

# Why I Am a Christian

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*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).*

I can say, with honesty, that no one in my entire ministerial experience has been able to give me an intelligent reason for *not* becoming a Christian. The nearest to an intelligent explanation for not being a Christian came from a man who frankly said that he was “not man enough” to be one. Every person who has a vital, personal relationship with Jesus Christ ought to be able to give an intelligent reason why he is a Christian.

A Christian cannot merely be defined as one who lives in a so-called Christian land. There is an informal establishment of Christianity in the United States which, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is the admitted basis of our morality and culture. In 1892 the United States Supreme Court recognized this fact, declaring, “Western civilization is based on Christian faith.” But living in the United States obviously does not make anyone a Christian. The term cannot be applied to the people of a nation in this sense.

One is not a Christian merely because he practices good deeds, honesty, and morality. Many of the ethnological systems of the world put an emphasis on proper morality. Some who are viciously antagonistic to Christianity practice these virtues.

The Word of God explains clearly that, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

Stated as simply as possible, a Christian is one who has recognized himself to be a sinner in need of the Divine forgiveness of God, and the infusion of power to live a victorious, God-conscious life. A Christian is one who, realizing his lost condition, has put his complete faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who can forgive his sins plant within him the germ seed of a new life by the miracle of the “new birth.”

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (II Cor. 5:17).

This marvelous metamorphosis occurs because a man puts his trust in the vicarious, substitutionary death of Christ on the cross for his salvation, and because he believes in Christ’s glorious, triumphant resurrection from the dead.

I believe the promise of God’s Word: “..... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

## **I AM A CHRISTIAN BECAUSE I BELIEVE:**

### **Jesus Christ Is the Incarnate God**

I believe that the founder of Christianity is the fusion of humanity and Deity in indivisible and eternal oneness.

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’

“So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’

“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ “Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt. 16:13-16).

I am a Christian because, in common with Peter of old, I believe that Jesus Christ is the enhumanated God. I believe that He was the Heavenly Son of an earthly mother, and the earthly Son of a Heavenly Father. I believe Him to be the Second Person of the interpersonal, superpersonality of the Divine Trinity. I believe He lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death for human sin, rose physically, literally, bodily from the dead, on the morning of that Third Day, and that today He is a Living Christ!

I agree with the brilliant scholar, C. S. Lewis, who wrote in his book *The Case for Christianity*: ‘When Jesus Christ made His appearance He shocked the Jewish World because He claimed He was God. He claimed He had the ability to forgive sin. He said He had always existed. He said He was coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now among pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that He was a part of God, or one with God. There could be nothing very odd about it, but this man, since He was a Jew, couldn’t mean that kind of a God. God, in their language, meant the being outside the world, who had made it, and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you grasp that, you will see that what Jesus said was quite simply the most shocking thing that has been uttered by human lips

‘I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying that really silly thing that people often say about Him, ‘I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn’t be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice.

‘Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a mad man, or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool. You can spit on Him, and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God, but don’t let us come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He hasn’t left that open to us, and He didn’t intend to.’

Jesus Christ is God invading humanity. He was the only begotten Son of God. He is God in the sense that no one else could be. He is, as the Scripture so beautifully states it, “...the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...” (Heb. 1:3).

He is the One who said in all sweet humility and with sublime majesty, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” He was the One who prayed, “Glorify Thou Me, oh Father, with the glory that I had with Thee before the world began.” He was the One who said, “I and My Father are one.” He was the

One who declared, “He that hath seen Me has seen the Father.”

There is a dignity attached to the peerless person of Jesus Christ the Godman that belongs to no angel or archangel, nor to any of the principalities or powers in heavenly places.

As the Apostle proclaimed, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

What was it on the day of Pentecost that struck such conviction into the hearts of those who heard Peter and the apostles preach? It was this: Peter, filled with the Spirit of God, told those who listened that day WHO JESUS WAS. In the climax of his message Peter said, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

When he said these words, the Word of God says that conviction struck the hearts of those who heard him like a dart, and in the agony of men convicted by the Spirit of God they cried, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Their eyes were opened at last to see the Deity of our Wonderful Christ. All the sins of their lifetime were seen to be as nothing compared to the sin committed when they placed against the Roman gibbet the Son of God, and rejected Him.

