

The True Church

True Christians will be Christ-like. The Redeemer clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to our world--a world seared and marred by the curse of sin, a vale of darkness and woe--to accomplish a great work, as he announced in the synagogue of Nazareth: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* Each church-member is to be a representative of the character and spirit of Christ. By precept and example the essential elements of a true, healthy, influential Christianity are to be revealed. Christ should be constantly set forth as the fountain of life, mercy, and love.

Brethren, have we any truth in advance of others? Is its influence on our character of any worth to us? When we bring that truth into our hearts, weave it into our character, carry out its sanctifying principles in our daily life, we show that we believe it to be worth defending, and that we will individually contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. We shall look to Jesus, and catch his spirit. In this age, the mind is inclined to lose sight of Jesus, and what is the result?--The tenderness of Christ is not cherished, and hearts are hard and unfeeling. Were Christ on earth today, his solemn rebuke would be upon many who profess to be Christians, who have entered into church fellowship, because they do not have the mind of Jesus, are not meek and lowly of heart. When self is exalted, there cannot be a ready sympathy with the poor and lowly and oppressed.

By beholding, we become changed. Through close study and earnest contemplation of the character of Christ, his image is reflected in our own lives, and a higher tone is imparted to the spirituality of the church. If the truth of God has not transformed our character into the likeness of Christ, all our professed knowledge of him and the truth is but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Let all who claim to keep the commandments of God, look well to this matter, and see if there are not reasons why they do not have more of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. How many have lifted up their souls unto vanity! They think themselves exalted in the favor of God, but they neglect the needy, they turn a deaf ear to the calls of the oppressed, and speak sharp, cutting words to those who need altogether different treatment. Thus they offend God daily by their hardness of heart. These afflicted ones have claims upon the sympathies and the interest of their fellow-men. They have a right to expect help, comfort, and Christ-like love. But this is not what they receive. Every neglect of God's

suffering ones is written in the books of heaven as if shown to Christ himself. Let every member of the church closely examine his heart, and investigate his course of action, to see if these are in harmony with the spirit and work of Jesus; for if not, what can he say when he stands before the Judge of all the earth? Can the Lord say to him, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?"*

Christ has identified his interest with that of suffering humanity; and while he is neglected in the person of his afflicted ones, all our assemblies, all our appointed meetings, all the machinery that is set in operation to advance the cause of God, will be of little avail. *"This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."*

All who are to be saints in heaven will first be saints upon the earth. They will not follow the sparks of their own kindling, they will not work for praise, nor speak words of vanity, nor put forth the finger in condemnation and oppression; but they will follow the Light of life, diffuse light, comfort, hope, and courage to the very ones who need help, and not censure and reproach.

**WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS
OF JESUS**



"When we are truly Christ's, our hearts will be full of meekness, gentleness, and kindness, because Jesus has forgiven our sins."

**WE SHOULD NOT BE LIKE THE
THE PHARISEES**



Has the truth of God been committed to us? Then let us seek to advance it in every way possible. More is expected of us than we have done; our works should correspond to the light which God has given us; they should advance accordingly. The rich, clear light that has been shining upon our pathway, has placed us on vantage ground; and we should improve every opportunity to do good. Christ came from the royal courts of heaven to seek and save the lost, and this is to be our work. The zeal which we manifest in this direction will show the measure of our love for Jesus and our fellow-men, of our efficiency and missionary spirit.

To every member of the church is committed a work, and his sanctification will be seen in the efficiency, the unselfishness, the zeal and purity and intelligence, with which he does the work. The cause of humanity and religion must not retrograde. Progress is expected of those who have received great light, and have many advantages.

The church must be a working church if it would be a living church. It should not be content merely to hold its own ground against the opposing forces of sin and error, not be content to advance with dilatory step, but it should bear the yoke of Christ, and keep step with the Leader, gaining new recruits along the way.

When we are truly Christ's, our hearts will be full of meekness, gentleness, and kindness, because Jesus has forgiven our sins. As obedient children we shall receive and cherish the precepts he has given, and shall attend to the ordinances he has instituted. We shall be

seeking constantly to obtain a knowledge of him. His example will be our rule of life. Those who are Christ's disciples will take the work where he left it, and carry it forward in his name. They will copy the words, the spirit, the practices, of none but him. Their eye is upon the Captain of their salvation. His will is their law. And as they advance, they catch more and clearer views of his countenance, of his character, of his glory. They do not cling to self, but hold fast his word, which is spirit and life. *"If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* They reduce their knowledge of his will to practice. They hear and do the things that Jesus teaches.

In the church is work for all who love God and keep his commandments. The profession one may make is not certain evidence that he is a Christian. The words he may speak give no surety that he is a converted man. Hear the words of Christ: *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"* Unless the daily life conforms to the will and works of Christ, no one can establish a claim to be a child of God, an heir of heaven. There is a legal religion, which the Pharisees had, but such religion does not give to the world a Christ-like example; it does not represent Christ's character. Those who have Christ abiding in the heart will work the works of Christ. Such are entitled to all the promises of his word. Becoming one with Christ, they do the will of God, and exhibit the riches of his grace. *"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."* O, precious promise! *"And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."* In marked contrast to the murmuring and complaining of the wicked, the servants of God will sing, *"I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord. Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off."* Then let not a semblance of pride or self-importance be cherished, for it will crowd Jesus out of the heart, and the vacuum will be filled with the attributes of Satan. *"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God."* *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."*

By: [Ellen White](#)

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