

Christian Or Student Of Christianity?

The philosopher Edictetus was not impressed by eloquence or learning.

It was a waste of time for his student to recite the list of books they had read.

Edictetus asked his students “*what has your reading done for you?*”

Edictetus looked **not** to the words of his students but to their lives for the answer to their quality as a student.

Edictetus expected his students to bring their lives into harmony with his stoic doctrines, he told them bluntly, “*if you don't want to live life as a philosopher don't come back.*”

With Edictetus it was all or nothing, there was no middle ground.

I am in **no way** advocating the teaching of stoics, but many people in this world, are blinded by Satan with such doctrines. [**2 Corinthians 4:4**]

Luke 16:8 [NIV] “*The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.*”

High powered, influential people, those still blinded by Satan seem to be more successful as far as this world's standards are judged.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.*”

We are **not** to conform with this worldly wisdom.

Many Christians are making the mistake that the failed students of the old Greek philosopher, mistaking the word for the deed, and falsely assuming that if they know the teaching of the Christian faith that they are Christians.

It will help us to locate ourselves spiritually if we face up to the rather ungracious question, “*am I a Christian in fact or merely a student of Christianity?*”

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 [NIV] “*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you, unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.*”

Paul expected the Church at Corinth to take this personal test with open eyes and honesty.

Many people have trod a hazy path to physical death because they will **not** choose to bring their thoughts and lives under the searching eye of their Creator God.

Such people prefer to assume everything is alright, though such assumption could be dangerous and even deadly.

Luke 6:46 [NIV] “*Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*”

No-one has any right to believe or claim they are a Christian unless they are humbly seeking to obey the teaching of the One they call Lord or Saviour.

Luke 6:47-49 [NIV] *“I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”*

Jesus Christ then illustrates how such a claim has **no** foundation.

Some may now object to what even Jesus Christ stated and illustrated.

They have falsely been taught that all you have to do is “accept” Jesus Christ, He did it all for you, kept the law perfectly for us as well as dying for us.

“Is it not possible then to become a Christian by faith alone altogether apart from the law?” they will claim.

Many honest people will argue this way, but their honesty cannot save their argument from being erroneous.

The teaching such people have received, especially over the last 50 years, has emasculated the Gospel Message and lowered the moral standards of the Christian Church until it is almost indistinguishable from the world’s society.

All this results from a misunderstanding of grace and a narrow, one-sided view of the Gospel Message, the power to mislead lies in the element of truth it contains.

Remember, a half-truth is always easier for a person to receive and accept.

The real eternal truth is that faith and obedience are two sides of the same coin and are always found together in Holy Scripture, the Christian Bible.

Faith has been preached as everything and obedience nothing.

The result among religious people is moral weakness, spiritual blindness and a slow but constant drift away from New Testament Christianity.

John 7:17 [NIV] *“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”*

Jesus Christ made it very plain the spiritual truth cannot be understood until the person has made a full committal to it.

The willing [or at least a willingness] and the doing come before the knowing.

We can even logically prove this from scripture –

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

Only the Holy Spirit linked with our human spirit [**Job 32:8**] can lead us to and reveal to us spiritual truth.

1 Corinthians 2:9-11 [NIV] *“However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him,’ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

This link with our human spirit is the only contact we can have with God and His Truth.

Acts 5:32 [NIV] *“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

The Holy Spirit is **only** given to those who obey Him. The “*him*” is all the godhead, the Father, Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Truth, Jesus Christ [**John 14:6**] is a strict Master and demands obedience before He will unveil the riches of God’s way of life to human beings.

Just in case you need more scriptural proof from God’s Word, the Christian Bible –

Matthew 7:21-23 [NIV] *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

The Greek word translated “*knew*” is “*ginōskō*” meaning to recognise or understand indicating a very intimate close relationship.

John 14:21 [NIV] *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

The relationship with our Creator God hinges on our obedience to His commands.

James 2:14-26 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”*

The Greek word translated “*deeds*” is “*ērgōn*” meaning to toil or labour.

Faith and action must go together.

1 Peter 1:1-2 [NIV] *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”*

Chosen and set apart [sanctified] so that we can obey Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:3-6 [NIV] *“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”*

The very likeness of God, that is God's Love, is only made complete through obedience to the Words of Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:21-24 [NIV] *“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”*

To avoid condemnation and have confidence on our Judgement Day we have to obey Jesus Christ's commands and do what pleases Him.

Romans 1:5-6 [NIV] *“Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”*

Paul's job, given to him by his Saviour Jesus Christ, was to call all people, both Jews and gentiles, to a life of obedience to Jesus Christ through faith in Him.

We are also called to belong to Jesus Christ. [**Acts 20:28**]

To sum it up, saving faith is impossible without willing obedience.

To try to have faith without obedience to Jesus Christ makes us **not** a Christian but merely a student of Christianity.