

TRUE CHRISTIANITY

Text: James 1:22-27

In the past number of years, because of change in culture and theology, as well as because of scandal in the religious world, the view of Christianity has changed. And of course, all this has not been for the good.

In this day of *"Health, Wealth, and Happiness in Ten Easy Lessons or Money Refunded,"* Christianity has become, to many, simply a better way to get rich or have a big time. (Havner) The world no longer knows what to expect from the church world, Christians and clergy alike. However, true, untainted, uncompromised Christianity is still alive and well today and there has never been a time when the world needed to see it more than now.

The world doesn't need Hollywood's version of Christianity or some dried up, cold theologian's version. Today we need God's version of True Christianity. And we need to understand the true *characteristics* of true Christianity.

I. TRUE CHRISTIANITY MUST BE *VITAL*.

A. True Christianity must have life--life that causes us to act.

James 2:17-18

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy works without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

B. True Christianity must have life that causes us to serve joyfully.

Romans 7:6

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

II. TRUE CHRISTIANITY MUST BE *VOCAL*.

A. True Christianity must be an articulate faith.

"The gospel is not something to come to church to hear so much as it is something to go from church to tell". (Havner)

B. True Christianity must be heard in our words.

Acts 4:31 & 33

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all."

C. True Christianity must be expressed in our way of life.

"By this shall all men know ye are my disciples."

We are not to be timid and backward or embarrassed by our faith. We are to express our faith in every way possible.

III. TRUE CHRISTIANITY MUST BE *VISIBLE*.

A. True Christianity must show up in daily conduct.

■ W. H. Griffith writes, "There are people in the world around us who never open, who never read this Book. But they are reading us. Are they able to see God in our lives? Are they able to say of us to others, "That man--or that woman--reminds me of Christ"? Do we let our light so shine that men may see, not us, but our Father in heaven? This is the real test.

W. H. Griffith-Thomas in a sermon, "Knowing and Showing," from Keswick's Authentic Voice. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 5.

B. True Christianity must be revealed in the way we treat others.

I John 3:16-18

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children,

let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

C. Christianity that is visible is called holiness (purity of life)

Hebrews 12:14

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

IV. TRUE CHRISTIANITY MUST BE *VIVID*.

A. True Christianity must be glowing, not pale and colorless.

■ One definition of the word vivid is - "Perceived as bright: Full of the freshness of immediate experience."

That describes the disciples experience in: Acts 4:13

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

B. True Christianity is not bland and useless.

■ While driving my boys to swimming lessons, Michael, age eight, saw a book my husband had left in the car. He picked it up and read the title.

"What's this book about?" he asked.

"It's a book to help us become authentic Christians," I replied.

He said, "Oh yea, that's what we are, right, Mom! Pathetic Christians!"

-- Connie Schmotzer, Bellingham, Wash., Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

V. TRUE CHRISTIANITY MUST BE *VICTORIOUS*.

"...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (2 Jn. 5:4)

A. True Christianity overcomes the world.

■ An Indian brave found an eagle's egg. Since he couldn't find the nest to put it back, he did the next-best thing. He put the eagle's egg in a nest with prairie chicken eggs. So the eagle was hatched and began to live with the prairie

chickens. All it saw were chickens, so it clucked and scratched and pecked around and was a chicken for years. And then one day it saw a glorious sight in the sky, a great bald eagle soaring up there. He said, "What is that?"

The chicken said, "That is the eagle, the king of birds. But forget it. That's not for you; you are a chicken." And he lived the rest of his life clucking, pecking, and scratching, and not flying.

Listen, friends: by the grace of God, you and I are called to be eagles to soar. That means loving your enemy, loving yourself even when you don't love your enemy, and trying again to love your enemy. That's the law and the gospel.

-- Bruce Larson, "When Your Enemy Prospers," Preaching Today, Tape No. 78.

B. True Christianity overcomes the world through Christ.

John 17:14-19

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

CONCLUSION

■ The Divine "scheme of things," as Christianity understands it, is at once extremely elastic and extremely rigid. It is elastic in that it includes a large measure of liberty for the creature; it is rigid in that it includes the proviso that however created beings choose to behave, they must accept responsibility for their own actions and endure the consequences.

-- Dorothy L. Sayers in Dorothy L. Sayers: A Rage for Life. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 11.

True Christianity must be vital, vocal, visible, vivid and victorious. True Christianity must be **REAL!** Do others see the reality of our relationship with Jesus Christ?