

We're going to turn our hearts to our continual study on the cultural versus biblical Christianity. And we want to look at the topic this morning: "What is a biblical Christian?" We know what a cultural Christian is. We're in society full of them, but we don't know all the times "What is a biblical Christian?" A true Christian, a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we wanna look into the word of God the next few weeks and just unpack four major points about "What is a biblical Christian."

Now there are many issues where total ignorance and complete indifference are neither tragic or fatal. And I'm sure that there are a few of us who can explain all the processes by which a brown cow eats green grass and produce white milk. But we can still enjoy the milk. Many of us today are totally unaware of Einstein's theory of relativity, and if we were pressed to explain it, it would supersede our current level of knowledge and understanding. And not only are we unaware of Einstein's theory, but most of us are quite indifferent. Yet our indifference and our ignorance are neither tragic nor fatal. There are some issues which ignorance and indifference are both tragic and fatal. One such matter is the answer to this question, "What is a biblical Christian?" In other words, according to Scripture, "When does a man, a woman, a boy and a girl have the right to be named Christian?"

Now, in Acts 11:26, it was at Antioch that disciples were first called Christians. So it's not a name of a later date in history. It's at the very birth, at the very beginning of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It comes up in the very foundation of the church. They were called People of the Way. They were called disciples. But they were called Christians first at Antioch. In Acts 26:28, as Paul testifies to Agrippa— and Agrippa said this to Paul after his great personal testimony of Jesus Christ, transforming him on the road leading to Damascus— Agrippa says in Acts 26:28 to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" For you "woke" people of this current age, Christian is not a Roman invention. It is not the black man, the white man, the yellow man, or the blue man's invention. It is something that God, out of the context of a suffering people (who were serving Christ) begin to embrace and accept the criticism and the ridicule of the world around them, mocking them for following the

Christ. It was the world system that said, look at those *Christianos*, those Christ ones. And so the church embraced that reality for themselves. It had nothing to do with their political, social and geographical dimensions of their life. It had nothing to do with their political power, with their influence, with their ethnic background, their cultural expression. It was a response of their life lived before a culture that was Christ-less. And that Christ-less culture said, look at those *Christianos* in a mocking and derogatory manner. And look what the followers of Jesus did. The disciples of Jesus, the People of the Way, they began to call themselves— the disciples began to call themselves Christians, first at Antioch (and this is Antioch of Syria, not Antioch of Pisidia.) There's two different Antiochs.

And then when Paul stood before a great powerful political figure, King Agrippa, Agrippa said, "In a short time do you think you'd want to persuade me to be a Christian?" Obviously his testimony was persuasive, but it did not bring about regeneration, but it brought great understanding to the mind and the heart of Agrippa, that if Agrippa were to die that moment he would be in Hell. Because there was enough knowledge of Christ in his redeeming power to convince him, he said, "You almost." "Do you think you can in a short time?" God can do anything quickly. And 1 Peter 4:16, the third time this word *Christianos* is used in the New Testament. "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name." That's Christian. *Christianos* or Christ one.

Father, bless your word as it goes forth with simplicity and power and demonstration of your spirit and empower us to be those disciples who call ourselves Christians today. May we take back the meaning, the impact, the purpose of that name because of the one whom we follow. The crucified and the risen, the ascendant, and the returning Christ. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, oh, Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Speak, Lord, your people are listening.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

What is a biblical Christian? One must not make the assumption lightly that he or she is a Christian, because we know about the cultural Christian. We know about the religious performers, right? The Pretenders. We know about those who grew up in the church and then grew out of the church. When you hit 18, no more God, no more Faith, no more truth, right? When you're in your formative years and the parents have the influence over your life as a young person, you love Jesus. You wanna hear about Jesus. You quote scripture, but then somehow at that ripe old age of 18, the whole belief system that was taught and laid down and practice and model becomes antiquated and out of date. It's not cool, it's not current, it's not relevant and the devil takes a hold of the minds of our children. A false conclusion at this point is tragic and fatal. Therefore I want to set before you four truth statements from the Bible that will give an answer to the question "What is a biblical Christian?"

