

Marks of a true disciple

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While preparing the sermon for this Sunday I also was preparing a sermon for next week in a different church.

After having done already quite a lot of work on both sermons God prompted me to combine the 2 sermons into one, so both churches could profit from the combined message.

As a result of this combination I also had to change the title of the sermon and it became a bit longer.

So let's go to the next sheet to get a quick overview of the things we will look at today.

Marks of a true disciple

1. He / she is born again
2. He / she depends completely on God
3. The Word of God dwells in him/her richly
4. He / she is transformed by the renewal of his/her mind
5. He / she grows in holiness

You see that my list is not very long.

But that doesn't mean that these are easy things to do.

In fact, they are so difficult that we cannot even do them just by ourselves. By ourselves we neither have the knowledge nor the power to do these things.

So, let's start looking at the first item.

Is Born Again (1)

- John 3:5-7
- 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Many people consider themselves to be a Christian because they were born in a Christian family. Even I myself made that mistake in the past. But the Lord Jesus Christ, in his discussion with Nicodemus, makes it very clear that that is not the way to become a disciple. He makes it quite clear that we must be born again. And with that He does not refer to reincarnation, He refers to a spiritual birth.

And that happens not because of what we do, but because of what God does through His Spirit in our lives. In John 6:44 the Lord Jesus says that no one comes to Him unless the Father, who sent Him, draws Him.

The result of being born again we see on the next sheet.

Is Born Again (2)

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

As we, through being born again, have become a new creation, it is logical that things must change in our lives.

This is what we will look at in most of the sheets to come.

We will start with the necessity to depend on God.

Depends completely on God (1)

- Proverbs 3:5-8
- 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;
- 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.
- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
- 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.

If you look at the ways of the world, you'll find out that they are completely opposing this idea.

In many bookshops you'll find a big number of so-called self-help books on all kinds of subjects.

Also, many people will really admire so-called self-made men.

But the Bible stresses again and again that we must depend on the Lord, and not on our own wisdom and strength.

That is clearly expressed in these verses.

The next Scripture shows us another reason why we should do that.

Depends completely on God (2)

- Ezekiel 36:25-27
- 25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
- 26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
- 27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

In Romans chapter 7 the apostle Paul speaks about the inward struggle he is experiencing between his desire to live according to God's ways and the ongoing pressure of his old fleshly nature to just do things in his old own ways.

In these verses we see some very important promises of God regarding the things He wants to do for us and in us.

We already did see that the Father is involved in drawing us to Jesus for the purpose of saving us. In these verses we see that He continues to work in us.

Thinking we can live the new life in Christ in our own strength will just get us frustrated by our failures.

Let's go to the next item.

Let the Word of God dwell in you richly (1)

- Psalm 119:148, 162
- 148 My eyes are awake through the *night* watches, That I may meditate on Your word.
- 162 I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure.
- Colossians 3:16
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

God wants to use His Word to change us.

But that means that we must do three things:

- Seriously study His Word
- Ask Him to show us how various things apply to us
- Apply it in our lives

Psalm 119 speaks about the importance of the laws of God

The verse from Colossians shows us how important it is for us as a community. All of us must be involved in teaching and admonishing one another. It is not just the task for those that God has given a specific task within the Body of Christ. All members have got to fulfil their duty in this aspect in order to strengthen the Body of Christ.

Let's also take a quick look at Psalm 19:7-11

Let the Word of God dwell in you richly (2)

Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired *are* *they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.

Maybe you think, wait a minute, we're not under the law, we're under grace! And that is true! But it doesn't mean that we cannot learn anything from the law.

Let's look at a couple of things the apostle Paul has to say about the law.

We will start with some verses from Romans chapter 7.

Let the Word of God dwell in you richly (3)

Romans 7:5-7

5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

One of the things God will use the law for is to teach us what He considers right and what He considers wrong.

In our way to holiness we need to learn these things, so therefore we still must study also the Old Testament.

