

I Am A Christian

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Date: 22 July 2018

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to Acts chapter 11. We're going to read from Acts 11.! And if you want to turn over, we'll then be going over to 1 Peter 4.

! But I'll give you time to turn there. And we're going to start at Acts 11, beginning at verse 19. Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

[1 : 11] When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. And now turn over to 1 Peter chapter 4.

And we're going to begin reading at verse 12. 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning at verse 12.

[2 : 16] Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer, or thief, or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God. And if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good.

[3 : 43] Well, we are asking on these Sunday mornings, who am I? Who am I? And it's a question about our identity.

And we're not going to the world outside for the answer, nor are we turning within to ourselves, but rather we're coming to the Bible to have God himself tell us who we are.

And we find that that's important if we're to think correctly about ourselves and then live according to who we really are.

So far, if Jesus is my Savior and Lord, I can say I am chosen by God. I am a new creation in Christ. I'm a believer.

I am a disciple. And now today, I am a Christian. Say it with me. I am a Christian. There are places in the world today where saying those very words would put your life in danger.

[4 : 52] Indeed, down through 2,000 years past, many have indeed lost their lives for saying no more than what you just said.

I am a Christian. A Christian. This term is so commonly used today to describe a follower of Jesus that it may surprise you to hear that it's used only three times in the entire Bible.

Never in the Gospels, twice in Acts, and once in 1 Peter. So let's look at these texts together and consider our identity as Christians and how that is to shape our lives.

So we turn to Acts 11.26 to begin the first mention of this term Christians. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

Now, when Jesus Christ was on the earth and preaching throughout Palestine, whenever someone was converted, they were referred to as disciples or as believers. But now, here we are, 14 years after the risen Lord has ascended into heaven and the persecution of believers in Jerusalem became so intense that the believers were scattered everywhere and everywhere they went, they proclaimed the Christ.

[6 : 27] Some went so far away as to Antioch in Syria, that place that's in the news so much today. They traveled all the way from Jerusalem up to Syria and proclaimed the good news there.

Some to the Jews, but some even to the Gentiles. And the Lord's hand was with them so that a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. They became believers.

They became disciples of Christ. And Barnabas, who was sent by the church in Jerusalem to check out this work of revival, found that indeed the grace of God had come and changed their lives, giving clear evidence of God's saving grace.

And through Barnabas' ministry, many more were brought to the Lord. And now Barnabas goes to fetch his friend Paul and finds him and brings him to Antioch.

And for over a year, these new disciples are taught the word of God from Paul and Barnabas. And it was there in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

[7 : 47] So we're told very clearly where they got that name. It was in Antioch. Well, how did they get that name?

Well, we're not sure about that. We aren't told that very plainly, are we? They didn't get it from Jesus Christ. We never read of Christ calling his followers Christians.

This term was not used, as I said, until 11 years after his ascension into heaven. It was probably not a name that they gave themselves, though some think that they did.

More likely, I believe, it was a name given to them by the unbelievers in Antioch. Put yourself in Antioch, 14 years after Christ's ascension, and imagine the challenge of this unbelieving city of Antioch.

In just the course of a year or so, there was an evangelism explosion in the city, and great numbers of people were believing and turning to the Lord.

[8 : 55] And this group was quickly multiplying in their midst, and they need a label to identify them. What shall we call them? Well, we can't really call them Jews, though many of them are Jews.

Yet, most Jews have rejected their Messiah, their Christ. And besides, there's also Gentiles in this group, non-Jews.

So, what shall we call them? This mixed, new, and quickly growing group of people in town. And somewhere, it seems, in the city of Antioch, someone first referred to them as Christians.

You know, it's all they ever talk about. They're all about Jesus, Christ, Christ this, Christ that. They're wanting us to be, to believe on their Christ.

Christ. They're all about Christ. They're Christians. It's the name of Christ plus a suffix. Christians, ones belonging to him.

[10 : 03] And that was the label that stuck, and then spread. Now, it may well be that this was originally meant as a derogatory term of contempt, to sneer and to shame them as followers of Christ.

Christ. We do know that he was despised and rejected by men as the false prophet. And Christ and his followers were held in contempt and hated by not only the Jews who persecuted them, but also by the Romans.

And so, it seems that this could have been originally a name to shame them. You guys are all Christians, named after their Savior Christ.

Well, 15 years later, we find this label being used outside of Antioch. Indeed, 400 miles away, down in Caesarea by King Agrippa, which shows that the label caught on from there in Antioch.