And the first truth statement is a biblical Christian is one who has faced realistically the problem of his own personal sin. Biblical Christian is the one who has faced realistically the problem of his own personal sin. One of the many things which distinguishes the Christian faith from other religions of the world is that Christianity is essentially and fundamentally a faith that calls sinners to repent and believe, by faith, the redeeming works of the Lord Jesus Christ. The angelic announcement to Mary in Matthew 1:21 says, "And she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins." Not from a bad economy, not from a racist society, not from a bad marriage, not from an unfulfilled dream, but from their sins. 1 Timothy 1:15 says, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." The Lord Jesus Christ himself says in Luke Chapter 5:31 and 32, 'Those who are well...' If you're not sick, you're well. You do not need a physician. Jesus said, "But those who are sick needs a physician." He says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Oh, that's the only way you can become a Christian is to first be a sinner. No one gets there without being a sinner first and then a saint. You're lost and then you're found. You're blind and then you see. That's how you come into this thing, right? You come alienated from

God and through salvation, you become integrated in God. You have disunity when you come and you have union when you embrace it by faith. Jesus said I come to call sinners to repentance. A Christian is one who has faced realistically the problem of his own/her own personal sin. Each individual must grapple with their sin condition if the truth of the gospel is being proclaimed. The Bible reveals that each one of us has a two-fold personal problem in relation to sin. On the one hand, we have the problem of a bad record. And on the other hand, we have a problem of a bad heart. If we start in Genesis 3 and begin with the tragic account of man's rebellion against God and the fall in to sin, then trace the biblical doctrine of sin (hamartiology is the doctrine of sin) all the way through the Book of Revelation, we will see that it is not oversimplification to say that everything that the Bible teaches about the doctrine of sin can be reduced to these two fundamental categories: the problem of a bad record and the problem of a bad heart.

Let's look at the problem of a bad record. What do I mean by the problem of a bad record? I'm using that terminology to describe what the scripture says before us as the doctrine of human guilt because of sin. Scripture tells us plainly that we obtain a bad record long before we had experienced any personal existence upon the Earth. Before we were born, before we were conceived in our mother's womb, we already had a bad record. Because Romans 5:12 says if you listen very carefully, that Adam becomes the prototype of the human race. Adam becomes a federal head of all humanity, from every ethnic and cultural and social group. And it says in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man..." What's his name? Adam. The first Adam. Let's get our Adams right. That first Adam messed us up, and that second Adam— or last Adam cleaned us up. And listen to what he says here, "Just as sin came into the world through that one man and death through sin..." So that one man, sin came in. Sin opened up door to death. "...Death spread to all humanity because all sinned."

So God is not picking on you and blaming Adam's choice for your choice. Adam represented you, and you were going to do the same thing Adam did because he's the

prototype of the human race. And we are descendants from Adam and Eve, right? That's why the apostle Paul dealt with this issue. He says, "When did we all sin?" We all sinned in Adam 'cause he's the representative. He's the prototype. He's the federal head of the human race. The gospel begins in Genesis 3. It's the fall of man and the promise in Genesis 3:15 is that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent, and the seed of the serpent will bruise his heel, which is a moral rule. That is the gospel in the nutshell. That is the Protoevangelium. The gospel in the nutshell. So when did all sin? All sinned in Adam. He was appointed by God to represent all of humanity. When he sinned, we sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. We didn't commit a sin like his sin, but we fell with him in that first transgression. But when we were born into the world, became of age and knew right from wrong, we started to accrue to our account, our transgressions. That's why the apostle Paul writes in First Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

