

Study 0095

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE MARKETPLACE (5)

In our last study, we continued to look at who a Christian truly is, by considering the markers or identifiers by which such a person can be known. The study, and the exercise that we engaged in, was not meant only to help identify who a Christian is, but it was essentially to help us assess whether we are truly Christians! We noted that in spite of all that had been said about the historical antecedent of Christianity, a person is not a Christian just because he follows the Lord's teachings; neither is he one because he has forsaken all, including his own life; nor is he to be considered a Christian just because he has counted the cost, and is prepared to pay the price, whatever it may be (**1 Corinthians 13:1-3**); rather it is because certain significant markers or identifiers as established by the word of God, are present in his or her life (**Romans 2:28-29**)!

The most critical marker or identifier of a true Christian is that the Holy Spirit is in him (**Romans 8:1-9; John 7:37-39; 14:16-17**)! So crucial is this marker that if it is absent in the life of an individual, such an individual is not a Christian at all! And since the Holy Spirit is not visible to man, His presence can only be known by His manifestation in an individual's life as follows:

- (a) The evidence of the old sinful and fleshly nature no longer exists in him; only the display of the nature of God is present (**John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23**).
- (b) His obligation is totally to God and all that God stands for, having been called out of the world, separated from the flesh, and delivered from sin (**Genesis 12:1; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 4:17-24; 1 Peter 2:9; Romans 12:2**).
- (c) He proves Christ's ownership over him, having been redeemed by His blood, by submitting to His Lordship over him (**1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 7:23**).
- (d) He is unable and incapable of knowingly committing sin, neither can he live sinfully, because the Holy Spirit, Who cannot sin, is now in him (**1 John 3:4-10; Romans 6:1-7**).
- (e) He lives solely for God, and God, through Christ, lives in him, having died to the influence of sin, the flesh, and the world (**Romans 6:15-22; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 2:19-20**).
- (f) He has counted the cost of being a Christian, and has resolved never to return to the world, and, to fleshly and sinful living, even though it may cost him everything that he once was and once possessed (**Luke 14:25-27; John 3:1-9; 7:32, 45-51; 19:38-42**).
- (g) He is willing and ready to suffer for Christ and for the sake of the gospel (**1 Peter 4:12-19; Romans 8:16-18**).
- (h) His affection and love for God is unrivalled by any other, and it is evident (**Revelation 2:1-5; John 21:15-19; 1 John 2:15-16; James 4:4**)!
- (i) His devotion and dedication to doing the will of God is clearly manifest (**Matthew 7:21-23; 21:28-31; 1 Peter 4:1-2**).
- (j) He is led by the Spirit of God, and he walks therein (**Galatians 5:16-17, 25; Romans 8:14**).
- (k) The evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in an ever-increasing dimension is clearly manifest; and so is the absence of the works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-24; 2 Peter 1:3-11**).
- (l) He completely lives by the word of God, and is not a hypocrite (**Luke 6:46; John 8:31; James 1:22-25**).

From all that we noted, it is very clear that without the Holy Spirit in you, you are not a Christian, no matter what you may want to say to the contrary! For, without the Holy Spirit in you, all the other markers ((a)-(l) above) will either be absent, or, if any is ever observed, it will be fake! Besides, all the markers must be present; not just a few of them! Some people try to live like a Christian, only to discover that it is indeed a very tough thing to do, and one strewn with many frustrations along the way. But for someone within whom is the Holy Spirit, this is not the case, for all that he needs to live as a Christian in this dark world has been abundantly provided through the grace of God which is given to all those who believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation! We concluded that everything you are, and can be, as a Christian, is solely because of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you!

The Character of the Marketplace

A person who is not a Christian indeed, cannot be a Christian in the marketplace. This is because the nature or character of the marketplace either brings out the nature of God in you, or, the nature of the world, the flesh and sin in you. Thus, who you are on the inside is made manifest in the marketplace!

The terminology, ‘the marketplace’ as used here, is representative of any place where people of all walks of life and of every persuasion, transact and engage in their daily passions and pursuits, and where public discourse hold, and ideas of all sorts are bandied (**Proverbs 1:20-21; Matthew 23:7; Mark 7:4; Acts 17:17-21**). Also, the marketplace is not just a physical location, but it is in addition, the world system, which governs the way things are done among people who are under its control, the way such people should live, how they should spend and save money, how they are governed and by whom, how they learn and are taught, and so on. The Lord Jesus alluded to the contrariness of the world system in relation to God’s children as He prayed for His disciples in **John 17:14-18**. Indeed, the Holy Spirit says that as a Christian, you should “*Never give your hearts to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world-system, based as it is on men's primitive desires, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself. The world and all its passionate desires will one day disappear. But the man who is following God's will is part of the permanent and cannot die.*” (**1 John 2:15-17; Phillips NT**). From the above scripture verses in John’s gospel and first epistle, we note the following about the marketplace (the world system):

- (a) It operates in a manner that is contrary to the way God would want His children to operate;
- (b) It is not Christ-friendly, and so not tolerant of the Christian;
- (c) There is evil in it;
- (d) It is temporal and illusive, not permanent and enduring; and,
- (e) Its inclinations do not derive from God.

Something that the Lord Jesus said in His prayer to God about His disciples (past, present, and future) is that they should not be taken out of the world, but be sent into the world. It would have made more sense if, being that the world has the characteristics above, the Lord Jesus had asked His Father to take Christians out of the world. Instead, He prayed that they should rather, be kept from the corruption of the world! Why? This is because the world is the source of labourers for God’s vineyard and kingdom work (**Matthew 20:1-7**); He expects the Christian to go into it, and not be corrupted by it, and bring these potential labourers into His Father’s vineyard (**Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-14**)!

Another thing we want to note about the character of the marketplace is that it seeks to govern and influence everything that operates within it, including the sanctuary of God. So, the Lord Jesus had to make it unequivocal that although the marketplace and the sanctuary of God may co-exist (**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**), they cannot mix, become one, or be in agreement with each other (**2 Corinthians 6:14-17**). There is nothing wrong in engaging in merchandising or transacting business in the marketplace, but there is everything wrong in doing the same in the sanctuary of God (**John 2:13-16; Matthew 21:12-13**), which serves as a place of prayer and fellowship with God! Someone said once that for a boat to be on the sea is a good thing, but for the sea to be in the boat; that is a bad thing and spells disaster for the occupants of the boat! Likewise, for the church to be in the world is a good thing; but for the world to be in the church is disastrous for the church!

Conclusion

It is clear that the marketplace has a major role to play in the kingdom of God, because it is the place from where the souls of men that are perishing can be purchased by the blood of Jesus. The marketplace is therefore the Christian's place of ministry to a dying world. He has not been called to make the marketplace his home or comfort zone, and hence to turn his passions, pursuits, and affections to it. Rather, his primary purpose in the marketplace is to bring, as many as want out of the world system and its evil, into the kingdom of God (**1 Peter 2:9**). Indeed, the nature of a Christian makes the marketplace only desirable to him for drawing out men from the marketplace into the sanctuary of God (**1 Samuel 22:1-2; Matthew 11:28; John 7:37-38**)!