

# Are You Ready?

By David Phillips

**B**eing a Christian is a call. It is an “upward call,” as Paul said in Phil. 3:14, “*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*” God calls all men through the gospel message. He does not call us unto arbitrary service, a one day a week service, or to simply wear the name “Christian.” He calls us unto faithful, lifelong service resulting in a glorious crown and eternal salvation (Rev. 2:10).

God calls us to be something better than what we are. He calls not only to wear the name of Christ, but to spend our lives striving to live like Christ. “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). He calls us not only to admire Christ, but to actually put on Christ. “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Gal. 3:27). When one becomes a Christian he/she is answering this call. By confessing Christ and being baptized in His name we are appealing to God to forgive our sins and to cleanse our consciences. “*There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of filth from the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 3:21). When we obey the gospel we acknowledge that, up to that point, we have lived to fulfill our own desires, but now we are ready to fulfill the will of God. Just as Christ died in order to fulfill the will of God, when we are buried in baptism we are showing that we are prepared to do the same. “*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*” (Rom. 6:4, 17-18).

One who understands what is involved in obeying the gospel should also understand that it is a great commitment. Jesus acknowledged this and, therefore, taught us to “*count the cost*” of discipleship (Luke 14:26-33). Because of the commitment involved, it is important for one who is considering the gospel to take some time to think about what is really important. What will my spouse think, what will my children think, what about parents and friends? These things are inevitably on the mind of one who is thinking about the gospel because making a commitment to God will require change. Such change often affects our relationships with the people who are closest to us (Matt. 10:36-39). A person must understand that obedience to the gospel is a commitment to God to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, regardless of whether our family supports us or not. Just as Christ had to make a sacrifice in order to offer forgiveness of sins, so we must be willing to make some sacrifices in order to have the forgiveness of sins. The process of acknowledging the sacrifices we must make and determining to serve God in light of those sacrifices is called repentance. We are turning our hearts to God and committing ourselves to His service. “*...repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance*”

(Acts 26:20).

Think about the promises of God: salvation, forgiveness, eternal life, the peace of God, joy inexpressible, spiritual truth and understanding, and a family that loves you. Are all of these things worth the cost of being a Christian? Is the prize of life worth enough to you to cause you to run the race of a Christian? God expects great commitment from His people because He is committed to us. He proved this by sending His Son to die for us. Is the reward of having God on your side worth the commitment that it would require? *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18). *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31).

All Christians have made this commitment. Together, members of the Lord’s church are working to learn and to understand the great blessings of discipleship. Together we are growing to the fullness of the image of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). The church is a family. It is the body of Christ. When one becomes a Christian he/she becomes a part of that body. You may struggle as you search for a footing, as do all men, but the Lord’s people are able to help, to encourage, to correct, and to grow with you.

This is what is involved in becoming a Christian. If you are thinking about obeying the gospel understand the rewards are definitely worth it. The question you must answer for yourself is, are you ready?

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