

Title: **“DO YOU CONSIDER
YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN?”**

Text: 1 Peter 3:15

Subject: *Reasons for Hope*

Date: Sunday Morning — May 16, 2010

Tape # Z-87a

Readings: *Ron Wood and James Jordan*

Introduction:

“DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN?”

— The word “Christian” was first applied to believers by those who lived around them in Antioch (Acts 11:26). **The word “Christians” means “Anointed Ones.”** Obviously, it was not used to deride these believers; but was used as a term of respect by those who were friendly toward them.

Later, God’s elect used the term to refer to themselves. Peter speaks of God’s suffering saints, assuring us that anyone who suffers “*as a Christian,*” anyone who suffers because of his faith in Christ, has no reason to be ashamed, but only to glorify God (1 Peter 4:16).

Yet, the word “Christian” was very soon corrupted in the minds of men to represent nothing more than a religious order, a religious system and a chosen set of beliefs. Agrippa told Paul that he was almost persuaded to become a Christian (Acts 26:28). Like most people today,

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that ignorant man thought, “I can choose to become a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Christian.”

Most people consider a Christian to be anyone who believes that Jesus of Nazareth is (or was) the Messiah. Papists, Mormons and Russellites (Jehovah’s Witnesses) as well as Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians are all considered “Christian” religions. Many think that all Americans are Christians, unless they choose some other religion. And many imagine that they are Christians because their parents are Christians, or because they have been raised in Church.

Would it be better to use the word “believer” to describe ourselves? In most of the churches with which you and I are commonly associated, “believer” is the word by which God’s saints are distinguished from others. Yet, that word is also corrupted by most. Indeed, many profess to be believers who are not. That has always been the case (John 2:23-25; 12:42-43). You may believe all the right doctrine and still be an unbeliever.

If I am asked, “Are you a Christian?” or “Are you a believer?” or “Are you born again?” I answer, “I hope that I am; and I am confident that my hope is good, because I believe that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the

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Christ of God. I trust him as my Savior and Lord. His blood alone has atoned for my sins. His righteousness alone makes me righteous. Yes, I hope I am born of God, a believer, a Christian, a child of God, because I trust Christ.”

Christianity is not just a religion. Christianity is “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Many years ago I was asked by a man sitting next to me in a hospital, **“What does it take to be a true Christian?”** After a brief pause, praying that the Lord would give me the right words to answer him, I said, — “Nothing from you, but all of you. True Christianity is the voluntary surrender of your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting him alone for the salvation of your soul.”

I ask you the question my granddaughter was asked last week. — **“DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN?”** If so, I ask you — “Why? What is the basis of your hope before God?” If you have a good hope, you can answer that question. If you do not have a good hope, you cannot and you are not a Christian.

(1 Peter 3:15) “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

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Do you hope to go to heaven when you die? Do you hope in the last day to hear the Lord of Glory call you saying, — *“Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”*? Do you hope to escape the wrath of God in the day of judgment, and to be numbered among the white-robed throng of the redeemed? Do you have such a hope? If so, why? What is the reason of your hope?

Everyone says, “I have hope.” “I hope it will be all right at the last. I hope to go to heaven. I hope to be with the Lord.” But why do you have such a hope? What is the foundation of your hope? I fear that if I were to ask you to respond to those questions, many of you would be unable to do so. You hope you are saved. You hope to go to heaven. You hope to be accepted of God. But you have no reason for such a hope.

If you and I are believers, we ought to be able to give some reason for our hope. If our hope is sound, we should be able to show why, and wherefore, and upon what grounds, and for what reason we expect to go to heaven when we die.

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Today, I want to talk to you plainly from my own experience about the reasons of my hope, the reasons why I do consider myself a Christian. You have my text before you. — **“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”**

Somewhere between proud presumption and dread despair, there is the believer’s hope. — Somewhere between a fleshly familiarity with God and a slavish fear of God, there is the believer’s hope. — Somewhere between modern dispensationalism and medieval mysticism, there is the believer’s hope. — Somewhere between decisionism and fatalism, there is the believer’s hope.

Someone has said, “We are hedged in on two sides in the Word of God! On the one hand, there are the promises of God, lest we should despair. On the other hand, there are his warnings, lest we presume.

