



July 19, 2007

## What's In A Name

This past week, Ted Strickland, the Governor of Ohio, signed a bill into law that removes the term “mental retardation” from State level offices and local county boards that have served the developmentally challenged population since the mid 1960's. The reason for this has been the social connotation that the words have taken on. Children, and adults, taunt one another with the term, using it in a non complementary fashion. Due to the negative stigma attached to it, citizens with such disabilities have been given a measure of respect by this mandate. In social, ethnic and global cultures there are names that have taken on meanings that were never intended at their inception. The term “Christian” is one of these that has taken on so many meanings and, in the minds of some, has become something they would rather stay away from. The name was used by early Christians to refer to believers. **“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11.26).** The name meant something distinctive. The term implied that one had rendered true obedience to God through Christ and they held to the doctrine that was being taught by the apostles and others inspired to teach and reveal the word. Tracing the history of the church through the first century onward we find that it was not long before false doctrines began to be taught. Paul, Peter and John address this in their various writings, warning Christians to remain faithful to the word that was taught. Jude writes, **“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3).** The Gospel was paid for by the blood of Christ and contained the instructions that when followed will save one's soul from eternal death. For this reason the integrity of the word is foremost in the scriptures. As Christians today we are under the same directive, **“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 1.13).** I have had some folks ask me what kind of Christian I am, desiring to know what particular system of theological thought I subscribe

to. The answer of course is that I, and others like me, strive to be New Testament Christians, defining our lives, beliefs and activities by the doctrine found in the New Testament. Paul states, **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph 4.4-6).** The scriptures will produce only true Christians. New Testament Christians will worship in spirit and in truth. Christ told the Samaritan woman, **“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (John 4.23).** This was in answer to questions about how one should worship the Lord. When we hold to the doctrine presented in the scriptures we achieve the unity that Christ prayed for **(John 17.20-21).** True to human nature there are those who did not hold to the inspired word. Confusion and the rise of various doctrines of human origin have so clouded the nature of what a Christian really is that some reject the notion that we can understand the word of God at all or reach any agreement in religious matters. Others have become so liberal in their religious practice that almost anything goes as long as one professes to love God. Christ stated that if we love him we will keep his commandments **(John 14.15).** The religious confusion over what a Christian is, and the misdeeds of those claiming to be such, have cast a shadow over the sanctity and purity of the name Christian and what it means to declare oneself as a follower of Christ. The abuses of humanity against God, by rejecting the pure teachings of the scriptures are not acts of faith, but rather, are statements of opposition to the only thing that will save us. We call upon all who claim to be Christians to search their minds, and the scriptures and hold to the purity of the Gospel call. The name means everything.

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