

Thank God, We are Christians

Some time ago, a news item said that, according to a pastor, a well-known convict had “found Jesus” in prison. It occurred to me that Jesus was not the one who had been lost. We should hope that the convict was brought to faith in Christ. We should also hope that he gave God the glory for his conversion instead of taking credit for it himself.

Years ago an evangelistic campaign used the slogan, “I found it.” Buttons and bumper stickers were distributed with those words. Someone asked me whether it should not be, “I found Him.” I suggested that it should be, “He found me.”

It is amazing to hear those who profess faith in Christ speak as if a person converted himself, as if a person could by his own choice and effort, make himself a believer in Christ. The Bible says clearly that fallen man cannot do anything at all toward his conversion, much less convert himself (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Apostle Paul never once, in all his letters to Christians, thanks them for believing in Christ. But he regularly thanks God for their faith in Christ (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians.,1:4-6; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3-6; Colossians 1:3-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5; 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:3- 5; Philemon 4-6). He gives God alone all the credit, all the glory and gratitude, for their faith.

Christianity is completely different from human religions. Every human religion teaches that we must try to get to God by our own efforts. The Bible teaches that God has come to us in His grace and power. Every human religion is a feeble failure. Christianity is a supreme success.

There is no ladder by which we sinners can climb to heaven - and if there were, we would not have the will nor the strength to climb it. But God has come to us, to save us, to rescue us, and to take us to Himself in heaven.

God the Father has sent God the Son to become a true Man, to live as we should have lived, to die as we should have died - all in our place, and to earn for us the forgiveness of all our sins: God the Father and God the Son have sent God the Holy Spirit to work in us through Word and Sacrament - to bring us to the faith and to keep us in the faith. God-given faith receives the forgiveness and salvation that Jesus has earned for us.

In John 1:41, Andrew says that they had “found” Christ. He means that they knew where Christ was located, for He had come to them. Jesus is everywhere (Ephesians 4:10). We “find” the Lord only where He comes to us: in the Word and the Sacraments (Isaiah 55:6-12).