When the prophet Jeremiah looked around him, he was compelled to weep. He had seen the desolations of Jerusalem. He had felt the bitterness, the wormwood and the gall of God’s hard providence. But when all else is gone, there is the believer’s hope. The prophet looked up to

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his God, the fountain of all grace, wiped away his tears and said, — *“The Lord is my portion saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.”*

What is our hope? It is defined by **Charles Buck** like this: — “The hope of a Christian is an expectation of all necessary good both in time and eternity, founded upon the promises, relations, and perfections of God, and on the offices, righteousness, and intercession of Christ. It is a compound of desire, expectation, patience, and joy.”

In the Scriptures, the people of God are said to have “**a good hope through grace**,” a “**blessed hope**,” and a hope that is “**sure and steadfast**.” Hope is the anchor of our souls amidst the tempestuous trials, troubles and heartaches of life. But a hope which anchors the soul must be a hope founded upon and established with good reasons.

Proposition: If my hope is one “*that maketh not ashamed*” I must be able to give a reason for my hope.

What is the reason of your hope? Why do you consider yourself a Christian?

- An old religious experience? — Saul had that.
- Great religious privileges? — Lot’s wife had that.

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- Religious works and devotion? — The Pharisees had those.
- Religious acquaintances and friends? — Judas had those.
- Feelings and convictions? — Agrippa had those.
- Strict morality? — The Pharisees had that.
- An orthodox creed? — Diotrephes had that.
- Great sacrifice? — Ananias and Sapphira had that.
- Church membership? — Demas had that.
- Miraculous gifts? — Simon Magus had those.

Divisions: Let me give you the reasons of my hope, the reasons why I hope I am a Christian. Perhaps you have hope for the same reasons that I do.

1. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God (Matthew 16:16).
2. Jesus Christ is able to save the chief of sinners (Hebrews 7:25).
3. The Lord Jesus Christ is able to keep that which I have committed unto him (2 Timothy 1:12).
4. I have both heard and obeyed the Word of God (John 8:47).
5. The Lord is my portion (Lamentations 3:24).
6. I have not yet been moved from the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:23).

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JESUS IS THE CHRIST

I have hope of eternal salvation, because I know that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God (Matthew 16:16).

(Matthew 16:16) “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

This is the confession of my heart and mouth. It arises from what I have seen, read and heard from the Word of God. It arises from my own experience — “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” What is the meaning of this confession? I simply mean to say that I believe what God has said concerning his Son. I so believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that I rest my soul upon him.

- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is come in the flesh.
- Living upon this earth as our Representative, the Son of God perfectly obeyed the will of God.
- The Lord of Glory voluntarily gave himself into the hands of divine justice to die in the place of sinners.
- That very Christ who died, rose again in triumph over the grave and ascended into glory.

Why did he do all of this?

- It was his Father’s will.

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- To fulfill his covenant engagements.
- To redeem his people.
- To win his throne.
- Because he loved us!

ABLE TO SAVE

I have hope of entering into glory, because I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save the very chief of sinners (Hebrews 7:25). Because Jesus Christ now lives in glory and reigns as a Prince and a Savior, I know that he can save the vilest of men by virtue of his shed blood. — *“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* I know that salvation is altogether a work of almighty grace, therefore, I have hope.

- Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).
- The Son of God has the authority to save sinners (John 17:2).
- The Lord of Glory has promised to save all who come to God by him (John 6).

(John 6:37-40) “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I

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will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

I have done just that. I have come to God through Christ as a guilty, worthless sinner. I can do no more. Will you too come?

- Come in humiliation.
- Come in faith.
- Come now.
- Come like you are.

