

Barriers & Incentives to Believing

by Bill Crews

That there are certain formidable barriers or obstacles to believing the gospel of Christ, believing in Christ, and following Christ is admittedly the case. Awareness of these hindrances keeps many aliens from becoming Christians and many avowed Christians from living as Christians. These may “sit down and count the cost,” but they are unwilling to meet it (Luke 14:25-33).

Barriers

1. To become and be a Christian one must give up his love for and practice of sin (Rom. 6:1, 6,12-13; Col. 3:5-10; 1 Jn. 2:15-16). Most are unwilling to give up their favorite, most pleasurable sins.
2. To become and be a Christian one must acknowledge that he is lost, undone, weak, helpless, and hopeless (Eph. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 3:9-23), and most are unwilling to do this.
3. To become and be a Christian one must deny self (submit to the will of Christ), take up his cross (be willing to die for Christ), and follow Christ (follow His example, obey His commandments) (Matt. 16:24). Few are willing to do this.
4. To become and be a Christian one must set his affections or mind on and seek the things that are above, not the things that are upon this earth (Col. 3:1-2). Spiritual things must become paramount in his life. Most are unwilling to go this far.
5. To become and be a Christian one must put Christ, the kingdom of God, and God’s righteousness before all else and all others, before self, family, job, pleasures, possessions, hobbies (Matt. 6:19-21, 33; 10:37). Most will not think it that important.
6. To become and be a Christian one must live a life that is different, that stands out, that is contrary to the life that most people around him are living (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:17—7: 1; 1 Pet. 2:11-12).
7. To become and be a Christian one must accept as true many things (God is; God created the universe and man; the Bible is the inspired word of God; Jesus is the Son of God; man’s spirit is eternal; there is life and existence beyond this life) that most of the scientific world repudiates (Heb. 11:6; Acts 17:24-25, 31; Jn. 8:24; 5:28-29; Ps. 14:1; 53:1). Most are unwilling to conclude that learned men can be wrong.
8. To become and be a Christian one must be willing to suffer persecution, to suffer in spite of doing right, to suffer for doing right (2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 10:22, 24-25; 1 Pet. 2:20-22; 3:17). So many fit the description given by Jesus in Matthew 13:20-21.

Incentives

It would be neither wise not just to close this article with no consideration of the “other side.” Our attention should not be so focused on the “barriers” and “obstacles” that we cannot see the incentives, the dividends, the blessings and benefits of becoming and being Christians. Those who become and live as Christians have:

1. Freedom from the bondage of sin; deliverance from the love of sin, the guilt of sin, the practice of sin, and the punishment due sin. God has forgiven and received them. Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 6:17-18, 3-6.
2. The approval and fellowship of the Father in heaven, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God. Reconciled unto God through Christ and His cross, one is united with God in Christ, rather than separated and alienated. He has the peace that passes all understanding. Eph. 2:13; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 1:3-4; Phil. 4:7.
3. The benefit of continued, needed cleansing from sin, 1 Jn. 1:7-9; 2: 1-2.
4. All spiritual blessings, Eph. 1:3.
5. The assurances that are given to and the promises that are made to the children of God by their Father. Matt. 5:6; 6:33; Heb. 13:5-6 (*“I will in nowise fail thee; neither will I in anywise forsake thee”*); 11:6; 2 Pet. 1:2-4.
6. The only life that can provide lasting joy and happiness, Phil. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:6-8.
7. The association, fellowship and love of the finest people on the earth — fellow-Christians, Rom. 12:10; 1 Jn. 3:16; 2 Cor. 12:15.
8. The power and strength to overcome temptations, to fulfill responsibilities, to use opportunities, to bear burdens, to endure persecutions, Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; 9:8-10.
9. The hope of life everlasting. 1 Jn. 2:25; Rom. 6:23; Titus 1:2.

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