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True Faith Is Active, Not Passive

A Christian is one who believes on Jesus Christ as Lord. With this statement every evangelical agrees. Indeed there would appear to be nothing else to do, since the New Testament is crystal clear about the matter.

This first acknowledgment of Christ as Lord and Savior is usually followed by baptism and membership in a Protestant church, the one because it satisfies a craving for fellowship with others of like mind. A few Christians shy away from organized religion, but the vast majority, while they recognize the imperfections of the churches, nevertheless feel that they can serve their Lord better in the church than out of it.

There is, however, one serious flaw in all this: It is that many – would I overstate the case if I said the majority? – of those who confess their faith in Christ and enter into association with the community of believers have little

joy in their hearts, no peace in their minds and from all external appearances are no better morally than the ordinary educated citizen who takes no interest whatever in religion and, of course, makes no profession of Christianity. Why is this? I believe it is the result of an inadequate concept of Christianity and an imperfect understanding of the revolutionary character of Christian discipleship. Certainly there is nothing new in my conclusion. The evangelists are loud in their lamentation over the bodies of dead church members, as well they might be, and many thoughtful articles and books appear from time to time dealing with the serious hiatus between faith and practice among Christians. Why then add another feeble voice to the many? Because many who lament the condition do not seem to know what to do about it, and because I believe that the way is plain, if hard; and that there is no excuse for going on at this poor dying rate when we can enjoy

abundant life in Christ Jesus. True faith brings a spiritual and moral transformation and an inward witness that cannot be mistaken. These come when we stop believing in belief and start believing in the Lord Jesus Christ indeed. True faith is not passive but active. It requires that we meet certain conditions, which we allow the teachings of Christ to dominate our total lives from the moment we believe. The man of saving faith must be willing to be different from others. The effort to enjoy the benefits of redemption while enmeshed in the world is futile. We must choose one or the other; and faith quickly makes its choice, one from which there is no retreat. The change experienced by a truly converted man is equal to that of a man moving to another country. The regenerated soul feels no more at home in the world than Abraham felt when he left Ur of the Chaldees and

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set out for the land of promise. Apart from his own small company he was a stranger to everyone around him. He was called "Abraham the Hebrew," and if he spoke the language of the people among whom he took up his dwelling place, he spoke it with an accent. They all knew that he was not one of them. This journey from Ur to Bethel is taken by every soul that sets out to follow Christ. It is, however, not a journey for the feet but for the heart. The newborn Christian is a migrant; he has come into the kingdom of God from his old home in the kingdom of man and he must get set for the violent changes that will inevitably follow.

One of the first changes will be a shift of interest from earth to heaven, from men to God, from time to eternity, from earthly gain to Christ and His eternal kingdom. Suddenly, or slowly but surely, he will develop a new pattern of life. Old things will pass away and behold, all things will become new, first inwardly and then outwardly; for the change within him will soon begin to express itself by corresponding changes in his manner of living.

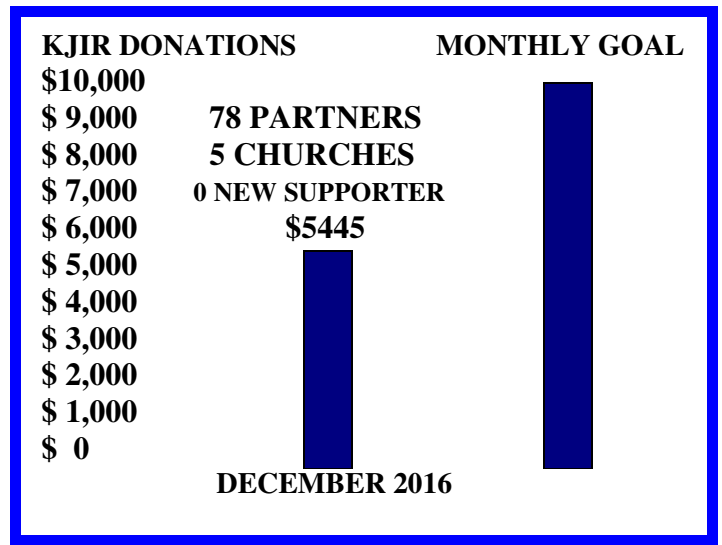
The transformation will show itself in many ways and his former friends will begin to worry about him. At first they will tease him and then chide him; and if he persists in his determination to follow Christ they may begin to oppose and persecute. The once-born never understand the twice-born, and still after thousands of years Cain hates Abel and Esau threatens Jacob. It is as true today as it was in Bible times that the man who hates his sins too much will get into trouble with those who do not hate sin enough. People resent having their friends turn away from them and by implication condemn their way of life.

The change will reveal itself further in what the new Christian reads, in the places he goes and the friends he cultivates, what he does with his time and how he spends his money. Indeed faith leaves no area of the new believer's life unaffected.

The genuinely renewed man will have a new life center. He will experience a new orientation affecting his whole personality. He will become aware of a different philosophic outlook. Things he once held to be of value may suddenly lose all their attraction for him and he may even hate some things he formerly loved.

The man who recoils from this revolutionary kind of Christianity is retreating before the cross. But thousands do so retreat, and they try to make things right by seeking baptism and church membership. No wonder they are so dissatisfied.

A.W. Tozer



KJIR'S New Years Resolution...To Be Like Jesus

He lifted up the fallen man
He gave the world a helping hand
His heart was touched each time
He saw a soul in need
Displayed kindness ev'rywhere
Mercy and love was His to share
And like this Man of Galilee
I want to be

To be like Jesus
To be like Jesus
All I ask is to be like Him
All thro' life's journey
From earth to glory
All I ask is to be like Him

His look of love went ev'rywhere
And lives were changed when He was there
Hungry eyes and hungry souls
Felt His embrace
He stooped to mend each crippled child
His healing touch was strong but mild
And like this Man of Galilee
I want to be

To be like Jesus
To be like Jesus
All I ask is to be like Him
All thro' life's journey
From earth to glory
All I ask is to be like Him.

Glory Gaither
Henry Slaughter

**Happy New Year
from KJIR**