Illustration: *The Artist and the Beggar*

(Matthew 11:28-30) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

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ABLE TO KEEP

I hope that I am a Christian, I have hope of eternal life, because I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to keep that which i have committed to him (2 Timothy 1:12). — *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”*

(2 Timothy 1:9-12) “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, ¹⁰ But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: ¹¹ Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. ¹² For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

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My heart’s faith is fixed upon a living Lord, who has revealed himself in me (v. 10). It is not what I believe that gives me hope, but whom I believe! **I have committed my entire being into the care of his hands; and I know he has the power to keep me.**

- The Triune God committed his law and justice into the hands of Christ.
- God the Father committed his will into the hands of Christ.
- The Triune Jehovah committed his people into the hands of Christ.
- The Triune God committed the honor and glory of his name into the hands of Christ.
- If Christ has kept what the Triune Jehovah committed to him, he can surely keep all that I have committed to him. — He will preserve me in life.
- He will comfort me in death. — He will raise my body from the grave. — He will keep me in the Day of Judgment. — He will lift me up when I fall (Psalm 37:25), and intercede for me when I sin (1 John 2:1-2). — And he will, at last, present me faultless before the presence of his glory!

HEARD AND OBEYED

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I have hope that I am a child of God, because I have both heard and obeyed the Word of God (John 8:47). — *“He that is of God heareth God’s words.”*

What have I heard?

- I heard that God is strictly just.
- I heard that God is totally sovereign.
- I heard that God is full of mercy.
- I heard that God is willing to forgive sin.
- I heard that God has made provision for the salvation of sinners by the blood of Christ.
- I heard that God commands sinners to believe on his Son.
- I heard that Jesus Christ receives sinful men — The Harlot — Mary — The Samaritan — The Woman Taken In Adultery.

What did I do? I believed what I heard (John 6:29).

(John 6:29) “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

- God said come; and I come.
- God said look; and I look.

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- God said repent; and I repent.
- God said believe; and I believe.

MY PORTION

I have hope of eternal salvation, I consider myself a Christian, because the Lord is the portion of my soul (Lamentations 3:24). — *“The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.”*

I have seen many turn from the faith of the gospel. But I cannot. I have no hope but this.

I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.

All other hope is gone forever.

My hope is in the Lord’s mercy (v. 22). — *“It is f the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.”* I have no hope but that God will deal with me in mercy.

- Eternal Mercy.
- Redeeming Mercy.
- Daily Mercy.

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My hope is fixed upon God’s unfailing love (v. 22). —
“His compassions, they fail not.”

My Hope is God’s faithfulness (v. 23). — *“Great is thy
faithfulness.”*

- He is faithful to himself.
- He is faithful to his purpose.
- He is faithful to his covenant.
- He is faithful to his Son.
- He is faithful to his people.

My hope is in God’s goodness (vv. 25-26).

(Lamentations 3:25-26) “The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him. ²⁶ *It is good that a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.”

God is good to those who wait for him, to those who seek him.

- They feel their need of him.
- They have faith in him.
- They seek him sincerely.
- They seek him continually.
- They shall be filled.

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“The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.” This is our hope! Today men talk of his pardon, but miss his presence. Today men talk of his blessing, but miss his being. Today me talk of his grace, but miss his glory. Today men talk of his place, but miss his person. Today men talk of his precepts, but miss his power. It is the Lord himself who is our portion. We hope in him!

STILL BELIEVE

I consider myself a Christian because I believe the gospel. I have hope of acceptance before God, because I have not yet been moved from the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:23). Paul tells us that we are saved — *“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”*

When any turn from Zion’s way;
Alas, what numbers do!
I think I hear the Savior say,
Wilt thou forsake me too?

Our Savior raises the question — *“Will ye also go away?”*
And with Peter we respond, *“Lord, to whom shall we go?
Thou hast the words of eternal life.”*

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- Shall I return to the world? There is no hope there.
- Shall I return to the law? There is no hope there.
- Shall I return to the way of religious ritualism and self-righteous morality? There is no hope there.

No, I must abide in the hope of the gospel.

What is this hope?

- Substitutionary Redemption.
- Imputed Righteousness.
- Free-Forgiveness.
- Salvation By Grace Alone.

APPLICATION

1. What do we hope for? — SALVATION.
2. What is the reason of your hope? — CHRIST.
3. You who have no hope, I counsel you to look to Christ.

(1 John 5:1-10 AV) “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his

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commandments are not grievous. ⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. ⁵ Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? ⁶ ¶ This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. ⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. ¹⁰ ¶ He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”

Do you consider yourself a Christian? If you do, — Why?
— What is the reason of your hope?

Amen.