

Am I a Christian?

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 11/18/2017

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Let's begin by asking the question, "Am I a Christian, or do I please myself?" Why do we attend Sabbath services? The answer is out of love and good works!

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to **provoke unto love and to good works**:

Sabbath services are not primarily a **social occasion**.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves," does not mean that we have to get together in large groups, but, "to **provoke unto love and to good works**," is God's command of what we **are to do!**

"Why does God even want us to assemble in the first place? One of the main reasons is to "build each other up."

Being with our spiritual family stirs up good works and helps us grow spiritually (Hebrews 10:24-25)." However, I would like to ask the question again—I've asked it before:

When was the last time you encountered the members of the big organizations assembling together for the very purpose of exhorting one another, and provoking one another **unto love and to good works**? I submit to you that that is **not** how the Sabbath is primarily kept by the bigger groups.

In fact—more and more of the true brethren are awakening to the fact that there is a distinct **lack of Godly love** exhibited at those Sabbath meetings. The true brethren see that there is a false pride and arrogance – acting superior or self-important in an offensive manner – there.

Out of more than seven billion people on this earth – there are nearly two billion who identify themselves as Christians. But does that really make them "Christians."

God defines what a Christian is – and this evil world – including those who claim to be Christians – do not begin to measure up to God's high requirements. They live contrary to the principles and teachings of Jesus Christ. It behooves us to not only know **what** a Christian is – but to **be** one. Where can we find out who is truly Christian?

Does the Bible tell us who **is a Christian** and who is not? Brethren, we have made ourselves to be so different from the world – have we not?

****What makes someone a true follower of Jesus Christ?**

Is it because we did not celebrate **Halloween** a few weeks ago?

Is it because we are not putting up a **Christmas tree** to celebrate **Nimrod's birth**?

Is it because we don't go to **sun-rise** services on Easter morning?

Is it because we keep **God's Commandments**? Are we Christians because of the way we wear our hair, clothes, the way we look, or the things we do not eat?

These things surely **set us apart** from society in general – do they not?

Maybe it is because we associate with a church with the right “Church of God” **name**?

When Jesus was **growing up** as a young man in the Holy Land – and even when He was preaching the Gospel during His **public ministry**, He encountered **religious leaders** who understood some prophecy – like we do today to...

And they went to services on God’s Sabbath Day. Does keeping the Sabbath make us a Christian. Maybe, doing all these things – if we don’t leave any one out will make us a Christian???

There was never a more established group of **religious men** anywhere on earth. But they were **not Christians**.

They were the Pharisees – we know all about them – don’t we? Jesus had run-ins with them because they were out to kill Jesus,

But, they **knew the Scriptures** like the back of your hand! The Pharisees did a lot of the same things that we do???

They had everything they wanted going their way. They had the blood-line of the Patriarchs.

They had the Law and the Prophets – like we do.

They had the **Feast sites** and the **recognition** of the people from all over the known world.

They had the **Ten Commandments** and the **teachers** to teach them.

They had **big numbers** of members. Did that make them Christians – followers of Jesus Christ?

Back in the days of Worldwide Church of God we had some congregations of 2000-plus on the Holy Days in a number of cities.

Is that the sign of the true Christian church?

These men who Jesus knew thoroughly:

They made long prayers

They had the Holy Days

They fasted often

They were in close association with the Priests of the Temple

They had the sacred calendar

They never ate anything unclean. Not eating a ham sandwich is not our righteousness. Only Jesus is – if I am a Christian.

They tithed on every little thing

They were even in charge of who attended Sabbath services and who could not

They believed on Jesus! So do the devils!

James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

The Pharisees were the establishment.

Let me show you that they even believed on Jesus!

John 8:29 And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.

John 8:30 As He spoke these words, many believed on Him.

The point I want to make clear is that these people were not Christians. They were not saved... They were not good Church members. Just what is the identifying sign of a true follower of Christ?

Brethren, here is a serious question? What is the **depth of our** Christianity? Is it because we do all these afore mentioned things better than others? That is what some think?

Jesus did not die because the world watches football games made from pigskins. He died because I am a sinner, and I come short of the glory of God. If everyone else were perfect – and I the only sinner – He would have still died for me!

Is Christianity about being nice to everyone? Is Christianity about not hurting anyone's feelings?

Jesus did not worry about the feelings of the money-changers when He drove them from the Temple of God with a whip. Jesus was tough for God.

Matthew 21:12 And Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

Acts 2 illustrates how Jesus' disciples, now apostles, were first identified:

Take note: We cannot be Christians without God's Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-6, 12 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. . . . So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Love and **good works** are not possible without God's Holy Spirit.

Notice that this event did not occur privately, but people from every nation under heaven witnessed the astounding miracle of God's giving of His Spirit to those He had called.

God did this so that the world would know that He identified Himself with the disciples of Jesus. He did this through His Spirit inspiring the apostles to behave in a certain way.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He did it so that the world would see that He was identifying Himself with the people of Israel.

Now we are getting to the good part of what makes us Christians. To be Christians we must do miraculous things. Things that are astoundingly rare on the face of this earth.

Paul writes in:

Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the **Spirit of God**, these are the sons of God." So, those who have God's Spirit in them are true Christians.

To be a true Christians are, we must do the "miraculous things," – something that only those with His Spirit can do.

Jesus tells us what this miracle is in John 13:34-35: "A new Commandment I give to you, that you love one another; **as** I have loved you, that you also love one another.

How did Jesus love us?

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have [**this same**] love for one another."

In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus says that God's law can be summed up in two commands: **1)** "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind"; and **2)**

"You shall love your neighbor as **you love yourself.**" What, then, is so different about His command here that **He can call it "new"**?

