
Not Every Christian

by: Ronald L. Dart

I would not want you to think that everyone out there who claims to be a Christian really is! Why would I say that? Well, I have heard a lot of people say, "Well if that's religion, I don't want any part it!" And I'm afraid that in an awful lot of cases, I would have to agree with them.

Someone else said, "The only problem with Christianity is, that it's never been tried." And with tongue-in-cheek, once again, I am forced to agree, because you will meet Christian people, that is people who claim to be Christian, who are thieves. You'll meet people who claim to be Christian who are covetous, or adulterers, or liars, or fornicators. Now you would think, watching most Christian people live their lives, that maybe God doesn't care very much what we do, as long as we say the right words. As long as we say, "We believe in Jesus," as long as we show up in church on Sunday morning or whenever, then God doesn't care very much about the rest.

Here is what Jesus had to say about this. You'll find it in Luke chapter 6 verse 44, "Every tree is known by its own fruit, of thorns men do not gather figs, you don't go to a bramble bush to gather grapes. {45} A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth that which is good, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth what is evil, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

It's funny isn't it, Jesus said that, "You can tell what kind of people we are, by the way we live our lives." He said something else astonishing here, at least astonishing if you believe a lot of Christian people. He said, "There is such a thing as a good man."

I remember somewhere that Jesus said, "When somebody said, "Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Why are you calling me good? There's nobody good but God" (Luke 18:18-19).

But in a relative sense, Jesus said "There is such a thing as a good man, and you can tell what kind of man he is, by the way he lives his life."

Could it be, that the Christian faith is about a change of heart? A change in the kind of people we are?

Jesus goes on to say in this same passage in verse 46, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?"

What He is saying is, that words are not enough folks. It is not good enough for you to say that I am the Messiah. It is not good enough to say that I'm your Lord and you don't do what I tell you to do."

Someone read this passage that says, "Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed and no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Well, they read that, and they thought, "Well, all I have to do is say, "Jesus is Lord." That's an easy formula isn't it? You can put that on a bumper sticker on the back of your car and everyone will know that you're a Christian, and I suppose, that's where a lot of these ideas that people have about, "Well if that's religion, I don't want any part of it!" comes from. Right?

Well if that is all you have to say is that, well then that would be one thing, we will all know that you have the Holy Spirit.

Let me tell you a true story. In our little town, there was a sandwich shop. It was a place we loved to go because they had a little meat counter there. They had a cooler and all the meats that they made their sandwiches from were right there in front of you and you could look at them, pick them and choose them. When you came in, and you ordered a corned beef sandwich, they would pull a slab of corn beef out and slap it on the meat slicer and slice off the pieces for you and they would make your sandwich right in front of you on the freshest bread with fresh lettuce and nice red tomatoes and they would put the whole thing together and serve it to you. You could sit over there with a nice Coke and have your lunch and watch a little sport on television. They were really nice people in that place. They would speak to you when you came in and had big smiles on their faces. It was a nice place to go and have lunch. It was a man and his wife, and they were making a good living with that little sandwich shop.

But the time came when they wanted to change their lives. They sold out and moved to Florida. They sold it to another man and his wife and the man who bought the shop and his wife were Christians. I could tell they were Christians by the sign they put on the wall that said, "Jesus is Lord," and by the fact that instead of basketball on the television, we now had a Christian channel on with a preacher or somebody singing Christian songs all the time.

But, the quality of the sandwiches began to go downhill. The bread was not as fresh, the meat was not as good, and the man and his wife, well, I don't know what it is, but a lot of Christian people don't seem very happy and not very warm. His business declined and soon it was gone.

I don't know what they did with the sign that they put up on the wall that said, "Jesus is Lord."

Now let me ask you, would a Christian be the kind of person who would take a thriving business and then try to make even more money out of it by cutting costs and maintaining prices and then put the name of Jesus on the wall to maybe attract other Christian people to do business with them and tell the world what good people they were?

Words are cheap, folks! And words don't make a Christian.

The rest of this little section of Jesus' teaching, verse 47 of Luke 6, He said this, "Whoever comes to me and hears my sayings, and does them. {48} I will show you to whom he is like, he's like a man who built his house and dug down deep and he laid the foundation on rock and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently on that house, but could not shake it because he founded it upon rock. {49} But the person that hears my sayings and doesn't do them, (never get into his life, never touch the way he treats people, never touches business practices), he is like a man without a foundation, who built a house upon the earth, upon sand, which when the stream did beat vehemently, immediately it fell, and the ruin of the house was great."

Here was a guy, who claimed to be a Christian, but who did not take the most fundamental principles of Christianity into his business and it failed.

Now I'm not here to tell you that Christians are perfect, because we're not. Nor am I going to tell you that our heart is always right, because it's not, but if the Christian faith, the Christian way of life, is not in the process of changing our heart, our mind, our life, what on earth is it for?

I sometimes wonder if we think our faith is a fire escape. It exists for no other reason than to forgive us of our past wrongs and to let us off the hook for the sins we commit every day, that our faith has nothing to do with changing our heart, with changing our life.

It's true that you can't judge a book by its cover. But Jesus said, "You can judge a tree by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33). If you're a person who is sick of his life, who is sick at heart. If your tree is bearing bad fruit. Maybe you ought to take another look at the Christian faith. The fact is, you can feel exactly the way I described it just now and be a Christian in name, but maybe you should take another look at the Bible, maybe look at Jesus' sayings. Maybe you should read carefully what Jesus, the master, said. Maybe you should consider a faith that changes the heart first and begins to rebuild the sick and broken heart and it has to do with the kind of person you are, with a faith that can change your life.

This doesn't mean that everything in your life will come up roses. What it does mean is that you can develop the heart and the character to deal with life in a totally different way. Far too many Christians seem to come up losers in life. In fact, I sometimes get the impression that a lot of Christian people think they're supposed to be losers, that that's the way it's supposed to be, but it's not! God does not intend to spend eternity with a bunch of losers.

Again, and again in the Bible, Christians are described as people who overcome. They are people who overcome the world. They are people who overcome sin. They are people who overcome evil. They are people who overcome the devil (Romans 12:21, Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21, 21:7).

The short word for overcoming is winning. God does not intend to spend eternity with a bunch of losers. He wants us to be winners.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. If it was true that all we had to do was say a few words and be saved, then why would Jesus make it very clear how we are to live our lives?
2. What are your thoughts about Jesus' statement that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks?"
3. How has hypocritical Christians hurt Christianity?
4. Many Christians do not like to admit the importance of works because they feel that you are trying to 'earn your salvation by your works.' If that were true then how do they prove their faith without works?
5. In what ways has becoming a Christian changed who you were?