

John 17:17  
*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

All of these changes should engender humility and stop us ever boasting again about ourselves, because, all the time these things are happening to us, underneath everything, we're still no better than anyone else:

Romans 3:27  
*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

It is very easy to see selfishness in others. We see plenty of it in others every day, even without the need of an experience of God changing our heart. But it's only after God has really changed us from the inside that we begin to see it in ourselves. This is what we essentially have to deal with in this life. Ourselves. We can't change others. We can't even change ourselves. But if God is living within us, we can now hate our selfish nature and want to be changed by God from within, even though we all too often still fail by letting self get in the way.

This is the real, authentic, true Christian life. It is exactly how the apostle Paul describes it as he said about himself:

Romans 7:14-26  
*I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I*

*myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

This is not a description of a person before God changed him, because there was no battle going on at all in his soul, then. Neither can we say it was something else not relevant to the Christian today, such as Paul, a Jew, telling us of his experience in relation to the Jewish law. No. It's a description of the true Christian whom God has truly changed, with the spiritual battle against the flesh continually going on within him until he dies.

The more we realise the truth about the depth of our sinful nature, the more we realise our desperate need of a Saviour. A Saviour who doesn't just lightly forgive sin and then forget about it. So many religions have that idea. A forgiveness of sin that is so easy. Sin is far, far more serious than that. It needs atoning for. We need One to die in our place, as the only way to placate the wrath of God. That is exactly what Jesus Christ came into the world to do. And not only that, but He comes into the hearts of His people and changes them permanently from the inside. Not that we become better, but rather we see more and more the truth about ourselves, and more and more our need of Him if we are to do any good at all:

Matthew 1:21  
*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

2 Corinthians 5:21  
*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Galatians 2:20  
*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

This is the fundamental message of Christianity.

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## What is Truth?

### **Sin**

We all have a major problem. We are selfish. Self-centred. Living for me, me, me, my pleasures, my desires. As if I was the centre of the universe. Not just that, but we are so proud, thinking we are so much better than others. How arrogant! In fact, if the real truth be known, we are vile, stinking cesspits of iniquity deserving of eternal conscious torment in hell-fire forever.

Nobody is going to ever admit that, or even see themselves as being anything like that. By nature, we are far too proud to accept such a description of ourselves. Indeed, our modern world keeps on telling us that we must never think like that. We must have a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance and self-esteem. Otherwise, so they tell us, we will end up with some kind of mental problem.

But that's not true. Rather, it is those who at first agree with the world's assessment of themselves, and who then later realise that it is all wrong, who are more likely to end up with a mental problem, because they were originally taught a lie by their educators, people who they once trusted, only to find that they have been deceived.

The sooner we accept the truth about ourselves, the sooner we can get the help we need.

But we're not going to get help from men. They are too full of themselves, thinking how wonderful they are. They are the ones peddling this modern psychology in the first place. We need help from a far higher source, namely God. This is where the Bible comes in. The Bible is the only book which acknowledges the truth about human nature:

Genesis 6:5  
*And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Genesis 8:21  
*....the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....*

Job 40:4, 42:6

*Behold, I am vile.... Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Ecclesiastes 7:20

*For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*

Ecclesiastes 7:29

*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*

Jeremiah 17:9

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Mark 7:21-23

*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

Romans 3:10-18 (quoting from various Psalms)

*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

### **Salvation**

And the Bible also tells us that there is an answer. God has provided a way out of this mess. That's the most wonderful thing in the world. There is no need to despair! How do we avail ourselves of this way out? The way is very simple. Ask God.

Matthew 7:7,8

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that*

*asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

We don't need to do anything. As if we could impress God! We just need to simply ask. But we must be absolutely genuine in our seeking of Him, and **want** with all our heart to be changed:

Jeremiah 29:13

*And **ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.***

Hebrews 11:6

*But **without faith it is impossible to please him:** for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that **he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.***

When we do ask God for help in all sincerity, He will change us from the inside. This is what all of us most desperately need:

John 3:3

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***

2 Corinthians 5:17

***if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:** old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

We then have that most precious of things — a real relationship with the One True Living God, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who created us and upholds all things in His providence. We can communicate directly with Him. Tell Him everything. And the most wonderful thing is that God keeps and looks after His people. What a privilege! The world knows nothing of this. We should never take such a privilege lightly, but always take Him deadly seriously.

### **Sanctification**

Once we have been changed by God, we grow in this new faith:

2 Peter 3:18

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ....*

But what is this growth exactly? Many Christians think that, with the Lord's help, they are slowly getting better and better all the time. But this is a great mistake. And this has created much wrong thinking throughout church history.

Even so, we have still most definitely changed. We are far, far better people after having been changed by God than before. All thanks to the Lord at work within us. But we, in and of ourselves, never actually get better and better. Christians look for a far greater hope. A new body which cannot sin. But this is promised to us after we die, not here in this world, but in the next:

1 John 3:2

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

As long as we have these bodies, we are still the same vile sinners as ever we were:

Romans 7:25

*So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

So, if we're not getting better and better, how do we become different? In many ways:

- We began to learn more about God, and more about ourselves.
- We now want to live for God, not for ourselves any more.
- We are kept from the grosser sins that we used to have no qualms about, thanks to God giving us a far more sensitive conscience.
- We now love the law of God, no longer hate it and want to keep it, although we still fall so far short of this in ourselves.
- We now hate our own selfishness. Another incentive not to pander to it.
- We now grow in grace and knowledge
- We become more and more set apart from the world and it's ways: