

Authentic Christianity**Acts 26:24-29**

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

When people speak of Christianity, it's often quite _____ from what the New Testament teaches about Christianity. What is authentic Christianity; what is it really _____? If you ask the question, "what is Christianity?" people will give you all kinds of _____. They'll tell you what they _____ Christianity is or what they _____ it were. People see Christianity historically and socially as it _____ in America; but if that's all they see, they may never know what Christianity _____ is. Today we're exploring the question, "What is authentic Christianity?" Is the Christianity we see today what God _____ when He sent Jesus into this world? In the early days Christians were known among themselves as "brethren," "the faithful," "the elect," "saints" (all of them were called saints), and they were also thought of as "believers." But people outside the church called them "Christians." This term came by the _____ of God, and it was universally accepted.

You might think the word "Christian" would occur frequently in the New Testament, but it occurs only _____ times. The word "Christian" refers to an individual who "_____ to Christ." Originally, words that ended in the letters "i-a-n" applied to the _____ belonging to the great households; it had passed into regular use to refer to _____ of an individual or a party. Some Bible dictionaries define the word "Christian" as "The name given by the Greeks or Romans, probably in _____, to the followers of Jesus. It was first used at Antioch." However, the name "Christian" is far more than that, as we will see.

Our reading today in the New Testament comes from the book of Acts 26:24-29.

The first time "Christian" is used in the New Testament is Acts 11:25-26. "So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians." The word for "called" here is *chrematisai*, not the common word for "called" from the word *kalleo*. *Chrematisai* refers to a _____ revealed name or instruction. The name "Christian" didn't actually come from _____; it came from _____ in fulfillment of the prophecy found in Isaiah 62:2: "The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a _____ name, Which the mouth of the LORD will designate."

To call myself a Christian means that I am a _____ of Christ. I wear His name; I follow His teaching; I call upon him as my Lord, and share in His spiritual and moral way of life. A _____ is a person who imitates his master, becomes like him in manner, in speech, in mind, and in behavior. The disciples were called Christians. Both words, "disciples" and "Christians," show the _____ relationship between the Lord Jesus and those who follow him. I am happy and honored to wear the name of Jesus Christ. I love Him and I want to wear His name. And I don't mind the world knowing that I am His servant.

The second time the word “Christian” is used is also found in the book of Acts. In chapter 26, Paul is defending himself and his _____ before the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king, Herod Agrippa. “‘King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.’ And Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?’ And Paul said, ‘Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains’” (Acts 26:27-29). Paul wished _____ were a Christian, and so do I. I hope you’re a Christian.

People _____ to be Christians; nobody is born one. We might be _____ into a family of Christians, but that doesn’t make us a Christian. We have to _____ for ourselves. We must be born _____ to become a Christian. We do that when we by faith decide to follow Christ and to be _____. The Bible says, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, that you’re slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:16-18). You can become a Christian by your heartfelt _____ to the gospel. Each of you, each of all of us, must choose to believe and to obey.

The Bible teaches in Ephesians about the _____ that takes place when a person becomes a Christian. **Read Ephesians 4:17-24.** You must make a _____ change when you decide to become a Christian. You must leave an _____ sinful way of life, a way that’s darkened and futile; and you must put on the _____ way of life that is patterned after Jesus Christ. A Christian who loves the Lord no longer _____ to live the way the world lives. He _____ an abundant life that is higher and nobler than his old way. Christianity is the way that people become new. They’re no longer darkened in their understanding, living callous and impure lives. In Christ, they have _____ a better way, full of love and full of good deeds. People learn Christ, and as they _____ in their knowledge, their lives become better and better.

The third Scripture which mentions the name “Christian” is 1 Peter 4:15-16. These verses say: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.” In this passage, the Bible says that one should not be _____ of being a Christian but to glorify God in THAT name, that God-given name that associates us with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Christians were undergoing serious _____ at the time that Peter wrote this to them. I could see how some might feel hesitant to _____ that they were Christians, if it meant persecution. Others might _____ if they acted sinfully and brought reproach upon their faith. But wearing the name of Christ honorably glorifies God. This is truly the name that God designates for his people.

The apostle Paul, like Peter, was willing to _____ whatever shame and punishment was necessary in order to preach the gospel and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul felt obligated to _____ the Lord in a pagan society. He said, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I’m _____ to preach the gospel

to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the _____ of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:14-16). No one has to be ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus because of all the _____ that Christ does in their lives.

