

A Christian Is...

Aaron Beard
Trussville
March 12, 2006

LESSON 2: A CHRISTIAN IS A PILGRIM

INTRODUCTION:

A. If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

1. Sure – your brothers and sisters in Christ here know you are a Christian and those who you know that are somewhat religious may know, but what about everyone else?
 - a. Co-workers, neighbors, & friends who aren't spiritually minded – Do they know?
 - b. What if you had not told others – Can they tell by your conduct, your speech, your priorities, the things you will not participate in, love for others, etc
 - c. Would others recognize you as a Christian?
2. Last time we defined what a Christian is:
 - a. A Christian is one who obeys the gospel of Christ
 - b. A Christian is one who is a disciple... he follows Jesus Christ in obeying His words and striving to become like Him

B. This morning I want to continue to look at the question: “What Is A Christian” – We will see that a Christian is a PILGRIM! Would others recognize you as a pilgrim?

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PILGRIM?

A. As Christians we are pilgrims here in this world:

1. Our being pilgrims and strangers speaks of our relationship to this world (**I Pet 1:1**)
 - a. I like the ESV rendering of this passage – “To those who are elect exiles...!”
 - b. One who comes from a foreign country to a land to reside there beside the natives
 - c. One who stays in a place as a stranger or visitor, to describe Christians whose final citizenship is in heaven & who are regarded as temporary dwellers on earth
 - d. **Illustration:** The many songs we sing and love that remind us of this fact!
2. **Illustration:** I want you to take a moment and visualize home... wherever that is for you:
 - a. There's the familiar sound of voices, momma's cooking, scenes, & memories
 - b. We love songs like “My Home's In Alabama” and “Down Home” that remind us
 - c. Alabama is not our home! Where we grew up is not home! Heaven is our home!
3. The foundation of our pilgrimage is our citizenship being in Heaven! (**Phil 3:17-21**)
 - a. Philippi was a Roman colony, thus a little piece of Rome in another place! Their citizenship was Roman and their way of life was a Roman way of life!
 - b. They understood Paul to be telling them their citizenship wasn't ultimately Roman!
 - c. They would have understood that they were to be a little piece of Heaven on earth!
 - d. Paul is encouraging them not to pursue fleshly desires and not to allow earthly things to become who they are – Why? Their citizenship is not here!
4. Crucial to our spiritual health is living with the understanding that this world is not our home! (**2 Cor. 4:16-18; 2 Peter 1:9**)
 - a. This is so easy for us to forget! We live in secure homes, pay mortgage payments, have stable jobs, many friends & neighbors, and consistent scheduled life
 - b. The closer we get to material things & this world the harder it is to live as pilgrims!
 - c. Therein lies our greatest danger! The world being visible has captured our attention. The other world, being invisible is not frequently considered!

B. Living with the realization that we are pilgrims will impact the focus with which we live!

1. One of the greatest problems facing God's people today is worldliness! (**I John 2:15-17**)
 - a. Yes, immorality and false teachings are destructive & must be guarded against
 - b. But worldliness is a silent killer! It lulls us into a state of inactivity and being content sitting stagnant! We still attend and look good... but we're dying spiritually!

- c. The physical world has grabbed our attention and robbed God of our focus!
- 2. Abraham stands as an example of one with a pilgrim's focus! (**Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16**)
 - a. What an amazing test of faith this was! To get up and leave the land he'd always known and friends & family he was familiar with to go where? He didn't know!
 - b. He wasn't ashamed to say he was a pilgrim – But his being a pilgrim wasn't since he lived in tents traveling around but because he wasn't to Heaven yet!
 - c. His focus was vital to his strength of faith – If their focus shifted from Heaven to the physical countries they'd left behind... they may have turned and gone back!
- 3. With our citizenship in heaven, our minds and hearts will be focused there! (**Col 3:1-4**)
 - a. No matter how you slice it, if our hearts are in things here... WE ARE WORLDLY!
 - b. It is difficult to grow in our faith if we are closer to the world than God! If we are closer to the world, it will be more real –if to God, He will be more real!
- 4. We need to ask: Does my life reflect a pursuit of heaven or of earth? (**Mt 6:31-33**)
 - a. Do spiritual things get pushed to the backburner so we can do physical things? Is God getting less and less of our time because of our busy schedules?
 - b. When there's a conflict between worship & something else, which wins out? We may make excuses, but the one that wins is the one that means more to us!

