

Christianity Demands More

By Steve Higginbotham

The story is told of a man who was arrested for getting involved in a drunken brawl at a bar. When it came time for this man's court appearance, the judge asked, "Sir, what do you have to say for yourself?" The man looked directly at the judge and said, "Your honor, I'm not guilty. My reputation in this community is spotless."

The judge then asked, "Sir, do you have anyone who can vouch for your character?" The man looked around the courtroom and pointed at the Sheriff saying, "He can vouch for me." Upon hearing that, the Sheriff stood and said, "Your honor, I've never even seen this man before." The man then turned to the judge with an "I told you so" look and said, "See your honor. I've lived here for 15 years and the Sheriff has never even seen me. Isn't that character enough?"

While we may smile at the above story, there may be more truth in it than we would like to acknowledge. I'm afraid many people have chosen to live their lives by the same philosophy. They measure their life by the avoidance of sins, vices, and bad habits. They suppose that as long as they refrain from certain activities, they are good citizens with a character to match.

However, Christianity is more demanding than this philosophy of life. Christian character is not measured just by the things we avoid, but also by the things we do. Christianity is active, not passive. It demands participation, not just avoidance.

Christian character is formed, not simply by keeping ourselves out of the gutter, but also by helping others out of the gutter. Christian character is developed, not simply by avoiding such sins as lying, stealing, gossiping, and fornication, but by engaging oneself in such virtues as honesty, mercy, love, compassion, and forgiveness.

Take a look at your life. Take a long, reflective look. What do you see? Do you find that your character is based primarily by the things you don't do? Or can you look at your life and honestly say that your character is based more on your active pursuit of Christian virtues?