We certainly love ourselves – keeping a roof over our heads, food, family, security, feelings, needs, status, thinking of ourselves in every situation. Verses putting God first.

We even justify our own righteousness – that is how much we love ourselves.

We should note that it is a command given by our Lord to the Church and not to Ancient Israel.

His instruction is directed specifically at His disciples about their relationship with one another.

True, we can find the two great commandments – love **of God** – love **of neighbor** – in black and white in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18), but there is a significant difference in this **NEW** command.

Love your neighbor **AS** I have loved you.

What makes Jesus' command to His disciples new is the standard, degree, extent, or condition that He places on their love for one another.

Notice again John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; **as** I have loved you, that you also love one another."

The "new" dimension to His command is the incredibly high requirement He sets for their love: His own model of Godly love.

It is one thing to love one another in the same way we love and care for ourselves.

It is a vastly greater love that motivates a person to **give up his life for another.**

That criterion considerably narrows the definition of those who are true Christians!

Was Jesus a Christian? How did He prove it?

He lay down His life.

Did Jesus love us? How did He show it?

He lay down His life.

Are we ready to literally die for anyone?

Give anything – give everything?

****Leviticus 19:18 ... Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.**

What is new? Jesus is saying that this commandment is entirely new?

John 13:34 A **new** commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; **as** I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

He lay down His life – that is **how** we also love one another.

Note: **Jesus' emphatic definition of a Christian:**

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd **gives his life** for the sheep.

John 10:12 But he that is an **hireling**, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and **scattereth** the sheep.

John 10:15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and **I lay down my life** for the sheep.

John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because **I lay down my life**, that I might take it again.

John 10:18 No man takes it from me, but **I lay it down [my life] of myself**. I have power to **lay it down**, and I have power to take [up my life] again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Five times is emphatic! Jesus gave and gave until He gave it all.

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye **love** one another, [How] **as** I have loved you.

Love, love, love – sounds so syrupy to some... doesn't it?

Well let's be honest and take some of the shine off of love.

Godly love is anything but syrupy.

Time is short – so let's have a "reality check."

****In place of "love" let's put the words "Lay down my life."**

How did Jesus love us – He laid down His life for us.

John 15:12 we asked How? **AS**

John 15:13 **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

There are no semantics there!

That is God's definition of brotherly love.

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do **whatsoever** I command you.

John gives us the "bottom line" 60 years after Jesus died. -> **Lay down your life too!**

John writing late – near the end of the first Century – defined what constitutes a "Christian."

And who definitely is **not** a "Christian."

1John 3:10 In this the children of God **are manifest**, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that **loves not** his brother. [does not **lay his life down** for him]

1John 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning [(Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18), that we should **love** one another. [as self]

Cain did not **lay his life down** for Abel – but just the opposite – he took Abel’s life.

Remember where we started in this sermon: We go to Sabbath services for two reasons: To urge one another to **love and good works**.

1John 3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works [were not good but they] were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Abel demonstrated **love and good works** and he **lay down his life** for his brother, Cain.

Therefore, Abel will live in the First and Better Resurrection.

1John 3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

1John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, **because we love** [lay down our life] **the brethren**. He that loves not his brother abides in death.

There is an interesting double-negative writing technique.

In effect John is saying, “If you do not **die** for your brother you are still **dead**.”

1John 3:15 Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Emphatic: Am I a Christian?

Note God’s definition in this pivotal verse:

1John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the **love of God**, because **He laid down His life for us**: and we ought/**must to lay down our lives** for the brethren.

Again, Christian / agape / love – **is laying down our lives**.

Brethren, we are blessed with God’s Truth, testimony, doctrine and word – And we even have a roof over our head – but from time to time we see a brother in need or being wronged – even by false ministers – and they are hurting.

What then does God **command** of a True Christian?

1John 3:17 But whoso has this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up **his bowels of compassion** [without pity, and a cold heart] from him, how dwells the love of God in him? [**IT DOES NOT**]

**There’s the answer to our question!

When we know of a matter and choose to **stay out** of the matter all together – the love of God is **not** dwelling in us because we are not Christians. We are not helping one another into the Kingdom of God.

Now John waited plum to the end of the Bible to say it – but he says here, “talk is cheap**,” our very lives must be the evidence of our Christianity.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were **baptized into his death**?

Romans 6:4 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**.

By laying down our lives for the brethren.

Jesus is not a DEAD Savior. But a LIVING Savior.

The following verses are speaking of **laying down our lives**.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly **love**; in honor preferring one another;

A Christian's life consists of the sacrifices he makes for others.

1John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word / talk, neither in tongue; **but in deed** [do it!] and in truth. [**Lay down life**]

That is **how you know if you are a Christian

1John 3:19 And **hereby** [that's **how**] we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Make a distinction:

1John 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep His Commandments [All Ten Commandments], and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

1John 3:23 And this is His [New] Commandment [singular] , That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another, as He gave us commandment.**

Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Brethren, we were all called by God at different times.

We have all had different experiences in God's Church.

That alone leaves us all on somewhat different pages.

Look at the patience of Jesus Christ while working with His carnal disciples.

None of us understand every last point exactly the same at the same time – but we help each other to be true to the Scriptures.

Over the years, we've all learned a lot that is right and some that is not right.

With the Worldwide Church of God apostasy, we've all matured to the point that we recognize heresy.

And we all desire to **understand the word of God** the way that God intended.

God tells us that iron sharpens iron.

How long do we continue to serve one another in that way? Here is the answer:

**Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

End: Am I a Christian