C. Living with the realization that we are pilgrims will impact our behavior!

- 1. Jesus taught on how His disciples would be different from the world! (**Matthew 5:14-16**)
 - a. To be “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” we certainly must have lives that stand as a contrast to the direction the world is going!
 - b. Notice it's not “salt of the church” and “light of the church” – It's of the world!
 - c. His followers would stand out, set an example, and they would make a difference!
- 2. As pilgrims, our conduct must be honorable among the Gentiles (**1 Peter 2:11-12**)
 - a. We need to realize that there are people watching us! Like with Jesus some just would love to see us mess up, others are watching and learning how to live
 - b. The word “honorable” means “beautiful” – In contrast to the FILTHY lives of others!
 - c. **Illustration:** Describe the difference in conduct giving specific attitudes & actions
 - c. It's always important to see that Peter shows that by living as pilgrims, with conduct that sets us apart from the world, souls that are lost may turn to the Lord!
- 3. We can see an example of this in Moses' faithful response to sin (**Hebrews 11:24-27**)
 - a. Although Egypt offered pleasures and earthly benefits, Moses understood life was about much more than those things! He was looking through eyes of faith!
 - b. He saw the pleasures sin offered as “short-lived” – Would he suffer if he chose to be with God's people? YES! But he sought eternal pleasure & riches!
 - c. By to the world's standards Moses made a STUPID choice! But he made the decision he did because he knew he was a pilgrim! One day he'd go home!
- 4. Because we are God's pilgrims our lives will not mix with the world's lives! (**1 Pet 4:4**)
 - a. There will be a division between you and the world because you are going in a different direction! They may even speak evil of you as a result!
 - b. Some want to see exactly how close they can get to the world, how much they can be like it, without being affected by sin – That makes the world our standard!
 - c. How does it make you feel when you realize that Christ calls you to go in a different direction than the world? Are we ashamed of being “set apart?”
 - d. I've seen parents and others spend too much time convincing their young people that they aren't different! They are to be different... and that's a GOOD thing!

D. Living with the realization that we are pilgrims brings great blessings!

- 1. Sometimes we only consider the state of being a pilgrim from the negative perspective:
 - a. We talk about how we don't fit in, suffer persecutions, how we must give up things that are sinful, and how we never can feel at home here in this world
 - b. Very few lessons focus in on the POSITIVE aspects – But there's great blessings!
- 2. Realizing we're pilgrims gives hope when we suffer physically! (**1 Cor 15:42-44, 51-53**)
 - a. I am not a physical being having a spiritual experience but a spiritual being having

- a physical experience! Who I really am is not what you see with your eyes!
- b. Our bodies are just functional vehicles – They allow spiritual beings to function in a world that is physical! They aren't meant to be eternal... they will wear out!
 - c. Whenever we are hurt physically, become sick, suffer from chronic problems, or even stare at death we can look with hope toward receiving new bodies!
 - d. Our bodies are just tents – Temporary dwelling places for the time we are pilgrims!
3. We also do not have to worry about being defined by what we possess or our social status here as those who live as though this life is all there is! **(Matthew 6:19-20)**
- a. As the world is caught up in the pursuit of the American dream & worries about keeping up with others, pilgrims know there's much more to life! **(Luke 12:15)**
 - b. As Pilgrims we realize our greatest treasures cannot be taken away or destroyed by time! We have Jesus Christ, eternal life, each other, & heaven!
 - c. Even if we lose all our physical possessions & status here our lives are not over because our citizenship is somewhere else & so are our hearts & minds!
4. We can keep our difficult experiences here in perspective with going home! **(Rom 8:18)**
- a. When you go through times that are hard, in whatever way, compare it to those things you look forward to in eternity! They don't even compare!
 - b. Job made mistakes in his response to God but refused to give up even though he lost almost everything! He knew this world wasn't everything! **(Job 19:25-26)**

CONCLUSION: Would others observe your life and recognize you as a pilgrim? (2 Cor 3:1-3)