

Five Marks of Authentic Christianity

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Introduction:

A. Orthodoxy does not always produce authentic Christianity.

1. Apathetic or lethargic people are not the only phony believers.
2. Orthodox believers can also be phony.
3. Many of our churches are filled with phony believers.
4. I am writing a book on this passage we will discuss tonight.
 - a. This passage continues through chapter 6. (2 Corinthians 2:14)
 - b. Acts and Galatians which give biographical details of Paul.
 - c. He didn't practice authentic Christianity for ten years after his conversion.
 - d. What I call phony believers today are not unsaved, they are just not living in the power of God.

B. Paul gives us five marks of authentic Christianity.

1. U.S. treasury workers detecting counterfeit money spend most of their time studying only the real dollars.
2. There are too many types of counterfeit.
3. The slightest deviation from the real thing is detected when you know the authentic.
4. The New Testament describes the real Christian life.
5. Jesus lived the most authentic life of all but many people are not helped by Jesus' example because of his divinity.
6. No one says this about Paul because he was like us.

I. The speaker reads the chapter beginning with verse 14. (2 Corinthians 2)

A. Christ always leads us in triumph and spreads through us the knowledge of Christ, and here there are three marks of authentic Christianity.

1. Real believers always give God thanks.
 - a. True believers have unquenchable optimism.

- b. They just can't be put down for long.
- c. Paul's books ring with hope.
- d. In jail at Philippi Paul was imprisoned yet they and at midnight and the walls of the jail shook.
- e. They could not help but praise God.
- f. Many today feel they must praise God for their cancer, but his is phony.
- g. Our authentic thanks is just bubbling over naturally.
- h. How many of us have this kind of thanks deep down in side?
- i. A lady was complaining to her pastor and when he rebuked her she said that when God sends tribulation he wants me to tribulate.
- j. In everything give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

2. Christ always leads us in triumph, giving unvarying success.

- a. Always.
- b. Paul's plans did not always come to pass, as with the Jews. (Romans 9)
- c. God did not let him minister to the Jews.
- d. All of God's purposes are fulfilled when we learn the secret of authentic Christianity.
- e. Paul was imprisoned and wrote that the things that happened to him furthered the Gospel. (Philippians

1. The whole Praetorian guard heard the Gospel.

- i. Many leaders in Rome were chosen from the Praetorian guard.
- ii. Learn to read your Bible with an eye to these details.
- iii. These guards were chained to the Apostle Paul and many were converted to Christ.

2. Many of the brethren were emboldened to preach the Gospel because of Paul's imprisonment.

i. Paul did not think of himself as a prisoner of Rome but of the Lord.

ii. If more preachers were locked up in jail perhaps more laymen would share with their neighbors.

iii. Today we name our sons Paul and our dogs Nero.

3. God spreads through us the knowledge of Christ wherever we go.

a. Paul saw himself as the aroma of Christ to God.

1. To believers the fragrance of life.

2. To unbelievers the fragrance of death.

3. People had to either believe in Christ or reject Christ.

4. The mark of authentic Christianity leaves behind a fragrance of Christ, like a girl wearing a beautiful perfume.

b. Paul was described a short and bald.

1. Acts describes him as loved by his disciples.

2. He left an unforgettable impression.

4. A fourth mark of authentic Christianity is sincerity, not religious racketeering. (2 Corinthians 2:17)

a. Some people make a racket out of a single aspect of truth.

1. Some peddle healing.

2. Some peddle prophecy.

b. Paul had unimpeachable integrity.

1. This is integrity that can't be called into account.

2. It is trustworthy and sincere.

c. Paul was commissioned by God.

1. He had a God given goal.

2. He was not just tickling ears.
 3. Paul lived in the sight of God.
 4. God is keeping track.
 5. Authentic Christianity is to speak the word of God.
5. A fifth mark of authentic Christianity is undeniable reality.
- a. Some accused Paul of not being a true apostle.
 - b. Some expected letters of recommendation from Peter.
 - c. Paul said the Corinthian believers were his letter of recommendation.
 - d. They had changed due to his ministry.
 - e. More than this, the marks of an apostle had been performed among them.
 - f. I preached about the unrighteous not inheriting the kingdom of God. (2 Corinthians 6:9)
 1. Many in Paul's day were licentious.
 2. In my audience a young man recently converted at a Billy Graham meeting heard me preach.
 3. He began to feel uncomfortable surrounded by sanctified church people but when he heard of the description of the sinners in Corinth he understood that they were just like him.

II. How do we measure up to authentic Christianity?

A. Paul asks who is sufficient for these things. (2 Corinthians 2:16)

1. By what dedication and by what resource can we be authentic?
2. Only Christ for we are not sufficient in ourselves.
3. Nothing comes from us; everything comes from God.
4. This is the New Covenant.
 - a. Nothing from us; everything coming from God.

b. The Old Covenant was opposite; all depended on us.

B. Living in the New Covenant is the secret of authentic Christianity.

1. Our dedication is not sufficient to server God.
2. In the 20th century we are trying to show the world what we can do for Christ.
3. The man who buys a car unaware that it comes equipped with a motor is deceived.
4. When he shoves it down the road we all know he is foolish.
5. He likes the paint and the upholstery but finds it is exhausting to push.
6. When we become exhausted in serving God we are like that man.
7. This man doesn't need to be invited to church meetings on how to push a car.
8. Most of Christianity is like this man.
9. This man needs to look under his hood and realize the power to run the car is inside.
10. If we learn to realize that the power to live the Christian life is in us.
11. There is an adventure in the Christian life when we live it according to God's plan.

C. Prayer.

1. Father open our eyes to this truth.
2. Make a difference in our lives.
3. Help those striving to serve you that you provide power.
4. The authentic qualities of the Christian life are found only in Christ moment by moment.
5. We pray in Jesus' name.