

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF CHRISTIANITY **(Luke 5:26)**

I. Distinctiveness is the power of Christianity.

- A. Loss of distinctiveness is the loss of power.
 - 1. The power of the church is not where it is like other religions but where it is unlike them.
 - 2. It is through its distinctiveness that it exerts its influence.
- B. Jesus saw this in His own life but also pointed it out to His followers.
 - 1. Matthew 5:47.
 - 2. Jesus was not satisfied with His disciples who simply would do what others did.
 - 3. In a real way, we are only the disciples of Jesus when we go beyond others.
- C. If we cannot do more for the world than other religions then we should question whether or not we are the Lord's church more than in name only.
- D. Does the church answer more questions, meet more needs, offer more comfort and give souls more strength than other religions?
- E. If not, something is wrong.

II. The church is distinctive because it has a divine message.

- A. The message of the Lord's church is not of human origin (Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:3-5).
- B. This message was conceived in the mind of God, thus making it reliable.
- C. Other religions may have some truth, but the Lord's church is not mixed with any of man's doctrines.
 - 1. This gave the church great power in the days of the apostles because it was so distinct from anything then present.
 - 2. It gave it power during the Restoration.
 - 3. It has the same power today and we don't need to forget that.

III. The church is distinctive in that it allows a person to see himself as he is.

- A. The gospel is the mirror for the soul (James 1:23-25).
- B. We can't truly know ourselves until we have seen ourselves in the gospel.
 - 1. 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
 - 2. 2 Peter 3:11.
- C. Christianity allows one to see how far short of the divine goal he is and causes us not to be satisfied with where we are.
- D. A Christian should never feel as if he has reached the goal (Philippians 3:13-14).

IV. The church is distinctive in its ideals and values.

- A. The world, and many who claim affiliation with Christ, see gain as the ultimate end of this life.
 - 1. True Christianity does not allow one to do this.
 - 2. Nothing is more important than the knowledge of Jesus (Philippians 3:10).
- B. Birth, wealth, name, fame, social prominence, athletic prowess, all fall away into nothingness before the cross.

- C. Nothing in this world is comparable to the salvation of one's soul (Luke 9:25).
- V. The church is distinctive in that it attaches importance to each soul.**
- A. The church is not guided by worldly customs or standards.
 - 1. The church is to have the view of Jesus.
 - 2. Each soul, no matter how vile it may be, is precious because it is going to spend eternity somewhere.
 - B. The church believes that Jesus died for all (Hebrews 2:9).
 - C. Because of this fact, every person must be viewed as a potential joint-heir with Jesus.
- VI. The church is distinctive in its conduct.**
- A. Christians love their enemies, and love is a verb (Luke 6:27).
 - 1. Anyone can love the ones that love them (Luke 6:32).
 - 2. We must be distinctive from the world in this.
 - 3. Do we do like sinners and only love those that love us?
 - B. Christians do good to those that hate them and mistreat them.
 - 1. Even sinners do good to the ones who treat them well (Luke 6:32).
 - 2. Are we distinctive in that we treat well those that mistreat us?
 - C. Jesus said that love was a mark of discipleship: Am I His disciple (John 13:35)?
 - D. Paul told the Corinthians he loved them more even if they loved him less (2 Corinthians 12:15): is that the way we are?
 - E. Christians are humble and not seeking glory or honor, being more interested in the work than the position (1 Timothy 3:1).
 - 1. This man is seeking to serve, not seeking an office.
 - 2. Even right before His death, the disciples of Jesus were thinking about position and not serving.
 - 3. They had to have Jesus wash their feet before they began to understand the commandment.
- VII. The church is distinctive in that it finds joy in affliction.**
- A. Peter and John suffered and rejoiced (Acts 5:41).
 - B. Colossians 1:24 - are we distinctive or do we constantly complain when things are difficult.
 - C. 2 Corinthians 12:10 - doesn't this sound strange even to many who are in the Lord's church?
 - 1. If it does, it is because we haven't realized Christianity is distinctive.
 - 2. This could be a large part of the reason we are without more influence and appeal than we are.

From a sermon by Bobby Gayton