And now it's being used 400 miles away by the king, King Agrippa. Now we're in the second use of the word in the New Testament. Acts 26 and verse 28.

[11 : 18] And so, Paul is on trial and he's giving his defense before King Agrippa and he's so pressed Agrippa with the claims of Christ that the king said to Paul in Acts 26, 28, Do you think in such a short time to persuade me to become a Christian?

A Christian. A Christian. That's the name King Agrippa used to refer to this new group of followers of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles.

And then a few years later, just maybe three years later, we find the Apostle Peter taking up this same name, Christian, in his first letter to the believers.

Now we're in the third use in the Bible. 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 16. The context is Peter is telling these Christians that they shouldn't be surprised to suffer in this world.

That when suffering comes into their lives, they shouldn't be surprised about it as what's happening to me. Something strange. No, no, not at all. Not those who are followers of the crucified.

[12:29] How can they ever be ashamed at suffering in this same world that nailed him to a cross? Surprise, not those who have taken up their own cross and followed the despised and rejected Christ.

Not Christians. Not those who are in very name identified with Christ. Don't be ashamed if the world treats you like they did.

You're Christ. And so he says in verse 14, if you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed.

For the spirit of glory and of God rest on you. What a blessing to have Christ's spirit resting upon you. And if you suffer, it should not be as a murderer, thief, or any other kind of criminal, or even as someone that's meddling in business not his own.

However, verse 16, if you suffer as a Christian, last use of the term in the Bible, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

[13:40] So whatever the origin of this term, whether it was given them by the unbelieving world to shame them, or whether it was chosen by themselves there in Antioch, either way, this name came to them and stuck by the overruling providence of God.

And what we find is this term fits them like a T. Could be that both are true. That the name Christian was initially given them by the world to shame them, linking them to the despised Christ.

But this much is clear, that at some point, Christians proudly embraced this label. And they wore it like a medal of honor. Don't we see that?

That the very labels that the enemy puts on people can sometimes be embraced with honor. Yes, that is who I am and what I believe, and I'm proud of it.

That's what happens with this name Christian, as we see in the mouth of Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

[14:53] This is the word of God to us. If you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed, but rather praise God that you bear that name Christian.

Embrace it. With thanksgiving, and with pride, and with praise to God. Does taking your stand for Christ in his word identify you with Christ, bring you persecution?

Don't be ashamed, the name of Christ. Don't be ashamed to be called a Christian, or even to suffer as a Christian, but praise God that you bear that name. That you and Christ should be identified together.

What a privilege. To be identified with Christ. That there is a real link, an abiding connection between you, the Christian, and Christ.

So, wonderful to be called by the name of Christ. That's what Peter's telling us. High honor to be a Christian, even though it brings persecution.

[16:05] So, they wore this label as a medal of honor. Just as in Acts chapter 5, you remember that the apostles were drug in before the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel.

They were arrested, they were flogged, and then ordered not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus. And they left the Sanhedrin, bruised, beaten, bloodied, but rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer for the name.

The name. Jesus Christ. They were proud, they rejoiced, they boasted to be able to be counted worthy to suffer for that name.

And so, day by day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. They didn't shy away in disgrace, ashamed of the name, but took every opportunity to speak of the name.

The name of Jesus, the Christ. So, if you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed. Praise God that you bear that name. So, regardless of its origin, it was under the providence of God that it happened, that Christians were tagged with this name, and here in 1 Peter 4.16, we find the Holy

Spirit putting his approval upon that name.

[17 : 34] Praise God that you bear that name. It's worthy of praise. Well, we've seen then all three uses of the term Christian in the Bible. It indeed became the prominent label to identify disciples of Christ all over the world.

Even if you go to non-Christian secular history, early non-Christian literature referred to them as Christians. Josephus, Pliny, Trajan, one of the greatest Roman historians, Tacitus, from 50 AD to 120, wrote that Nero's scapegoats were a, quote, a class of people who were commonly styled Christians after Christ, who was executed by Pontius Pilate.

Commonly, this was the name that stuck, you see. Christians. Why Christians? Because of Christ, the one crucified by Pontius Pilate.

Now, here we are 2,000 years later and Christian is still the predominant name by which the disciples of Jesus are called.

and rightly so because that is what we are. We're the Christ crowd. We're Christ people. The household of Christ that belonged to him. Do you see the uniqueness of this term of identity?