Humanity was created without sin in the Garden of Eden, in Paradise, the garden of delight. But from the moment Adam disobeyed God's command. Not the woman, but the man. He messed it up. So the kind of venom you have towards the woman, it really should be pointed towards the man. "If that woman wouldn't have done this—" No. If that man would have obeyed God, we wouldn't have this issue today. If that man would have been obedient to God. If that man would have stood on the word of God. If that man would have opened up his mouth when the devil was talking to his wife, we wouldn't be here today. He was there. He was listening. He was passive and quiet. And he knew what God said about this situation. But he chose to do what she wanted him to do. That wasn't her that was him. Are y'all with me on this? We gotta get this right. We are products of generational sin, not generational curses. Don't get caught up into that faulty teaching that you're product of the generational curses that your mama, your grandma, your granddaddy and your grand so-and-so did when they were alive, and the reason why you like you are is because they were no good and you're no good. That's not generational curses in the Bible. Every man is accountable for God, for their own sin. Everyone will be judged because of their own sin, not because of your daddy sin or your

grandmama sin or your grandfather sin. There's no generational curses, there's generational sin. We passed that sin on through birth, right? We fail in him in the first transgression and we are a part of the first Adam's race that is under condemnation, apart from the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

That's Romans 8:1, Paul declared, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit has set us free from the law, sin, and death." The Bible teaches that after we're born into the world, additional guilt accrues to us. For our own personal transgressions. The word of God teaches in Ecclesiastes 7:20, "There is not a just man on Earth who does good and does not sin." It's not one. Listen, beloved, every single sin incurs additional guilt. Romans 3:9-12, "As it is written, none is righteous, no, not one." No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good." That's the condition of man. Man has a bad record. That's the unbelievers condition apart from faith in Christ alone. Our record in heaven is a marred record apart from Christ. Almighty God measures the totality of our human experience by a standard which is perfectly inflexible. He doesn't grade on a curve. You have to come up to the standard. You have to meet the standard, and if you can't, you're condemned. God is keeping a detailed record. That record is among the books in Revelation 20, verse 12, "And John said, 'And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne [the Great White Throne] and books were opened (with an "S"). Then another book that was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged from what was written in the books according to what they have done.'" If they want evidence, God will have it. And those books are recorded; every thought, every motive, every intention, every deed, every dimension of human experience that is contrary to God standard. And his standard is holy and it's perfect and it's sinless. It's impeccability that law, because of his nature. They're either failing to measure up to a standard, or they're transgressing his standard. That's what the book's gonna show. That's the precedent. There's no Court of Appeals before the Great White Throne. There's no appellate court before the divine court. The final word is what he's already written in his books.

We have a problem of a bad record, a record according to which we are guilty and here's the question: Why do human beings feel guilty? Because they're sinners. Why do human beings die? Because we're sinners. That was the result of man in the beginning at the garden. When he sinned, he hid. He felt guilty, he was ashamed. He put fig leaves to cover up his body. Why? Because he disobeyed the holy standard of God. There's no amount of counseling that can take away your guilt. *What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is that flow that makes me white as snow. No other help I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.* Oh man, those blood songs are beautiful this morning. We need to sing our blood songs outside of the building, inside of the building, on our way to work, from work, going home, from home. We need to sing. That's redeeming blood. That's cleansing blood. That's purifying blood. That's sanctifying blood. We're made right in God, through Christ alone. Cause we had a bad record.

Romans 3:19 says, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God." No one is getting away with what they're doing. No atrocity. No inhumanity to humanity from The Fall to 2022 will get away with their sins. You can do it in darkness, it will come to light. You can hide in the closet, it's gonna come out of the closet. You can bury it, it's gonna rise from the dead. You can never escape the justice of God. That's why I believe in biblical Christianity; that God would judge every human being for every wicked thing they have done. No one gets away. It's only through the blood that we're forgiven. It's through the blood that pardon comes. It's through the blood that we get amnesty and what we deserve, we don't get. That's Mercy. Mercy is God taking away from us what we deserve. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve, but Mercy is taking away from us what we do deserve. Thank God for Mercy and Grace.

