

BC 29:2; Phil 3:12-14 – Eight Things that Mark the True Christian

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: There are all kinds of fake products on the market. There are fake perfumes, fake leather, fake brand name clothes, etc. A real Louis Vuitton purse can cost \$4,400.00 or \$200.00, if it is not so real. Even so, **in most of these fake products you can lose money, but not all of them are as dangerous.**

There are times when getting fake things can be dangerous – even deadly. Some **Chinese baby milk powder had melamine**. And a few years ago there were some **fake chemotherapy medicines**. Some died after taking those medicines.

The most deadly fake thing in the world is a fake Christian. A fake Christian can be in a church with all the right marks (**faithful preaching, proper administration of the Sacraments, and strict Christian discipline**), but in practice his life is completely different. **He leads many to hell while having a nice form.** But God wants you to learn what a true Christian is like.

Our headings are:

What our Belgic Confession Teaches

What the Bible Additionally Teaches

Our goals are: **That you will know, believe, and show the true marks of redeemed Christians for Christ's glory.**

With respect to those who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks of Christians; namely, **by faith**, and when, having received Jesus Christ the only Savior, **they avoid sin**, **follow after righteousness** **love the true God and their neighbor**, **neither turn aside to the right or left**, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof. But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain in them great infirmities; **but they fight against them** through the Spirit all the days of their life, continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they have remission of sins, through faith in Him.

What our Confession Teaches

1. True Christians have the one true faith, a genuine faith, Sola Fide in Christ.

a. Another word for genuine is sincere. Sincere comes from 2 Latin terms: sine and cere, meaning "without wax." "Long ago, **a potter would often put his seal, or stamp, upon a completed vessel with the words sine cere.** This meant that to his knowledge there was no flaw in that work. If a potter **did crack a vessel**, he would carefully **patch that flawed vase or bowl by filling in the crack with wax.** Then he would **glaze it over.** But it did not merit the stamp sine cere, "without wax," because it was not a flawless piece of pottery."

(Dieleman) This is the idea of what **a sincere Christian is: He is whole and free of cracks.** True Christians with true faith rest on God, lean on Christ, and look to Him alone for grace and salvation.

b. Since genuine faith is based on knowledge, Reformed churches have always insisted that new Christians must **be taught the doctrines of the Scripture** before and after baptism so Christians can grow. **More truth taught and believed more faith is created.**

In fact, Apostle Paul reminded Timothy in **1Timothy 1:5**, that a sincere faith protects from falling into false doctrines.

2. True Christians continue to flee from sin, which is an act of faith.

They see the receipt of their ownership – the marks on Jesus hands and side - so they learn that they must not go back to the things of this world.

What comes to your mind when you hear the command “flee from sin?” The first thing that probably comes to your mind is Joseph in Potiphar's house. **Consider what Paul said to the Romans and to Timothy!**

Romans 6:1-2 - What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! **How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**

The implication of this rhetorical question was: “I won’t! I’ll live differently.” My baptism or my church membership won’t save me! The Apostle Paul stated it even more strongly.

2 Timothy 2:19...` Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

Galatians 5:24 ...those who are Christ’s **have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.

Dieleman: When Chrysostom was arrested, the Roman emperor sought to make the Greek Christian deny his faith. But the emperor was unsuccessful. So the emperor discussed with his advisors what they could do to this prisoner. "Shall I **put him in a dungeon?**" the emperor asked. "No," one of his counselors replied, "For he'll be glad to go. He **longs for the quietness** where he can delight in the mercies of his God." "Then **he shall be executed!**" said the emperor. "No," came the answer, "For he'll **be glad to die.** He declares that in the event of death, he will be in the presence of the Lord." "Well, what shall we do then?" the ruler asked. The counselor replied, "There's only one thing that will cause him pain. **Make him sin. He's afraid of nothing but sin.**"

The Christian must also separate himself from wickedness in order to protect his duty.

2Thessalonians 3:6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord

Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

When you flee from sin, **let the joy of the Lord fill your life. Maybe when the world sees you having joy in sadness they will ask about your God.**

Don't act like you were baptized with vinegar or lime juice.

3. True Christians Pursue righteousness

a. Pursue means "to go after with full force."