[18 : 59] No other term links us so clearly and unmistakably to Christ. Think of some of the other terms. Believer, disciple, saint, brother, sister.

These are all terms found of us in the Bible. Christian. Now, which name most clearly identifies you with Jesus Christ? Christian.

And so, of all the terms by which we're called, none are more fitting in spelling out our identity. Just as Christ's religion is called Christianity because it's all about Christ.

So, Christ's followers are called Christians because they too are all about Christ. In fact, you'll never understand what a Christian is unless you understand who Christ is.

For our identity as Christians is completely wrapped up in Christ, that worthy name by which we are called. So, I want to consider how fitting it is that we should be called by the name of Christ, that we should be called Christians.

[20 : 16] It's a tailor-made shirt. It fits perfectly for who we are, for our identity. I want to trace this out chiefly through the words of the Apostle Paul.

No man wrote more to set forth the teachings of Christianity than the Apostle Paul. And this is the Paul who stayed in Antioch for over a year teaching these new disciples of Christ.

And it was out of that teaching and out of that scene in Antioch that they were first called Christians.

So, the very marrow of Paul's letters in the Gospels or in the Bible in the New Testament set forth the teachings of Christianity that were being taught in Antioch that moved someone, unbeliever, believer in Antioch to start calling these disciples Christians.

And it stuck. Well, we're called Christians. Consider this. Because, first of all, our whole doctrine is centered on Christ.

Paul said as much as he traveled around from place to place preaching. He says, I determined to preach nothing but Christ.

[21 : 36] Now, that's pretty pretty focused, isn't it? To preach nothing but Christ and Him crucified. Well, so, so, so who are these people?

Well, I know this, that the whole of their doctrine centers on this Christ. Christ, whoever He is and whatever He's done, that's it.

And if you were in Antioch and went to hear Paul preach, you heard about Christ, I'll tell you. For according to the Apostle Paul, Christianity is Christ. The gospel is nothing more than the good news about Christ.

So, whatever the topic of preaching, whatever the text, Paul made a direct connection to Christ. Why are we called Christians?

Because our whole doctrine is centered on Christ. Because, secondly, our righteousness before God is Christ. Why is it that you are counted righteous in heaven?

[22 : 41] That when He looks upon you, He sees you as right with God. Because God made Him Christ, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

So, we have our righteousness before God in Christ. Our acceptance with God is all because of Christ.

We're accepted in the Beloved One that is in Christ. God the Father looks and says, oh yes, you are in Christ. You're accepted here.

You belong here in heaven. You're in Christ. Accepted in the Beloved. Christ, our wisdom from God, that is our righteousness, our holiness, our redemption.

So, why are we called Christians? Well, our whole doctrine centers in Christ, our whole acceptance in heaven, our righteousness is in Christ, and then our whole life is in Christ.

[23 : 47] Christ. One thing we've learned through Joseph's illness is that hospitals that you visit like to send you performance surveys.

They like to know how they're doing. I'm not sure there's got to be some kickback to them because they send you a stamped envelope and everything else. They really want to hear from you. How did we do?

And so, we got a survey back from the University of Alabama. And yesterday, I was giving the survey to Joseph, and here was the question. Describe your visit to our hospital in one word.

Are you kidding? No. That's what they want. They want you to really cut to the chase. Just one word. What was your experience like in our facility? Describe your doctor.

In one word. Describe the staff that you interacted with in one word. I suppose it's a way to just really get down to the nubbins, isn't it?

[24 : 53] What you really think about them. Just give us one word. Now let me ask you something. What one word would you use to describe your whole life? Your whole life.

However old you are. And all the things you do. Just give me one word. And while you're sitting there thinking, the Apostle Paul's got his hand up. I know.

For to me, to live is Christ. For to me, life equals Christ. He is so much, my life is so much wrapped up in him that life for me is Christ.

One word. Is it any wonder we're called Christians when our life is Christ? Break down your life into its many parts.

Take your work life. What did we hear last week in this pulpit, this hour? Oh, Christ, didn't we? Colossians. You work for Christ.

[25 : 57] It's your work. Christ rewards you. Your work life is all about Christ. Take your family life. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. You say, oh, I thought I was talking about my family life. Yeah, you were. We are. And the one word is Christ. He keeps, he's there too, isn't he?

And take your recreational life, your Saturdays, your Sundays. It's called the Lord's Day. Isn't that something? Your finances.

