

The Distinctiveness Of Christianity

Intro: Luke 5:26 ²⁶ And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, **We have seen strange things to day.**” This statement is an appropriate description of Christ. This was one of the outstanding characteristics of Christ that gave Him the power of appeal. His life from birth to His ascension was marked by wonders, surprises, and amazement. It was distinctive.

Mat. 7:28-29 ²⁸ And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: ²⁹ For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.”

1. Luke 4:22 ²² And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?”
2. John 4:27 ²⁷ And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?”
3. He amazed His parents; Luke 2:48 ⁴⁸ And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”
4. After discussing the dangers of riches; Mat. 19:25 ²⁵ When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?”

I. DISTINCTIVENESS IS THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

A. Loss of distinctiveness is loss of power.

1. The power of the church is not where it is like other religions, but where it is unlike them.
2. It is in its distinctiveness that it asserts its real influence.

B. Christ recognized this not only in His own life but pointed it out to His disciples.

1. Mat. 5:47 ⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?”
2. Christ was not satisfied that His disciples should do as much as others.
3. In a real sense we are only Christ's disciples when we surpass others.

C. What does the church more than others?

1. If the church cannot do more for the world than other religions, we would do well to question whether or not it is the Lord's church other than in name.
2. Does the church:
 - a. answer more questions?
 - b. cover more ground?
 - c. offer more comfort??
 - d. invest the soul with more vigor and strength?
3. In short does it raise and elevate above the level of denominations and meet all the spiritual needs of man? If not something is wrong.

II. THE CHURCH IS DISTINCTIVE AND STRANGE IN THAT IT HAS A DIVINE MESSAGE.

A. A part of the power of the church is in the message.

B. Its message is no human product.

1. Gal. 1:11-12 ¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. ¹² For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
2. 1 Cor. 2:13 ¹³ Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”
3. 1 Cor. 14:37 ³⁷ If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

4. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 ¹⁶ "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
5. 2 Pet. 1:20-21 ²⁰ "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost."
6. It finds its origin in the mind of God and is totally reliable.

C. Truth:

1. John 8:32 ³² "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
2. Truth unmixed with error will save; truth mixed with error will not save.
 - a. While other religions may have some truth, it is laced with the doctrines of men.
 - b. Rat Poison is 98% good, only 2% deadly.
3. The church has truth unmixed with the doctrines of man.
 - a. This gave the church power in the days of the apostles, also during the restoration.
 - b. It has the same power today.
 - (1) Rom. 1:16-17 ¹⁶ "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - (2) Jam. 1:21 ²¹ "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

III. IT IS DISTINCTIVE AND STRANGE IN THAT IT ENABLES A PERSON TO SEE HIMSELF AS HE IS.

A. The gospel is a mirror for the soul.

1. 1 Cor. 13:12 ¹² "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."
2. Jam. 1:23 ²³ "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass."
3. Jam. 1:25 ²⁵ "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
4. No man can know himself until he has seen his picture in the gospel.

B. Christianity makes a person realize how far short he is of the divine goal and never leaves one satisfied.

1. A Christian never feels that he has arrived.
2. Phi. 3:13-14 ¹³ "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

IV. THE CHURCH IS DISTINCTIVE AND STRANGE IN ITS IDEALS AND VALUES.

A. Things that others count as gain (purpose of life) are readily counted as loss for the knowledge of Christ.

1. Phi. 3:7-8 ⁷ "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,"
2. Birth, wealth, fame, social importance, etc., dwindles into nothing before the standard of the cross.

B. The whole world is counted as nothing when compared with Christ.

V. THE CHURCH IS DISTINCTIVE AND STRANGE IN THAT IT ATTACHES SUPREME IMPORTANCE TO EVERY SOUL.

- A. Mat. 16:26** ²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
- B. It is guided not by worldly standards and customs; but like its Lord, sees in the vilest soul, something precious.**
1. God's grace is extended to all; Tit. 2:11 ¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,"
 2. Christ died for all; Heb. 2:9 ⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
 3. Thus, each individual may be a possible inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.
 4. Consider Paul; 1 Tim. 1:15-16 ¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

VI. IT IS DISTINCTIVE AND STRANGE IN ITS CONDUCT.

- A. Christians love their enemies.**
1. Luke 6:27 ²⁷ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,"
 2. Anyone can love the ones who love them.
 - a. Even sinners do this.
 - b. Luke 6:32 ³² For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."
 3. Are we distinctive? Do we do like sinners in loving only those who love us?
- B. Christians do good unto those that hate them and mistreat them.**
1. Luke 6:28 ²⁸ Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."
 2. Even sinners do good unto the ones who treat them well; Luke 6:33 ³³ And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same."
 3. Are we distinctive?
 - a. How do we treat those who mistreat us?
 - b. When have you returned good to the one who mistreated you?
- C. Christians are to love.**
1. This is a mark of His disciples.
 - a. John 13:35 ³⁵ By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
 - b. Are we His disciples?
 2. 2 Cor. 12:15 ¹⁵ And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."
 - a. Paul said he loved them more even if they loved him less.
 - b. Is this our practice?
- D. Christians are humble and not seeking exaltation.**
1. Mat. 20:25-28 ²⁵ But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶ But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
 2. Mat. 23:11-12 ¹¹ But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."
 3. They are interested in the work, not a position; in serving, not an office.

4. The apostles of Christ were not ready for the work He had for them to do. They were thinking about place and position not service.
 - a. Mat. 20:20-21 “²⁰ Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him. ²¹ And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.”
 - b. Luke 22:24 “²⁴ And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.”
 - c. So Christ gave them an example; John 13.

VII. THE CHURCH IS DISTINCTIVE AND STRANGE IN THAT IT FINDS JOY IN SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE.

A. Suffering is a part of Christianity.

1. Mat. 5:10-12 “¹⁰ Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”
2. 2 Tim. 3:12 “¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”
3. 1 Pet. 3:14 “¹⁴ But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;”

B. Examples:

1. Acts 5:41 “⁴¹ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”
2. Peter and John suffered.
3. Are we distinctive? Do we rejoice or murmur?
4. Col. 1:24 “²⁴ Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church:”
5. 2 Cor. 12:10 “¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”
 - a. This sounds strange even to many who are in the church, because we have not realized that Christianity is distinctive and strange.
 - b. This may well be the reason we are without any more influence and appeal.

Conclusion: Acts 4:13 “¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” These had caught that distinctiveness and the people saw it.