

Marks

Live Like a Christian

God made a covenant with Abraham that would identify the descendants of Abraham throughout their generations. There was a sign of that covenant to be carried by each male descendant as long as there was a male alive to carry on that God-given tradition. It was a physical mark to show the physical connection to God through Abraham. The tradition of circumcision was included in the Law of Moses as a means of identifying an Israelite. But that mark, along with all the Mosaic Law, was ended when Christ died on the cross. (Colossians 2:13-17 NKJV) The marks of a Christian are not seen in the flesh but shown by the change in the heart that is in a covenant relationship to Christ.

On the night before His arrest, Jesus taught the disciples some of the lessons they would soon spread to the world. He taught them about being a servant by washing their feet. Then He taught them the "mark" that would identify His followers. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another"* (John 13:34). The "love" He referred to is the agapaō love that Dr. Thayer says is to love dearly. It is the love that God displayed for people when He gave His son to die for them (John 3:16). It is the fundamental attribute that each child of God must have to live and act like a Christian. Love, agapaō, is the first characteristic Paul lists in his letter to the Romans about the attitudes and feelings that identify those transformed by Christ.

The characteristics of a Christian do not come naturally to most people, and Romans Chapter 12 helps us determine the changes needed for the person made alive in Christ. "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Paul begins with the love Christ used in the new commandment. *"Let **love** be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be **kindly affectionate** to one another with **brotherly love**, in honor giving preference to one another"* (Romans 12:9-10 NKJV). Paul uses four Greek words for love; Agape, Philostorgos combining Phileo and Storgos, and Philadelphia. This listing takes the sacrificial love that causes someone to offer themselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), beginning with affection toward others and developing into a working association with others, laboring in the family of God in Christ.

Paul includes a reminder to do what needs to be done immediately with enthusiasm, *"not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"* (Romans 12:11 NKJV). David referred to the vows to serve God as He said, *"So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may daily perform my vows"* (Psalms 61:8 NKJV). King David understood the need to fulfill a vow, the obligation of duties to be done, and the need to do them as soon as possible, all with love and joy in the heart.

Paul's list continues: (Romans 12:12-21 NKJV). The follower of Christ displays Rejoicing, patience, and steadfast praying (12). They supply the needs of others and are continually hospitable (13). They Bless everyone and never curse those who harm them (14). They will show compassion and understanding with those who weep and those who rejoice (15). They will consider and behave with brethren in humble association, for all are equal in God's sight through Christ (16). The Christian will always do and give good, even in the face of evil. They will always look for good as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, *"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all"* (1 Thessalonians 5:15 NKJV) (17). Though challenging at times, they will try to live in peace with all people under all conditions (18). A Christian will never take revenge but do good to enemies (19-20). And a Christian will be controlled by love, never surrender to evil, and defeat evil

in the end (21).

As we continue to study scripture and associate more closely with our brethren, the characteristics Paul lists develop and increase within each of us. From the new birth, rising from the waters of baptism, to a fully mature Christian in Christ's kingdom, a growth parallels a child's transition into adulthood. Our parents and teachers set development standards for us as our bodies and minds grew and aged. God's Word also sets standards of growth and development. From the first understanding that we have been offered eternal life through His Son, we will continue to learn and grow stronger in His service until we cross from this life into eternity.

Next, we will look at Paul's encouragement to walk as a Christian. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy** of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1 NKJV).