You see, whatever aspect of your life, what do we find? We find that we meet Christ there because he's Lord of all. He claims the whole of life.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will appear with him in glory. And so when many of the professing disciples of Jesus heard that sermon in John chapter 6, they followed him no more.

[27 : 05] They turned away and from that point on they no longer followed Jesus. You realize what they were saying? We are content to live our lives without Christ.

We're content to not have Christ stick his nose in our work, our family life, our financial life, our physical, my body, my time. I'm content to not have Christ in my life.

They turned and walked away. You know, some people here might be in that camp. They're content to live without Christ. And Jesus turns to the twelve, you don't want to leave also, do you?

Do you want to leave and live your life without me? And Peter answers for them, Lord, to whom shall we go? I've got a real problem here, Lord.

You are my life. And if I walk away from you, where do I go? There is no one who is for me, who does for me, who meets my need like you do.

[28 : 11] Where should I go? We know and believe that you're the Holy One from God. And you alone have the words of eternal life. We can't imagine life without you. Well, that's what Paul's saying, for me to live is Christ.

That's what Peter's saying. That's what marks a Christian. We stumble and we fall and we we come back to Jesus Christ and he forgives us and he helps us and he restores us.

But we never get to the place where we say, I'm ready to say, I don't, I don't want to, I don't want Jesus in my life. I don't want my life to be associated with Christ anymore.

No. Christian's life is wrapped up in Christ. What about our passion? What is our passion? We've seen our doctrine.

We've seen our righteousness, our whole life. What about our passion? Paul says, I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ. But Paul, you've been a Christian now for 30 years.
[29 : 15] I know. And I want to know Christ. There is still more, more, so much more to know about Christ. I want to be able to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is this love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

This is his passion. Knowing Christ. It's the essence of eternal life. This is eternal life to know you, the living God, the true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
That's what eternal life is all about. If you don't want to know Christ, don't convince yourself that you have eternal life because that's the essence of eternal life. It's to know Christ.
To know Christ. It's the essence of that abundant life that he came to give. Our passion to know Christ. Our ethic. What is our ethic?
What determines right and wrong for us? To obey everything that Christ has commanded us. That's what makes a Christian.

[30 : 24] I shouldn't say it's what makes us a Christian. That's what identifies the Christian. We're to go and make disciples of Christ to baptize them and to teach them to obey everything that Christ commands.

You see, that's the ethic. That's the ethic in the kingdom of God. What is Christ's command? Fitting, isn't it, that we should be called Christians. Our ethic is all about Christ.

Hearing and doing what Christ has said. Our example. Who is our hero? Who do we pattern our lives after? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, 1, Follow my example as I am following the example of Christ.

And so we're all following the same example and it is none other than Christ. Peter speaks of the way Christ suffered unjustly when he suffered for us.

And how did he do that? Without retaliation, without giving threats, but by entrusting himself to God, the just judge. And in doing so, Peter says, he's left an example for us that we should follow in his steps.

[31 : 32] that we are a people who suffer injustices in the same manner as Christ did. We pattern our lives in every area after Christ so we're a people with our eyes fixed on Christ and we're being transformed into that image of Christ and we're learning to live like Christ, to see people as Christ, to have his eyes, to have his heart, to have his feet, to have his mouth.

Christ is our example and where's our power? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Paul, what are you saying about the Christian? Whatever situation we're in, we have the power of Christ. So I'm able to be content in every circumstance!

Because Christ is my power. whatever God calls me to do, I can do it through Christ who strengthens me. Our motivation, the love of Christ compels us.

It grabs a hold of us. It moves us. It motivates us. The love of Christ, he's our motivation in life. our aim no longer to live for ourselves but for him who died for us and rose again.

[32 : 59] We make it our goal to please Christ. What's our mission? Our mission. Why are we here? What are we about? This group of people.

What are we about? Well, Jesus, Christ's mission. That's what we're about. We're about Christ's mission. And so as he left the earth, he tells us, you go now and make disciples of all the nations and baptize them and teach them to obey everything that I've commanded.

And so that mission is our mission. We embrace it. We embrace it and it figures into our lives. We're here for the mission. We're here for the mission.

It's Christ's mission. And what's our boast? In Christ alone. God forbid that I should boast. Save in the death of Jesus Christ.

He's our boast. Not unto us. Not unto us. No, we swear off any praise to ourselves and we say, our boast is Christ.

