

THREE IMPORTANT TRAITS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

James reminds us that one's life is like a vapor that appears briefly then vanishes away (Jam. 4: 14). The Christian, understanding how brief life is, lives it in a significantly different way than those who either do not understand it, or if they do, seem to give it no thought. Three traits which characterize the life the Christian lives are: It is a holy life, a helpful life, and a hopeful life.

The Christian life is a holy life. There are at least two aspects of the holy life the Christian lives. His is a life separated unto the service of the divine king who died for him. That means his life is one of exactness in respect to obedience to the word of God. The Christian walks circumspectly (Eph. 5:15). That means he walks accurately. His guide is the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and he rejects the doctrines and commandments and creeds of men (Matt. 15:8, 9). The Christian has renounced living for himself and for the fleeting things of the world with its sinful lusts, and strives for the eternal goal of the heavenly reward (Phil. 3:13, 14; 2 John 8). Jesus is our example in that He was separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). That does not mean he had nothing to do with them (Mark 2:16). He taught the publicans and harlots. To the surprise of the leaders of the Jews, Jesus told them that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of heaven before they would (Mat. 21:31). Jesus did not withdraw from sinners, but He did no sin, nor did guile come from his mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). Christians are called upon to come out from the sinfulness of the world (2 Cor. 6:17; 1 John 2:1).

The Christian life is a helpful life. Again, Jesus is our example. He went about doing good (Acts 10:38). Matthew records that Jesus went about and healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people (Matt. 4:23). We are instructed that as we have opportunity, we are to do good unto all men, especially those who are in the household of God (Gal. 6:10). One who fails to do that is described as not having the love of God dwelling in him (1 John 3:17). Peter writes that a person who *"will love life, and see good days"* must eschew evil and do good (1 Pet. 3:10, 11). When Jesus described the scene at the judgment in Matthew 25, the criteria for one being on His right hand among the saved was having done good in this life. One who knows to do good, but does not do it has sinned (Jam. 4:17). Paul saw in a vision, a man from Macedonia who appealed for his help (Acts 16:9), and he went. As the old hymn says, "Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there."

The Christian life is also a hopeful life. This aspect actually encourages the first two. The Christian strives to live above sin and lives a life of service, because of his hope for heaven. In the beautiful 15th chapter of First Corinthians, Paul defends the fact of the resurrection from the grave. If the future resurrection of the dead were not a fact, we would be most miserable (1 Cor. 15:19). But we do have hope! But we are assured that if the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, our mortal bodies will be quickened by Him (Rom. 8:11). The New Testament has much to say about the Christian's hope:

- It is a joyous hope (Rom. 12:12).
- It is an abundant hope (Rom. 15:13).
- It is laid up in heaven (Col. 1:5).
- It is a blessed hope (Tit. 2:13).

- It is an anchor of our souls (Heb. 6:19).
- It is a better hope (Heb. 7:19).
- It is a lively hope (1 Pet. 1:3).
- It is a defensible hope (1 Pet. 3:15).

We live the Christian life in hope, which means we live in expectation of the crown of righteousness which the righteous judge will give to all those who love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

The Christian life is a holy life, a helpful life, and a hopeful life. There is no other way on earth one can live life and have the hope of eternal life except to live it as a Christian, a child of God. That is true, because only the Christian life is an obedient life. The Hebrew writer informs us that Christ is the author of eternal salvation only to those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9).

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