

# Is a Worldly Christian Saved?

A Christian is someone who places their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is an event known as your spiritual birthday (II Corinthians 6:2). The day the Lord takes your spirit to heaven is also an event (Acts 7:59). What takes place in between these two events is called the sanctification process.

Many of the youth I work with profess faith in Jesus Christ and tell me they are going to heaven. They know the gospel and believe the Lord will save them. But then you look at the way they live and wonder if they are saved. The sanctification process doesn't seem to be working.

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he told them they were worldly or infants in Christ (I Corinthians 3:1-2). He said they were "in Christ" but not living by the Spirit. His question to these believers later on in the chapter was, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" These worldly Christians didn't need to be reconverted because the Holy Spirit was already present in their lives. Paul lists the sinners who will not inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9-10) but then says that is who some of them were, not are.

Some pastors and church leaders struggle with telling a worldly Christian that they belong to the family of God. What they feel like saying is, "You're not a believer until you repent of your sin." I became a Christian at a young age so all of the sins I needed to repent of came after my conversion. Obedience to Christ was something I learned later on, not a good work I needed to make me feel like a Christian.

Requiring a person to walk in victory over sin prior to salvation is called "front loading" the gospel. The gospel wouldn't be good news if a sinner had to do that. Everyone would wonder when they were victorious enough. If you are honest, you didn't always obey the Lord early on in your Christian life. You struggled with temptation and asking God to save you over and over didn't help.

If you tell a worldly Christian they are not a believer, they will probably agree. Then what? If you present the gospel again, most of them will respond and say, "I really mean it this time!" But victory over the power of sin is not the result of human motivation or self-effort. In Galatians 3:3, Paul rebuked the believers for thinking their own strength could cause them to obey the law.

Baby Christians struggle to let go of wrong behaviors because memories of sinning are still recent. Their worldly lifestyle is just starting to be replaced. The sanctification process has begun in a new believer's life if they are bothered by their sin and desire to please the Lord.

Grace is the desire and the power to do what pleases God (Philippians 2:13) and sanctification is the grace of God at work in your life. The Holy Spirit inspires you to live out your new life and your part is to believe what the bible says you are able to do. There is a new lifestyle the Holy Spirit produces as you walk by faith, maintain your fellowship with the Lord, and abide in Jesus Christ.

God's children who resist the work of the Holy Spirit will respond when God disciplines them. The person who never grows spiritually probably didn't experience the new birth.