[34 : 02] What's our hope? Christ in you. The hope of glory. Christ in you. To have Christ in us now is all of our confident expectation of future glory later.

Do you have any hope in heaven? Well, it's this, Paul says, Christ in you. Does Christ dwell in my heart now by his spirit?

He doesn't leave. He comes and sets up his home and so if he's in me now, that's my hope for heaven. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

What's the hope of the Christian? Why are they so optimistic about the future? Because our happy hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and what he will do at his coming.

Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Our hope is in Christ. Our conversation is Christ.

[35 : 02] If anything marked these early Christians, it was that they did not keep quiet about Christ. They were always talking about him, that Christ, their Savior, was alive from the dead.

That was shouting good news. And so, persecution may have scattered them outside of Jerusalem, but wherever they went, they proclaimed the Christ. And that, from the human side, is why so many conversions happened in Antioch.

Yes, the Lord's hand was with them, but God always uses me means, and what were his means? These Christians, their conversation was salted with Christ.

You couldn't talk to one for very long before you heard it. You heard it. Christ. Christ. Christ.

Christ. It salted their conversation. So what should we call these people? Christians. Christians. No wonder they were called Christians since Christ was ever on their lips.

[36 : 12] He's our Savior, our Lord, our anointed one, our mediator, our prophet, our priest, our king. It's all Christ. He's our love, our delight, our joy, our peace.

He's the way, the truth, and the life. So is it any wonder that Christians should be the label that found its way upon disciples of Jesus?

That the very name of Christ should have been linked to us, and that all under God's providence, and indeed, with the approval of the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter, that if you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed, but thank God that you bear that name.

Does it not fit us? The one who is all of our doctrine, all of our life, all of our salvation, our righteousness, our passion, our ethic, our example, our power, our motivation, our aim, our mission, our boast, our hope, our conversation, our shepherd, our friend, our helper, and protector, and guide, and keeper.

It's all Christ. Well, how do we apply this?

[37 : 30] Well, they're both privileges and duties aren't there to bearing the name of Christ. Think of the duties, the responsibilities for those who bear his name.

It's no small thing to have the name of Christ put upon us. You know what that means? Christian. It means that for good or ill, the world sees Christ through your eyes, through what they see in you. The reputation of Christ in your world, in your orbit, in your family, your workplace, your neighborhood, people that interact with you, they think of Christ based on what they see and hear from you.

You bear his name. Therefore, it's our responsibility to not misuse the name of the Lord, our God, that name that has been placed upon us.

The world around us makes that connection between Christ and a Christian, and they often hold the standard pretty high. Boy, don't they love to criticize a Christian when he's inconsistent with what Christ says to do?

[38 : 43] Well, the identity is proper. They have a reason for doing that. We are, after all, disciples of Christ, so they have a high expectation of us.

And so we must not bring reproach upon the name of Christ. We must do nothing that would bring dishonor to Christ's name. As God complains in Romans 2.24 that his name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, he says.

My name, blasphemed because the way you're living. No, no. When a professing Christian behaves in an un-Christlike manner, it gives the world an occasion to blaspheme, to make fun of Christ.

There's nothing to him. He's just a story figure. There's nothing to Christians. They're no different than us. superstition.

And they write it off. Oh, that should be something to stir us to be very careful. The name of Christ is exalted.

[39 : 45] God the Father has exalted him. He has put his name and his word above all things. And so we need to keep it high.

Let's hold it high. Let's take the high road in our living so that the name of Jesus will be held high. Let it not be drug through the mud and be exposed to the reproach of the world.

Well, more important than getting the last word in is the reputation of Christ that we bear when we're suffering for Christ's sake.

More important than getting the last word in, suffering reproach in a way that Jesus bore.

Committing himself to his faithful creator.

Not retaliating. Not threatening. Not harsh words. Calm faith in the judge. I can trust him. Are they seeing Christ in the way you suffer unjustly?

[40 : 51] Let us bear his likeness. his name is exalted high. Jacob's son, Simeon and Levi, you remember they behaved in such a way as to drag down their father's name.

They wiped out that whole village because of what they did to their sister. Jacob complained to them afterwards, you have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land.

You've made my name stink in their nostrils because of the way you believe. You're sons of Jacob and when you did that, you made my name stink to these people.

Well, that's what we're to be careful not to do. We're bearing the name of Christ. Don't make his name stink to people but rather let us spread abroad everywhere the fragrance of Jesus.