This standard touches, beloved, not only the external behaviors of man, but also the internal motives of the heart of man. That's where it's coming from. The tragedy of these shootings just devastating the lives of families and killing children without a thought. He ain't

getting away with that. There's a divine judgment coming. There's a day of reckoning, and it's God's reckoning not the Supreme Court or the appellate court or the magistrate. It is God court. Biblical Christianity addresses our external behavior as well as our internal thoughts that produce those behaviors. We confess through prayer and praise, "*Change our heart, oh God. Make it ever true. Change our heart. Oh God. May I be like you.*" That's our prayer. Thus, our confession as redeemed sinners.

But this problem of a bad record is not the only problem. We have an additional problem. Well, you say man is messed up. Man is messed up! And we're gonna talk about this bad news so we can get to the good news. Man has a bad problem. But that's not the only problem. We have an additional problem and that's the problem here. It is of a bad heart. The Bible teaches that the problem of our sin arises not only from what we have done, but from who we are. Cultural Christians do not acknowledge that they are sinners. They do not acknowledge that they even sin. Cultural Christians believe in good works and doing good deeds. They believe in paying it forward. They believe in random acts of kindness, and all that's fine, but it will not merit favor before a holy, holy, holy God. Jesus is the only merit that one can have. When Adam sinned, he not only became guilty before God, he also became spiritually fallen and spiritually depraved. Cut off, disconnected from the life of God. That's the condition of your unsaved family member, your unsaved coworker, your unsaved friend. God forbid that's the condition of you. I'm speaking in general here, you church folk— church people. Because we get deceived by our religiosity and we use our religiosity as a basis for relationship when there has been no regeneration in the middle.

This depravity is described in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. I hear what people are saying politically. The problem is not the guns, it's the people with the guns. It's both. It's the gun and the people. Why do you need automatic weapons that can take out thousands of people with one shot? To hunt after a deer? Why do you need that? Those guns are made for warfare. Not for hunting animals. Problems with the people and the

people's heart. Mark 7:20-23, "And Jesus said what comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come this evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness." All the stuff you see on TV. All these evil things come from within and they defile a person. Now Jesus describes it and Mark 7:21, he said, "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts." And then he names all the various sins that can be seen in any social media feed or any given day. Murder, adultery, blasphemy, pride. Jesus said that these things rise out of a problem of the heart. Notice carefully that he did not say, "For from without." By the pressure of society. By all those TV stations. By all those nasty magazines and negative influences come forth murder, adultery and pride, and theft. No, he said "From within..." It's not what the so-called sociologist experts say that it is; a condition of society that people are the way they are. No, the condition of the human heart is the reason why people are the way they are.

And the heart must change if the behavior is going to change. If the mind doesn't change, then the actions won't change. If the attitude doesn't change, then the affection won't change. The condition of society does not produce that. It exacerbates it. It makes it worse. But it doesn't produce it. The heart produces it. It produces crime and rebellion, and Jesus says this is a condition of the human heart. And the Bible and Christianity is the only book that addresses the heart of man. Every other religion focuses on the behavior. You know why? Because it's easy to modify things. It's easy to turn over something. It's easy to alter the externals, but it's very hard to change the internal. Only the gospel can do that. Now, each of us by nature, has a heart that the scriptures described as desperately wicked. A fountain of all forms of iniquity. And Paul said in Romans 8:7, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. For it does not submit to God's law. Indeed it cannot." Now Paul does not say that the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, the natural mind (that is the mind that has never been regenerated by God) has some hostility or some enmity or some hatred. He calls it hostility. He calls that kind of mind hatred and enmity against God. Look, the mind that is unregenerate is

hostile in itself. The carnal mind is hostile against God. The disposition of every human heart, by nature, can be pictured as a clenched fist raised against the true and the living God.

