

## **The Experience...worth having**

By

Curtis Dickinson

At the beginning of Christ's ministry He was surrounded by those who sought a "religious experience" through the working of miracles or the involvement in social problems. Judas Iscariot complained that the expensive ointment, which Mary poured out on Christ, should have been sold in order to give money to the poor. James and John suggested that He bring down fire from heaven in vengeance upon cities that rejected Him. Others wanted Him to take the reins of civil government and forcibly bring men into line with their ideals. Jesus rejected all of them, knowing full well that the working of miracles and the relieving society of its burdens would not produce men in God's image.

### **THE SOCIAL GOSPEL**

A young man writes that he is giving up the preaching ministry to be a social worker, because he wants to "experience Christianity" and not just "talk about it." But he needs to realize that the prime purpose of Christ's coming into the world was not to remove from the world the problems, temptations, hardships and suffering, but to remove sin from the individual that he might have eternal life. He could have provided food for the whole world and given health to all people. But after performing these miracles for a relatively few He proceeded to preach the gospel of the Kingdom and rejected those who sought His miracles (John 2:23-24 ). God's purpose, as revealed in the Bible, is not to save this world from pollution, from temporal burdens and to give everyone financial prosperity; nor is it to save political empires. Rather it is to bring men as individuals into a state of righteousness through the forgiveness of sin, and to "deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal. 1:4). A chief sign of unbelief in our day, as in the days of Noah, is the disregard for God's revelation that this present world is evil and will be destroyed by fire, along with all the unbelievers in it (2 Pet. 3:7). We are commanded, therefore, to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. ... The world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever (1 John 2:15, 17). Plainly the command is not to save the world, but to obey God.

Benevolence is required of a Christian, not to save the world, but to please God and be like Him. Godly love compels the Christian to action. The branch that is truly in Christ will bear fruit. But mere social action cannot take the place of the holy calling to be a saint" fine may do many good works and yet remain sinful at heart and out of harmony with God. On the other hand, one who is cleansed by Christ will seek to do all the things that please Him, and even when his efforts fall short of the desired result, he still fulfills the purpose of God.

When the Jews asked, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered, "This is the work of God" that ye believe on Him who He has sent" (John

6:29). While “faith without works is dead,” it is just as true that works which do not derive from and aim at the purpose of God are worthless.

### **MIRACLE FAITH**

Paul wrote that man is without excuse for his unbelief because of the common sense God gave him to observe that which God created (Rom. 1:20). God’s creatures should require no more for a foundation of faith than this – that all things are created. But the strange phenomenon is this that millions who believe God still insist on some experience, some specific revelation, a miracle, instantaneous healing, or speaking in tongues as assurance that God really is. Many go around seeking such experiences in one religious service after another, anxious and frustrated because they cannot speak in a “tongue” as some others do. They think that this experience would greatly increase their faith and that they would automatically become happier and more successful Christians.

What is this but unbelief? Must God prove Himself to each individual by some shocking experience? If the whole created world does not convince a person of the reality of a Creator, then what more would one single miracle add? Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign: and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:39, 40). Christ’s death and resurrection is the one sign upon which Christian faith is established.

There is no satisfying the craving for signs. First a simple “experience” which is often the result of a religious gathering manipulated by someone skilled in the art of applying psychological pressure. Then there follows the continual yearning for a fresh touch, a repeat performance that caps the last. Many continue the search into the unknown – into the witchcraft and false prophecies – and in it all, a disregard for the express purpose of God as revealed in His Word. The Christian is to search the scriptures, not for “experiences”, but for the revealed commands of God, that he might be conformed to His image. Subjective experiences and miracles cannot tell us the purpose in the mind of God. Scripture can.

### **CONVERSION EXPERIENCE**

“Experiential conversions” are encouraged in the large “evangelistic campaigns” conducted throughout the world. In these, skilled technician’s labor to create the right kind of atmosphere and the evangelist preaches a sermon designed to create more heat than light, so that the sinner is emotionally overwhelmed and undergoes a “religious experience.”

Experiential conversion is actually in opposition to the true Christian experience of conversion. According to Christ and the apostles, it is the gospel that is the “power of God unto salvation”. This gospel is the “good news” of Christ’s death, in that He died for man, in the place of man, to meet the penalty for sin; and of His resurrection, in that He was resurrected back to life, and that we too may have life even as He does, This truth (the gospel) never changes; it is the same for every person in all times, and therefore

everyone coming to Christ must come through this same faith. Furthermore, all are baptized in one baptism, that is, into the death of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3). It is the same experience for all. While some may be more emotionally affected than others, the difference is only in degree: the experience is the same for all. Those whose conversion (?) is based on some other experience than faith in this gospel and the obedience to it, are experiencing something other than a Christian conversion.

The purpose of God is the same for all: to have man in His own image. “But we **ALL**, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” ( 2 Cor. 3:18 ). While we may be in different stages along the way of transformation into His image, there is still no difference in the actual process taking place. Experiences which would lead in different directions cannot be a part of the Christian experience.

### **EXPERIENCING FAITH**

Jesus said “If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself” ( John 7:L7 ). If you want to truly experience something, **then DO GOD’S WILL**. Here is the real Christian experience: obedience to God. It is such obedience that conforms us to His image, and thus fulfills His purpose for us. This is the primary task of all Christians, of the entire church. No amount of work, whether it is so-called soul-winning, social involvement or the betterment of society, will ever fulfill God’s purpose for you if you do not seek to do His will by obeying His commands. No wonder churches are dead—they are involved in numerous programs and great activities, but have lost sight of the primary objective: the transformation of individuals into the likeness of Jesus Christ by obedience to His Will. In them the world may view great organizations, but it does not view the image of Christ.

Jesus did **NOT** teach us to seek after “experiences”. Neither are we to seek after supernatural revelations or miracles. Instead we are expressly told to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” It is being righteous that makes us fit for God’s fellowship and for His use. One does not become righteous by involvement in numerous activities, no matter how worthy these may be. We are made righteous through Jesus Christ (2 Cor.5:21), and we walk in righteousness by obeying His commands. His commands are so far from the accepted standards of today that anyone who obeys them will find himself walking a totally different path than the world around him. The entrance to such a path is narrow and there are very few that walk it. Don’t try it unless you are ready to be considered a fool by the world. But if you want a true Christian experience, that’s the way to get it.

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.  
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute  
Curtis’ articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article  
for permission to be valid. Vol. XI, Number 2.  
.....