So, that's different. That's not the stench that we usually have in the world. There's something attractive about that kind of love, that kind of response under suffering, that kind of joy and peace under affliction.

[42 : 09] There's a sweet-smelling aroma of Christ. That's what we want the world to smell. We want to bring glory to that worthy name by which we're called.

It's interesting that in 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 23, Paul could speak of certain brothers, representatives of the church, as an honor to Christ.

Now, usually we think of the opposite. It is an honor to be called by Christ, to be his servants and to be his disciples. But Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaks of these people as an honor to Christ.

In other words, when people see them, hear them, watch them, Christ is honored. That's what we want to do. They lifted up the name of Christ by the way they conducted themselves, and upon meeting them, people went away thinking more highly of Christ, their master.

Privileges, responsibilities. Yes, responsibilities to bear the name of Christ. But oh, what are the privileges to have Christ's name put upon us?

[43 : 23] For us to be identified with him? Us? Do we know who we are? Do we know who he is? For us to be put together?

As one who belongs to him? To have the spirit of Christ? Resting upon us to have his righteousness on our account? To have his power enabling us to live for him? And when we get the name Christian, what do we find?

We find we've been brought into a fellowship, a family of other Christians. And what a blessing and privilege to be brought into the Christian family.

That family that has Christ as our head, the body of Christ. Christ. And then what is our privilege? That is, we're not ashamed of him.

We're not ashamed of his name and his word in this wicked and adulterous generation. He, Christ, will not be ashamed of us when he comes in his father's glory.

[44 : 30] He's coming to judge the world. And he will say of some people, I never knew you. And they will be thrown into hell forever to suffer.

But those, he says, yes, he's mine. Yes, she's mine. They will enjoy heaven forever in his presence. And Jesus says, you don't be ashamed of me, my name, my word in this life when I come with all my father's glory, no more shame upon Christ, the despised, rejected Jesus.

Now he's coming in glory that no one can deny. And down will go every knee and open will be every mouth to confess that this Jesus Christ is God to the glory of God the Father.

And in that day, I will confess your name to my father. Then will he own my worthless name before the father's face.

And in the new Jerusalem, appoint my soul a place. What a privilege to belong to Christ, to bear his name, to be a Christian.

[45 : 42] Alexander the Great, while he was conquering the world, was presiding over a military court of his army. And a soldier had been brought in who had deserted in the heat of battle and fled, was caught, and was now brought before Alexander for sentencing.

What is your name, soldier? Alexander, sir. What? What is your name? Alexander, sir. And Alexander, who was known for his rage, whose lack of self-control caused him to murder, to kill in cold blood, one of his best friends who was also a leader in his army, but under the rage of the moment, he murdered him.

That Alexander said, what is your name, soldier? And he stuttered out the third time, Alexander, sir. And Alexander, in a rage, says, change your conduct or change your name.

No. I want to say that it is a privilege to have King Jesus as our captain because he doesn't rail upon his servants in our failures.

[47 : 10] Have we not turned and run in the face of battle? Have there not been opportunities for us to courageously stand and say, yes, I'm a Christian, to speak of Christ in a situation where we went silent, suddenly silent, strangely silent in the moment.

There it was. We don't have a captain that comes and reams us out, but he is gentle and humble in heart as he's teaching us to walk worthy of the name by which we are called and picking us up and giving us every motivation to stir us up, forgiving us, graciously dealing with us, setting us on our way again.

Now go, go. Don't be ashamed of that name, but praise God that you bear that name. Let's embrace our identity as Christians this morning.

We've looked it in the face. Let's embrace it. Christ is everything to us. It's only right that we should have his name upon us, his label on us as Christians.

Let's honor the Christ whose name we bear. Our Father, that this Jesus Christ, your Son, should ever be connected to us, that he should ever be all of this that we have just sung of him is indeed amazing grace.

[48 : 32] Oh, capture our hearts once again, that we, we poor sinners could be called Christians in truth and that Christ could be all of this to us and then help us as we go into this world.

It's been easier for us to sing these things about our Christ than for many of your people in other places who are paying the ultimate price to claim the name of Jesus Christ.

So help them, strengthen them to remain true, to not be ashamed, but to praise God that they bear that name and help us to do the same in harder situations that you might be glorified in the eyes of this world.

What a Savior these people have. Behold how they love one another. It's just like him. So help us, we pray. And to you be the praise in Jesus' name.

Amen.