A Christian doesn't have to be ashamed when he _____ up without a hangover. A Christian doesn't have to be ashamed that he tells the _____, that he keeps his word, that he practices what is right, and that he loves his neighbor. The way of Christians is God's way, God's plan to _____ all of mankind. That's why Christians are the _____ of the earth and the _____ of the world. They are God's people making a difference for good and right in an _____ world. In their lives they _____ what the will of God is, that which is “good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

What does it mean then to be a Christian? It means: I don't belong to me; I _____ belong to my Lord Jesus Christ. I have given Him _____ place in my life. I believe what He _____. I practice a life that _____ Him. He loves, so I love. He gives of himself, so I give of myself. He avoids evil, so I avoid evil. He kept his heart right, so I keep my heart right. To belong totally to Christ is a _____ notion. The reason many people wonder what a Christian is arises from the fact that many so-called Christians _____ with the notion of following Christ but never _____ embrace the idea that we fully belong to him and not to ourselves.

Many think being a Christian is a great thing until it interferes with what they _____ to do. They're willing to let God be a part of their lives to some extent, but they're unwilling to follow Jesus when they don't _____ with Him or they don't like what He asks of them. They like Jesus until he interferes with their _____ to live as they please. Such people may call themselves Christians, but they're only fair-weather Christians.

They've forgotten the _____ that Jesus paid to redeem them. **Read 1 Peter 1:18-19.** The Lord Jesus paid His precious _____ to save and redeem you from sin and from hell. What He has done for you and will give to you far outweighs any earthly _____. We all ought to count it an _____ to belong to Jesus.

The Bible says, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and then transferred us to the _____ of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). Jesus took us from sin and darkness and brought us into the kingdom of hope and peace and promise. He _____ us from an evil world and brought us to the love of God. How could we imagine living ungodly lives when we consider all that he has done for us? First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a _____ of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a _____: therefore glorify God in your body.”

In the book of Philippians, Paul described himself in chapter one and verse one as a bond-servant of Christ Jesus. To be a bond-servant means that I am a slave, a slave in chains to my Lord. The Lord _____ me, and He has a right to make important decisions that affect my life, decisions that I cannot change, that I cannot overrule. Christianity is not a _____ where I can vote things in and vote things out; it's a _____. Jesus Christ is the King of kings and

the Lord of lords. He is in charge; He makes the rules, and we must submit our hearts to Him.

So much of what people think of as “Christianity” is _____ from what Jesus meant for it to be. People have filled it full of human _____ and human _____ so that it hardly resembles His divinely revealed will in the New Testament. For many people, Christianity is like a smorgasbord laid out for them, and they can pick and choose whatever they _____. In their minds you pick the kind of Christianity, the kind of Jesus that you _____. You pick the kind of _____ that you like. You pick what you want to _____ and you can leave the rest alone if you like. Many fail to hear God fully but hear _____ what they want to hear. That kind of religion is not the Christianity of the Bible; it’s the kind of Christianity that people manufacture for themselves. It’s not divine; it’s human!

New Testament Christianity is _____ upon the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! It’s built on divine _____ found in the Scriptures because God never lies. Jesus loves us so much that He willingly _____ for us. His grace and forgiveness are available to _____. He’s the _____ of all mankind, you and me and everybody. His words are the final _____ for our faith, our practices, and our morals. You may think that you have a say so, but God has the last say, and what He says is powerful and authoritative. His promises are open to all who will believe and _____, and He’s coming again to _____ the world in righteousness.

Biblical Christianity is the most exciting, fulfilling, powerful, and loving _____ imaginable. To have Jesus as Lord and Savior, and God as our Father is the best life with the best mission and the best _____. God wants us to spread the good _____ to everyone. In Mark 16:15-16 Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” Jesus is in the saving business, and His _____ is the way that He spreads the gospel to all.

People often _____ Christianity unfairly. Many don’t _____ the Christianity of the New Testament. Talk to some about Christianity and they bring up the crusades or witch trials. But neither the crusades or the Salem witch trials or the inquisition _____ New Testament Christianity. Titles, robes, cathedrals, and icons don’t show _____, New Testament Christianity. Monasteries, and incense, sitting on flagpoles, vows of silence, and forced celibacy don’t reflect the Christianity of the _____. Worship concerts, enterprises, fake healings have nothing to do with the Christianity of the New Testament. If you want to know what _____ Christianity is, look in the Scriptures. The New Testament gives God’s truth. New Testament Christianity is God’s way to _____ this world with love, with purity, with grace, with hope, and with heaven. **Read Titus 2:11-14.**

Are you one of the redeemed? Have you become a Christian? To become one, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, repent of your sins, confess the name of Christ, and be baptized. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church. He’ll rescue you out of the domain of darkness and transfer you into His kingdom. Don’t let even one day go by outside of Christ or true Christianity.