love so well."