

Outward and inward sin

The commandments of the Lord are our teacher who drives us to Christ for mercy and our weaknesses make us hungry for his righteousness and thirsty for his justice!

Some of us, well, all of us, are slow learners when it comes to Christian living, living according to the principles of God's Kingdom! It takes a long time for us to change our deep-rooted, entrenched attitudes. An understanding of the reformed doctrine of original sin not only makes us more dedicated to spread the gospel of grace, but also provides the empathy with our fellow pilgrims to be keen to reach out to everyone who shares our struggle against the flesh.

1. Outward sin can often be relatively easily repented of when we truly receive Jesus.

We appear to be living a new life - and we should be. Those who steal will stop being thieves, those who are treacherous will stop committing adultery, those who have no integrity will live honest lives, those who are deceitful will stop lying, those who are unfaithful will become regular worshippers.

This is wonderful in God's sight and a testimony to others of his goodness and his power to change us. It is as the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 3:18: And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

But is it enough to get rid of these outward, despicable, ungodly ways and habits?

No! It is not!! It certainly is not enough!

The Scripture says, *with ever-increasing glory*. The King James version says, *from glory to glory*.

2. As we continue to discover who God is and as we experience his glorious holiness in a closer walk with him, we realise that in order to grow from glory to glory, our sinful, ingrained attitudes need to be wiped out!

The transformation into the likeness of Christ to take place "with ever-increasing glory" our ungodly inward ways need to be erased, destroyed and even eliminated from memory!

Yes, Jesus first of all deals with our **OUTWARD SINS** - lying, theft, gambling, addictions, pornography, unfaithfulness, lack of prayer, love and kindness - and all the other transgressions of God's law.

But it often takes a second intervention of the Spirit, an even more urgent wake up call than the one who brought about our first conversion, to start dealing with **INWARD SIN**.

Selfishness, pride, greed, favouritism, power hunger, filthy thoughts, nastiness, hidden injustice, unteachable controlling spirits and many other bitter fountains of loveless and blasphemous ways seem to be protected strongholds of the worldly life that simply refuse to let go of you! These things can be hidden from those who know us only superficially, e.g. fellow church members, and are harder to disguise from those who know us better - spouse, children, close friends and closest colleagues.

But God knows them all. And the Holy Spirit shows them all to you! The Holy Spirit knows that as long as we help the devil to defend these strongholds, we will not experience the ever-increasing glory of the likeness of Christ. We are weak. Original sin is rooted deeply into the very source of our existence!

As little as we can do good works through which we are able to earn God's forgiveness, just as impossible is it to become inwardly rejuvenated new creatures - except through the gracious work of the Spirit, who gives ever-increasing glory to those who journey with him step by step, day by day!

3. The commandments of God, our teacher who drives us to Christ.

As we confess our sins - every day, and are remorseful - always, and seek ways of restoration - all the time, we become more and more ashamed of our outward sins, and more and more humbled by our ingrained inward ungodliness. The commandments of the Lord become our teacher who drives us to Christ for mercy and our weaknesses make us hungry for his righteousness and thirsty for his justice!

It is a life-long struggle. It is a hard battle. But it is one that keeps God's people humble, seeking, compassionate - and dedicated to proclaim the Gospel of grace! This battle makes us willing to reach out to fellow pilgrims who share our struggle against our natural desires and who fall into the same traps as we do!

As the decrees of God urge us to remain on our knees in prayerful dependence on God's grace only, we slowly change into students of God's Word, followers of Jesus, learners in the class of the Holy Spirit and faithful members of Christ's Body in whom the Spirit dwells.

4. The Kingdom standards create the longing for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

And as the standards of the Kingdom drive us to humble worship of God with his people - the longing for the eternal Kingdom, the Day of the Lord, the final battle that will eternally wipe all evil out, becomes stronger in our hearts. Eventually we even start to sincerely pray with Christ's saints: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

(Rev 22: 17, 20 & 21): The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.