This is the decisive question of all time: “What will you do with Jesus?”

I believe that He spoke with authority, and meant what He said, when He declared, “He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

I am further convinced that the greatest sin that any man can commit is to reject Jesus Christ and His offer of pardon and mercy. I believe in Jesus Christ not only because of what the Bible says, though that would be sufficient authority, but because His influence on history convinces me of His uniqueness and His Deity.

George Bancroft, the American historian, said, “I find the name of Jesus written at the top of every page of modern history. For almost 2000 years He has been the central figure of human life. He is indeed the key to the history of the world. He is the person that literature feels to be its loftiest ideal, philosophy conceives as its highest personality, criticism recognizes as its supreme problem, theology claims as its fundamental doctrine, and religion knows as its cardinal necessity. He is the wellspring of all that is best, purest, and noblest in human existence. Jesus Christ stood in the flesh, and still stands alone, supreme above all the mightiest and holiest of earth.” What a tribute from a historian!

### **I AM A CHRIST/AN BECAUSE I BELIEVE:**

#### **The Bible Is the Word of God**

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved

by the Holy Spirit” (I Peter 1:21).

The Bible is the text book upon which Christian experience is based. It is inconceivable, then, that a man can be a Christian who does not believe that this is an inspired book, a Holy Book, a divine revelation from God—not that it contains, but that it is the Word of God.

“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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16,17).

I believe the Bible is a perfect book. Coming from God it could be nothing less.

“The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psalm 119:160).

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

In the Bible’s original revelation it was absolutely flawless. There was not a mistake nor an error. True, men may have produced inaccuracies in the translation, but even this was all but impossible because of the manner in which the manuscripts were copied (which is evidenced by the validity of the present translations compared with the Dead Sea Scrolls).

Truly, “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8).

I believe that the Bible satisfies. It is not only the greatest textbook of human behavior, but the only book that fulfills the needs of men.

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

When I became a Christian I did not understand all about the Bible—I do not understand it all today—but I took it by faith and believed it to be God’s message for my soul. I found it satisfied my longing, as nothing else could do.

I believe the Bible is a mighty book, that it is “...living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

“‘Is not My Word like a fire?’ says the Lord, ‘And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’” (Jer. 23:29).

To the unbeliever this would seem strange, extravagant language, but the miraculous power of the Word of God no longer surprises those of us who have had the privilege of watching it deal a blow to the sin in men’s hearts, until they become “new creatures” before our eyes. God’s literary masterpiece is life-giving, energizing, and powerful.

“...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

Some people never experience the power of the Word of God in their lives because they are stumbling over details and questions in the Bible that have no bearing on their personal salvation. I am reminded of the account of a civil service examination a man was taking, to secure a position as clerk in the Social Security Department. The question was, ‘How far is the earth from

the moon?"

The applicant answered it thus, "I don't know, but I know it isn't near enough to interfere with my duties in the Social Security Department.

Many people are too sophisticated to believe in the utter integrity of the Bible. A young man came home from college, where he had been sitting under a skeptical professor who was an agnostic. Noticing his grandmother reading the Bible the young man said to her, "Grandma, do you believe that book?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Do you believe in the miracles?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

"What do you think of Balaam and the donkey? Don't you think it is remarkable for a donkey to talk like a man?"

She looked at her grandson and said, "Well, I don't know that it is more remarkable than for a man to talk like a donkey, as you are doing."

Sometimes it is best to answer a fool according to his own folly.

### **I AM A CHRISTIAN BECAUSE I BELIEVE: Christ Has the Power to Change Men's Lives**

I have seen the power of Christ demonstrated in the lives of men. I have seen bad men made good, drunkards made sober, thieves made honest, foul men made clean, weak men made strong, sad men made glad, sour men made sweet, hard men made tender.