1Timothy 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and **pursue righteousness**, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

2Timothy 2:22 **Flee also youthful lusts**; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1John 1:7 - But if we **walk in the light** as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Philippians 3:12 - Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; **but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**

So if you are interested in a guy or a gal...ask this question: Is he or she pursuing righteousness? The right answer will guarantee you happiness!!!

b. There is no option to be slothful. To be lazy is to die.

c. Be ready to die for pursuing what you believe. De Bres, the Confession writer, was put to death for celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as the Bible teaches.

4. True Christians love God and their neighbors.

This is how you are able to pursue righteousness.

John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, **if you have love for one another.**

1John 4:20-21 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: **that he who loves God must love his brother also.**

Faith, prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, understanding-all mean nothing apart from love (1

Cor 13). Even the best theology, the most carefully written Creeds and Confessions, and the most beautiful sermons, mean nothing without love. And this is a perpetual battle.

Romans 7:15 - For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; **but what I hate, that I do.**

Galatians 5:17 - For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, **so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

5. True Christians are focused on truth, not turning to the right or the left. Sola Scriptura.

They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him (OT & NT.)

Your better doctrine must make you love better.

Acts 17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and **searched the Scriptures daily** to find out whether these things were so.

1Thessalonians 5:21 **Test all things;** hold fast what is good.

You must not get hung up on useless conversations, however.

1Timothy 6:20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—

What the Bible Additionally Teaches

1. True Christians will join the church. (Confessions are dated so we have to add more.)

So don't wait for a perfect church before you join it. Christians aren't perfect.

a. Rome teaches is pure so as long as you are baptized you will be saved.

But the example of the mixed impure church was obvious during the time of Jesus. Jesus showed that the church was not perfect and he still wanted people to join.

Psalm 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath **lifted up his heel against me.**

This referred to Judas. He walked with Jesus for 3 ½ years. He infiltrated the church did his dastardly deed. But Jesus kept him there until he showed this true self. So the church is imperfect, but you must be a part of it.

Individual members of the church and the elders of the church will always have many

weaknesses and shortcomings. Like many of the imperfect foods we eat, we have rat hairs - like our chocolate bars, and 20 maggots in our mushrooms. Yet God separated you to be his children, and you are to stay in the church as he cleans you out. This is why Paul referred to the sinful **people as the church at Corinth...or the church at Ephesus** – imperfect though they were.

b. Anabaptists teach you have to be literally pure before you could join the church. You join the church to be mothered after being an orphan. You need training. If you are perfectly trained you don't need the church! **The church is your mother if God is your Father.**

2. The true Christian won't deny that the church is full of hypocrites, but will make it clear that all our imperfections were paid for by Jesus.

Rather, we would encourage those who recognize their sins to come to the same cross as you for grace. Sola Gratia.

3. The true Christian will want others to join the church.

The church is not for the perfect. Come, dear sinner, come as you are. You and your children will find grace in abundance.

Conclusion:

Christians are known by their **genuine faith** – a faith that works – a faith that makes them **flee from sin** – a faith that makes them **flee to Christ for help and pursue righteousness** – a faith that makes them **love God and their neighbor** – a **faith that makes them study the Word of God for truth,** and **a faith that makes them join the church, acknowledge its imperfections,** and yet **bring people to her!** Christians are never perfect, but they **strive to live to please God.**

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Displaying true Christianity is not an end in itself; it has a purpose. Soli Deo Gloria – the glory of God alone.

3. So display Christ so the lost will come and give God the glory. Someone said that **the best argument for Christianity is Christians. Yet the opposite is also true. The strongest argument against becoming a Christian is Christians, Christians who** lack evidence of Christ. And display Christ so fellow Christians will be encouraged to grow closer to God.

3. Because of whose you are through his blood on the cross, may you then be moved to be a true blessings to your fellow brothers and sisters in Jesus. May you never forget the motivation of the cross.

Finally, if you don't have faith – a confident trust, based on knowledge – in Christ, you are not of his church. Your home is hell. There you will join all those who have rejected the opportunity to be saved. But if you look to Jesus and ask him for help, he will give you all you need so you can become his child.

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Readings: BC 29:5-8; Phil 3:12-14

Sermon Title: Eight Things that Mark the True Christian

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Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

BC29 Paragraphs 5-8

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