In Romans chapter 6 Paul also already wrote about the Law. We'll look at several verses from that chapter also.

Let the Word of God dwell in you richly (4)

Romans 6:8-11

- 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,
- 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.
- 10 For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.
- 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What we see in verse 10 should remind us what the Angel of God said to Joseph in a dream as he was considering to divorce from Mary quietly, as she was pregnant before they were married.

Through His death on the cross the Lord Jesus Christ was going to set free from the power of sin those who believe in Him.

And as our baptism symbolizes our dying with Christ and being resurrected in newness of life, there is no place in our lives for sin anymore.

The apostle Paul continues to speak about this matter in the verses on the next 2 sheets also.

Let the Word of God dwell in you
richly (5)

Romans 6:12-14

- 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.
- 13 And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.
- 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

In Romans chapter 7 the apostle Paul tells us about his own struggle regarding these matters.

The biggest struggle in our lives as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is the struggle inside us between our old sinful nature and our new life in Christ.

According to the apostle Paul sin should not be controlling us.

And he continues his teaching on these matters in the following verses of Romans chapter 6.

Let the Word of God dwell in you
richly (6)

Romans 6:15-18

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

17 But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Being saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't leave any space for us to be controlled by sin.

In the strength given to us by God we really need to resist its urge in our lives.

And God will give us the strength we need, especially when we confess that we cannot do these things in our own strength.

Now, let's move on to the next item.

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind (1)

- Romans 12:1-2
- 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.
- 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

If there is one thing the Old Testament makes very clear unto us than it is the fact that just having good laws does not automatically transform people into Godly people.

The first step towards transformation is being born again, as the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us so clearly in John chapter 3. Without this step true transformation is impossible.

But our transformation should not stop there.

The next step is to get the garbage of the world out of our minds and replace it with the instructions from God as we find them in the Bible. But just knowing the Word of God isn't enough. It must be applied also.

The apostle Paul gives us some very clear indications regarding these things in his letter to the Colossians.

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind (2)

- Colossians 3:8-11
- 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.
- 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,
- 10 and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

Verses 8 and 9 give us quite a nice list of traits we need to get rid of.

And I believe that is not such an easy thing to do.

We really need God to accomplish that in us.

And the same thing is true for the things we see on the next sheet.

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind (3)

- Colossians 3:12-15
- 12 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;
- 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*.
- 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.
- 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Again the question: do you believe we can do this just in our own strength? I certainly believe that it is impossible for us, we really need God to work these things out in our lives. Therefore we need to depend on Him to guide us in every aspect of our lives.

Let's go to the last item on our list.

Grows in Holiness (1)

1 Peter 1:13-16

- 13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance;
- 15 but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct,
- 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

The apostle Peter reminds us in these verses that we are to be holy, as God is holy.

Very often we are told that being holy means to be set apart for service unto God. And while that is true, and we can see that very clearly in both the Old and the New Testament, it is not all that there is to it. It is not by accident that God tells us to be holy as He is holy.

One thing we know about God is that He is perfect in all His ways. We see that also in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in Romans 8:29 we read that as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we are predestined to be conformed to His image.

But this is not the only reason why we should be holy. Another reason we see in the next verse.

Grows in Holiness (2)

1 Peter 2:4-5

- 4 Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious,
- 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

As we learn from these verses, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we are a holy priesthood unto God.

When you check the Old Testament for the requirements for the priests as well as for their duties, you'll find out that those were very specific, including rules for marriage etc.

And the rules for the High Priest were even more strict.

Being a holy priesthood in these days gives us also various responsibilities. We must show unto the world how God intends us to live together in a loving and righteous way.

Let's go to a quick and short recapitulation.

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We need to keep in mind that all these things are not an optional part of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that they are indeed essential. We need to take these things we have been looking at very serious.

My friends, God wants to work out these things in our lives.

But will we let Him do that? Do we want Him to do that?

Our answers to these questions basically indicate if we are a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Shall we pray?