Jesus Christ transformed a man named Sam Hadley. Sam was a fugitive from justice with 38 counts of forgery against him, a hopeless drunkard, a bum. Yet he was converted by the power of God into one of the greatest soul-winners that ever lived on the planet called earth. The grace of God so transformed him that Wilbur Chapman later said he was the most Christ-like man he had ever met in his life.

For the encouragement of others, Hadley would tell his story in the Jerry McAuley Mission, in New York, and he would say, "I was a bad iman, but I wanted to be good; I wanted to be honest, but I was crooked. I wanted to pray, but I was always cursing. I wanted to be truthful, but I was a liar. I wanted to be sober, but I couldn't stay on the wagon. Finally I said, 'What am I going to do? I'm sick of sin. I'm burdened with guilt, and I want the weight of it to roll off. I want peace and I want the assurance that will stand the tests of life, death, and eternity.' Then Jesus Christ, the Mighty Savior whom God sent, walked out and stood before me. Yes, He did.

"He stood before me and said, 'I can do all this for you. Will you let me do it?'"

"This happened in the saloon at the corner of 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Third Avenue. And I walked up to the bar and struck my fist on it and said, 'I'll never take another drink if I die.'

"A man behind the bar laughed in my face, and told me to go to Hell.

"I stumbled out into the night; staggered until I found a policeman, and I said to him, 'Officer, I

am going to have the D.T. 's; will you please lock me up in a cell, and whatever you do don't give me any whiskey.'

"If ever a man spent a night in Hell, I did. I was released on the afternoon of the next day, so weak I could scarcely walk. As I passed the saloons I could smell the whiskey, and for refuge I went into the mission, where Jerry McAuley was telling how Jesus met and saved him from his wild thieving, drunken career. I made my way tremblingly down to the front, and knelt with a number of other drunkards. Jerry McAuley prayed for us and then told me to pray.

"I said, 'Jesus I am a drunkard; can you make me sober? Jesus I am unclean, can you make me pure? Jesus, I am profane, a blasphemer, can you help me to pray? Jesus, I am lost, can you save me?'

"Then Jesus said, 'I can, and I will.'

"And like the Mighty Christ that He is, He took this poor, worthless, drunken bum and redeemed him by His infinite power.

Do we have men with experiences like this today?

Yes! I have seen such wonderful transformations wrought in the hearts and lives of men that I am convinced that Jesus Christ is able to save "to the uttermost."

I could bring before you 100 men and more who could persuade you that this power, and only this power, which is in Christ Jesus, can transform men's lives.

**I AM A CHRIST/A N BECA USE I BELIEVE:  
Christ Alone Can Solve the Sin Problem**

I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior because I was convinced, and will ever be, that He alone can conquer sin and deliver a man from its power and its presence.

When Gandhi visited a school for leper children he asked the pupils if they knew of any disease that was worse than leprosy.

"Yes," they said, "Sin is worse."

"And is there any cure for it?" he asked.

"Yes," they replied, "The blood of Jesus Christ."

How we thank God for Christian missionaries who have made such understanding the portion of some of His little ones.

All that any normal person needs to do to become convinced of the reality of sin is to thoughtfully read the newspapers. Sin is the tragic element in human life. It troubles the individual; it troubles the home; it troubles the world. All the international conflict of this hour is caused by it. It is the root of every tragedy.

Every honest man or woman is convinced, not only of the fact of sin in the world, but of sin in his own heart. I knew that I was a sinner, unfit to meet a holy and just God.

Assuredly, no man feels ready, until he finds peace through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Sin is the cancer that eats the soul of man piecemeal. It is the anarchy which drives him from the fellowship of his fellowmen. It is the great alienator that separates him from his God.

We know that sin is the master plague, for there is no other way to explain the sadness, the suffering, the crime, the injustice of this world. We see this sin-sickness curse and blight everything that it touches. It has left its black mark on every page of human history.

Jesus Christ alone is the antidote for the poison of sin in man's soul.

Mohammed cannot save. Confucius cannot save. Buddha cannot save. Religion cannot save.

Faith in Christ, and Christ alone can save.

For the sinner, for the one who is in need of forgiveness, there is Jesus Christ who died on the cross in his behalf, as his Savior from sin.

“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).