

A Christ-Like Character

(Acts 11:21-26)

Without a standard, there can be no comparative. We say someone is richer because we have another person in mind whose extent of wealth we can somehow estimate. You say, “I have never been healthier” because you compare your present state of health to some earlier frame of reference. Without a standard, there will be no way of setting a target that one can aspire to achieve either. For every believer, the standard to pursue, emulate, and press towards is the Lord, Jesus Christ. There is a popular adage that says, “Show me your friends and I’ll tell you who you are.” This speaks loudly to the fact that you can know a lot about a person from the company that he/she keeps. In like manner, having the appellation *Christian* without pushing to conform to the character, principles, and teachings of Jesus Christ is meaningless.

According to the Scriptures, the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. It was then a characterization that depicted “ownership by Jesus.” It referred to some people who did not acknowledge the Emperor of Rome as their idol; the emperor who was then a symbol of power, wealth, and fame. Instead, they were of the Way, holding allegiance to “one” Jesus of Nazareth who is said to be King but had no “kingdom”, no “palace”, and no “visible” army. In other words, in those days, the term *Christian* had a measure of derision that went with it (according to some Bible commentary). Over 2000 years later, the same still holds true to some extent. Some will mock your faith, embrace ungodliness, and oppose any idea that is Christ-centered. Even among believers, the pursuit of fame, wealth, and influence has almost pushed followership of Christ to the secondary.

As believers, we must hold fast no matter how the world is turning. We must endeavor to tailor our character to that of our Lord. What then are some of the Christ-like characters that we as believers need to emulate? A Christ-like character is one that defends the defenseless (Isa 61:1-2). It defends the truth - God is spirit and those that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4: 24; 8:39-40). A Christ-like character passionately seeks God’s will to be done, not his own will (Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42). Jesus knew the mission (John 12:27) but, as the Son of Man, when He neared the point of the cross He asked His Father if He would amend the mission while still fully submitting to the Father’s will. Thus we see that a Christ-like character must always faithfully and fruitfully pursue the work of God. It is a character that will gladly take up his/her cross daily and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23-24). A Christ-like character loves unequivocally. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Being Christ-like means being a true friend, standing by; remaining faithful; and keeping the commandments of the Master.

In Luke 9:62, we read that “no one having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Therefore, a Christ-like character will strive to finish what he starts. He doesn’t jump from this to that but remains focused once having confirmed God’s purpose for his life. It is a character that acknowledges adversity but will not be deterred by it. Jesus’ face was set on the cross (Luke 9:51-53); He would not allow distractions to drag Him down. He taught us the purpose of God-given gifts: they are for the building up of God’s people, not for tearing down. Thus, a Christ-like character gives glory to God for what he/she has; there is no blessing we have that we have not received from God (1 Cor 4:7). A Christ-like character humbles self and obeys God above all others. He follows God whole-heartedly no matter who else departs. Jesus showed us the perfect example by humbling Himself and being obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:8). There is no challenge that you and I can face that will make up sufficient excuse not to obey God. He commands that we love one another and render good deeds to mankind.

The relevant question today is, “are you Christ-like?” Do you identify more with Jesus or more with the world? Are you in Christ or are you still seating on the fence? If the latter is the case, will you consider giving your life to Jesus today? Remember, tomorrow may be too late. Make that decision today; Jesus is waiting!