And that is the American Society. We're so obsessed over our personal rights that we don't think about the rights of God. We think about our personal rights. We're gonna protest, and we're gonna fight for our rights. What about God's right? What about his rulership, his sovereignty? And we want freedom without responsibility. Isn't that a shame? The disposition of our heart, by nature, can be pictured as clenched fists. This is the inward problem of a bad heart, a heart that loves sin, a heart that is the fountain of sin, a heart that is hostile to God. Now has the problem of your bad heart ever become a pressing personal concern for you? I'm not asking in theory, whether you believe in human depravity. You might agree that there are such things as simple nature and a sinful heart. My question is: have your bad record and your bad heart ever become matters of deep inward pressing concern to you? Have you known anything of real personal inward consciousness of an awfulness of your guilt in the presence of a Holy God. Isaiah did. Isaiah chapter 6. He was in the temple in the presence of God. God manifested his glory. And he said, "Woe is me." Unclean. Dirty man. Wicked man. And the people I'm around are just like me. Have you seen the horror of a heart that is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?

A biblical Christian is a person. I'm telling you, if you are biblical Christian today it's because you have thought seriously and taken to heart your own personal sin problem. That's why you brought it to the Savior. That's why you confess him as Lord. That's why you not only confess him as Lord, but you confess your sins every day because you know the proclivities and the propensity's of your own fallenness. That's why you feel guilty when you do wrong 'cause you realize your condition apart from his grace. You don't try to have alibis and allies who lie and try to justify what you do. No, you come clean, you take responsibility, with the condition of your heart. See beloved, the degree to which we may feel the awful weight of sin differs from one person to the next. A 10-year-old Sunday school student may sense that sin in his own heart and life and confessed Christ to a different degree than a 60-year-old man who

lived long enough to do a whole bunch of mess. He's gonna feel it differently. But they all are convicted of the same condition: the problem of sin and the problem of their heart. The length of time over which a person is brought to the consciousness of his bad record and his or her bad heart differs. There are many variables, but Jesus Christ as the great physician never brought his healing virtue to anyone who did not know himself to be a sinner. Jesus says in Matthew 9:13, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." John started the ministry in preparation of Jesus Ministry, "Repent, the Kingdom of God, is at hand."

They were conscious of their sin. In our society, we're not conscious of our sin. Sin has been written away with psychological maladies. Sin is no longer a part of the American Lexicon. Only when you need counseling— and even in counseling, they tell you, "That's not a sin." That's that old antiquated lie your preacher told you and your parents misled you about. That's not sin. Whatever happened to sin? Sin is a diagnosis. Sinning is now an illness. Sin is now a sickness. Sin is now a malady. Sin is now a psychological category seen as a real reality. And even to the one who denies it, they know deep inside something is wrong. Are you a biblical Christian? One who has taken seriously your own problem of sin. We who are in Union with Christ, we come to the Lord's table this morning and we come often with a deep spiritual sense of our communion with Christ, through his sacrifice of his body and his blood.

The hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" poetically and passionately captures what it means to be a biblical Christian. One who faces realistically the problem of personal sin. Where is that found, preacher? Well, in stanza 2. *Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul.* So somebody shout with me today! Do you hear what that man is saying? He is saying that our problem has a solution and that solution is the blood. Oh, how precious is the blood. And then he says this in stanza 3, he sings, "*Oh this bliss of this glorious thought! My sin not in part but in whole.*" See, when Jesus comes to clean you up, he cleaned all of you. Conscious, subconscious, preconscious. Come on, somebody. He cleans your soul, your *psyche*, your *pneuma*, your spirit, your inner man, your outer man. He cleans you all up.

He says, *“My sin, Oh the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, all my soul!”* And then he says, *“It is well with my soul. It is well. It is well with my soul.”* Now maybe my relationships are not all that well, but my soul is. My finances may not be all well, where I want them to be, but my soul is. My children don’t act the way I want them to act, but my soul is. You gotta look at what Christ did for your soul, so you won’t lose your mind.

Let’s go to the Lord’s table this morning. This is the heartbeat of a biblical Christian, beloved. *It is well. It is well with my soul.*