

The Authentic Christian Life

By Rev. Thomas M. Cucuzza, Pastor
Northland Bible Baptist Church, St. Cloud, MN

In a local department store a while back, I remember walking by the furniture they had on display. It was the kind of furniture that you put together yourself. I noticed a computer desk and on the desk were what seemed to be a computer, monitor, and keyboard. I had my suspicions about them so I moved in for a closer look. Once I looked closely it became evident that these computer pieces were simply cardboard imitations made to look like the real things. But from a distance they looked pretty real.

The Christian life is that way. There are many imitations but only one that is real.

What is the authentic Christian life and how can we have it? Well, we must start with the foundation. *There is no Christian life without Christ Himself.* And we begin the Christian life by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone as our personal savior.

For years I thought I was a Christian until at age 19 someone explained to me that I had to be sinlessly perfect to go to Heaven. I was trusting in my religion. They also explained that the best I could do in the area of good works still fell short. I remember the first time I saw Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

It was like time stood still when I saw these verses. I had always believed that my good works *did* play some part in saving me. Yet how could I argue with God? The man went on to explain that because there was nothing I could do to work my way to Heaven, Jesus Christ came and died and rose again, making the complete payment for my sin. And that the only thing I could do to go to Heaven was to trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I did that and I was immediately and completely saved for all eternity! This is where authentic Christianity begins.

It is a sad truth that many people have their faith resting in themselves instead of Jesus Christ and His payment for their sin. They do not have authentic Christianity. Dear friend, if you are reading this and you have never trusted Jesus Christ and Him alone as your Savior, why not do it right now? If you will trust Christ, the Lord's promise to you is clear:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me HATH everlasting life. John 6:47

But what about once we *are* saved? What about the authentic Christian life?

With the Body of Christ becoming more and more like the world, I believe we've been slowly deceived. We are always looking for a new rush within Christianity to get us going again. We are looking for "quick fixes" to get us motivated. Certainly, we think, the "new thing" will fix what's wrong with us. This is clearly the thinking of the last days in which we live, *and it is false.*

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the LATTER TIMES some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; ³Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 1 Tim. 4:1-3

Think about it: A doctrine of a demon is any thing that adds to or takes away from the all sufficiency of Jesus Christ and His Word. The devil, seeing that he can't get the glory he wants, will try to strip the Lord Jesus Christ of His glory or cover it up with something else.

All false doctrine does this. And it is by deception. We are looking for instant or miracle fixes. ***We are convinced that the answer is not in what we already have, for, we think, it is not sensational enough.*** Let me explain:

In years past, when I was more involved with photography, I use to subscribe to a photography magazine. The way those magazines are designed is to make you think that you cannot take good photographs unless you have the newest camera or accessory! But the truth of the matter is, while equipment is important, it has more to do with the photographer and his abilities than the equipment!

This is where we are today within Christianity. We've gotten to where we have to have the "new" thing in Christianity, or ride the "new" wave or movement, whether it's true or not. And we judge the truth of something by how many are involved, instead of, "What does the Bible say about it?" **We are not satisfied with what we have, when what we have is all we need.**

For the last 20 years, we've seen one movement after another come and go in Christendom: men's movements, women's movements, ecumenical evangelistic movements, preoccupation with demonology and territorialism spiritual warfare, laughing movements, howling movements, healing movements, prosperity gospel, health gospel.

One major defect (among others) in these things is that the sensational aspect of them wears off and you have to either come back for more or go on to something else. They do not satisfy. This is *not* the authentic Christian life. As a matter of fact, if this is where you are at, you can rest assured that it is not of God.

Where is the authentic Christianity? Where do we find the truth? What IS the truth? Let's look at 3 important points:

1. The Authentic Christian life is anchored in the word of God and the God of the Word. There are no shortcuts to this. In this day of "instant this and one hour that" it is no wonder that we are starving for the truth and living in defeat. The authentic Christian life takes time and commitment. True success is a slow but sure process.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

We received Christ by faith in the word of God. We are to live our lives the same way, by faith in the word of God. What does that mean? It means to stake everything we have on the Lord and the truth of Scripture, and let that change our lives.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Colossians 2:8-10

Do we believe we are complete in Christ? If we do, then why don't we live that way? Paul had some wonderful counsel to Timothy:

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1 Timothy 4:13

Give attendance to reading. Reading what? The word of God. One of our problems today is that we are reading too many books and not enough of *the Book!* Don't misunderstand, I love to read books. But I'm afraid that many of us are spending more time reading the works of men more than the word of God. I am not saying that books are not important. I greatly am blessed by the books in my library. But the Bible is the source of total truth and is the only inspired work.

All SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

“Perfect” here means complete or fully qualified. Through the Word of God we become fully qualified to live for the Lord. What more could we ask than that?

This fits perfectly with the last part of 1 Timothy 4:13. We use the Word to encourage others, and to teach them the doctrines or teachings of Scripture.

Notice the word “doctrine” here. There are many today who do not like the word “doctrine”. They say that doctrine divides. The honest truth is that doctrine is the skeleton of our faith. All other issues hang on it. If the doctrine is not there, all you have is a weak clump of tissue. And the church will end up filling the doctrinal void with either emotionalism or entertainment. This is too often our contemporary pattern.

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. 1 Timothy 4:15-16

When we read the Word we are to revolve it in the mind until we grasp it! That is what meditation means. Then we are to give ourselves or surrender ourselves totally to it.

The result? Personal deliverance from destruction. We will also experience victory. Isn't this what we as Christians want? But there is a bonus! It also will result in the deliverance of others' lives as well as we take the Scriptures and share them with others. Notice though at the heart of it all is the word of God.

2. *The Authentic Christian Life is a disciplined walk with Christ, eyes on Him, surrendered to His will.* This is daily, moment-by-moment. It is also deliberate. This is what it means to walk by faith. Faith means to trust. It is walking in trust or dependence on the Lord. Let's look closely at a few passages from Hebrews:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Hebrews 13:5-6

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. Hebrews 13:8-9

Notice the simplicity and beauty of these verses. Our Lord never changes, and in that, will never get old to us. And He will never leave us nor forsake us. His grace is always there to come to our aid and provide ability to live a fruitful life. *It is not a circus atmosphere, just totally sufficient!!! And when we live life God's way, we will be satisfied and blessed.*

The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it SHALL ABIDE SATISFIED; he shall not be visited with evil. Proverbs 19:23

Years ago I was intrigued by the title of a book. It was entitled, "Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret". After reading it I realized that there was no "secret" in the book at all. Hudson Taylor's strength was that he lived in dependence on the Lord and His word. And he was obedient. Which leads us to our last point:

3. *The Authentic Christian life is a life of obedience to God's word.* It is an issue of application. We are living in the day of bloated Christians, and I don't mean from too much Italian food! (By the way, I'm Italian!) . We have become walking databases of truth. *But we must apply what we learn!* The book of James, with its theme of practical Christian living, makes it clear:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves...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. James 1:22, 25.

My Friend, there are no secrets to the Christian life. *If you're looking for some new, never before taught doctrine, it won't be from the Lord!* What we need is to give our lives totally to the Lord

and His word, trust Him, and obey. We will find that all of our needs will be met, we will grow, and the One who is our all sufficiency will accomplish it: our Lord Jesus Christ.