

God's People Are Radical

What it means to be “radical.” As you think about the few Jesus says will be saved, we need to picture them in the way the Bible does. Otherwise, it is easy to deceive ourselves into thinking that it does not cost as much as it really does to be part of the few. In fact, I believe it is accurate to describe the “few” as being “radical.” Although this word is used in various ways in society today (sometimes referring to crazy and/or violent people), the word simply refers to being far different from what is considered “normal,” have views that are far different from most, and to be devoted to a cause. This definition fits with how God's people should be.

Jesus Christ was “radical.” Consider Jesus's life in comparison with the world. Was He “normal” or did He stand out as being far different – even from the religious people? Jesus is described as being the Light of the world who was hated by the world because He exposed their evil (John 1:9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 15:18)! So, His life showed a distinct contrast between the ways of God and the ways of the world – as different as light is from darkness.

Disciples of Christ must follow His “radical” steps. Jesus was the most “radical” person to ever live on earth! Therefore, those who desire to follow in Jesus's steps will also be viewed as being “radical” by the world – including by many religious people (Luke 6:40; 1 John 2:3-6). It is simply unreasonable to think that those who follow Christ can have a cozier relationship with the world than Jesus had! In fact, Jesus's disciples are called to also be lights shining in a dark world (Matthew 5:14-16; Ephesians 5:8-11). So, the few who follow Jesus will be considered “radical” because their lives reflect the righteousness of Christ rather than living according to the “normal” ways of the world. As a result, Jesus told His disciples that the world would hate them just as it hated Him (John 15:18-21).

Conclusion

Are you among the radical few? The Bible clearly teaches that most will not choose to put so much trust in God that they will obey and sacrifice in the way that pleases God. Although we often fall short of what God wants us to be, we should still recognize the Bible's picture of the few and do the very best we can to strive to imitate Jesus Christ in our own lives!

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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Jesus's words in Matthew 7:13-14 are some of the most sobering in all Scripture. The fact is that few will be saved from their sins and have eternal life in Heaven. So, this means the majority of people will be eternally condemned to Hell. Surely, this ought to cause everyone to evaluate whether they are part of the group identified as the “few.” Although it is difficult, it is possible to be part of this group. But, this requires some serious commitment, sacrifice, and diligence. Therefore, we must investigate what the Scriptures teach about the “few” to know how to be part of this special group (as we'll examine throughout this series). For, it is not up to us to decide what makes people part of the “few.”

The purpose of this lesson is to learn that few will be saved by considering that God's people have always been part of the few, are still few today, how to become part of the few, and the “radical” nature of the few.

God's People Have Always Been Few

Noah. During the time Noah lived on earth, the world was so full of wickedness God was sorry He had created mankind and determined to destroy them by means of a worldwide flood (Genesis 6:5-7). Yet, Noah and his family found favor in God's sight, pleased God, and were saved (Genesis 6:8-9; 2 Peter 2:5).

Lot. When Abraham separated from his nephew Lot, Lot chose to live in the plain of the Jordan, pitching his tent as far as the city of Sodom (a wicked city, Genesis 13:10-13). After the Lord revealed He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, not even ten righteous people were found

(Genesis 18:16-33). Yet, the only righteous few were Lot and his family (2 Peter 2:6-8).

Joshua and Caleb. After 12 spies were sent into the Canaan land, ten of the spies brought back a negative and faithless report (Numbers 13:31) and convinced the Israelites not to take the land. The Lord punished these people and they died in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb brought back a report that demonstrated faith of being able to take the land with God's help (Number 13:30; 14:6-10, 24) – and God brought these into the land.

David. When the Philistine army challenged the Israelites to fight against their champion warrior (a giant named Goliath, 1 Samuel 17), none of the Israelites would face Goliath in battle because they were all afraid. After forty days passed with no one answering this challenge, a young shepherd heard Goliath's challenge and volunteered to fight because he believed God would rescue him (v. 37) – and God caused him to be victorious, using only a stone and sling!

Elijah and the 7,000. The people of Israel had rebelled against God and the covenant they had made with God. The king (Ahab) and his wife (Jezebel) were even putting God's prophets to death. When Elijah heard that Jezebel would try to kill him, he fled and prayed to God (1 Kings 19:10). Yet, God told him he was not alone (1 Kings 19:18). Still, only a relative few among Israel were faithfully following God.

The undefiled in Sardis. Jesus said the church in Sardis was dead, while having a reputation of being alive (Revelation 3:1-3). Yet, even among these professing Christians who were not pleasing God, there were a few people who had not defiled themselves and served Jesus (v. 4)!

God's People Are Few Today

Many invited, few chosen. Consider Matthew 22:14. In a parable, Jesus demonstrated how God has invited many people, but most are not willing to come. Particularly, the parable seems to apply to how the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus and the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. Still, many people are called/invited by the gospel (through its message being preached), but few are chosen because they do not accept God's invitation!

Many lost, few saved. Consider Matthew 7:13-14. There are only two possible paths: The broad path that leads to eternal destruction and the narrow path that leads to eternal life. Jesus says it is difficult to walk on the path that leads to life. So, most will not walk on it. Few will choose to make sacrifices now in order to be rewarded later.

Many deceived, few walk in truth. Consider Matthew 7:15-20. Both false prophets and false teachers are a threat to those who are interested in serving God. The danger is that many will think they are following God, when they really are not. Unfortunately, many deceivers have gone into the world who do not really have God (2 John 1:7-11), and many will follow their destructive ways (2 Peter 2:2). There are only few who walk in the truth.

Many profess, few obey. Consider Matthew 7:21-23. There are many who claim to follow Jesus today (i.e. to believe in Him, be part of His church, obey Him, etc.). Yet, Jesus says many will profess Him as Lord who will be eternally condemned. For, just believing in Him, calling Him "Lord," and doing some good things in His name is not enough to be counted among the saved. Instead, it is the one who does the will of God who will enter His kingdom.

Many hear, few do. Consider Matthew 7:24-27. Many will hear and not do what God's word says. This is like the one who builds a house on sand as opposed to one who builds a house on a rock. In fact, the majority of people who hear the gospel of Christ will not put it into practice in their lives (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23).

Becoming Part Of The Few

Impossible without Jesus. We have all sinned and separated ourselves from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). As a result, we deserve eternal separation from God in Hell (Revelation 21:8). And, there was no way to earn our way back into a right relationship with God. The only way is through Jesus (Titus 3:3-7)!

What God requires. Although Jesus has provided everyone the opportunity to be saved (Titus 2:11), God will only save those who have true obedient faith (Romans 3:26; Hebrews 5:9; James 2:24, 26). To be saved, God requires you to hear God's word (Romans 10:17; Acts 18:8), believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (John 8:24; Romans 10:9-10), repent of your sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), be immersed in water (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21), and remain faithful (Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Jesus's one true church. Jesus would only build one church that would consist of the few who will be saved (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41, 47). Upon your obedience to the gospel's plan of salvation, God adds you to this church (and to none other). This is the one body of Jesus Christ that has been purchased with Jesus's blood (Ephesians 4:4; Acts 20:28).