

Colossian 3:5-11

May 2020

THE OLD AND NEW PERSO

I came to Christ in 1967, which means I have been a follower of Jesus for 53 years. Initially I thought that when I became a Christian my personal problems and difficulties would be removed, but as time has gone by I have discovered that becoming a Christian is like opening a cupboard full of rubbish and junk and you spend the rest of your life cleaning it out and replacing it with the good stuff. 53 years later and I am still a work in progress.

John Newton, the author of amazing grace said, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be; but still I am not what I used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am"

Billy Graham's wife Ruth was driving along a country road and came across a sign saying slow down road works ahead. After she had passed the roadworks she saw another sign saying, 'End of construction, thanks for your patience' She was so taken with the sign that she had those words inscribed on her headstone.

We used to have a plant called the potato vine.

It is not the common white flowered one, it has a blue flower.

When we bought it was just a stump with of lot of last seasons growth on it in the form of dead wood. The nursery man told us that if the new growth was to develop we had to cut off the dead wood, which we did and in spring the new growth came.

When we come to Christ we have a new life force within us, the life of Christ, but if that new life is to develop and bear fruit in our lives, the dead wood of the past life has got to be cut away. And for us that process is ongoing.

Inside we are new people. We have died to the old ways through the cross of Christ, but unfortunately we still have a lot of the residue of the old life clinging to us like dead wood, in the form of old attitudes and behaviour patterns that God requires us to cut off.

In this passage God commands us as new people in Christ to do exactly that.

Eliminate the dead wood of the old life. 5-9.

Encourage the new life to develop. v10-11.

ELIMINATE THE DEAD WOOD OF THE OLD LIFE. V5-9.

Jesus came to bring us real life as God intended it to be, but unfortunately so many Xs are not experiencing the new life of God. It is not being expressed through their personalities, because the old attitudes and practices of their past life are still attached to them. The new life of God is not getting through because it is stifled and blocked by the dead wood of the old life.

In Romans 8:13 Paul says that if we are to really live as God intended us to live, we must put to death the wrong behaviour patterns that operate through our body.

As we get rid of the wrong practices and attitudes of the old life, the new life of Christ within us is able to develop, emerge and express itself.

It reminds me of the story of the raising of Lazarus.

Jesus performed the miracle of raising Lazarus from death. He came out of the tomb alive, but his movement was restricted because he was still bound up in the old grave clothes. The life was there but it needed to get out, and the only way it could get out was by removing the clothes of death.

Notice that Jesus did not remove those grave clothes, He told those at the grave side to remove them.

N.B. God has performed the miracle of placing His new resurrection life in us, but we are not told here to let God remove the old attitudes and practices of the former life. We are told to remove them. We must take the initiative, we must address them and deal with them, if the life of God within is to express itself through us. And that is a daily ongoing practice.

Let us look at this dead wood.

Paul gives 2 lists.

The first list in v5-7 deals with distorted love

The second list in v8 deals with destructive hate.

v5. Distorted love

If a guy tells a woman that he loves her and is not willing to make a permanent commitment to her in marriage, he doesn't love her, its lust. Lust is distorted love.

Lust is only concerned about getting and taking its about satisfying our immediate sexual desires. It wants what it wants now, regardless of how it might affect others.

And sadly so many women have swallowed that cheap line, "I love you", believing it was the real thing and sacrificed their moral and physical purity.

III. I remember a youth worker telling us about teenage girl who came to him in tears. A guy in her school class talked her into having sex with him assuring her that he loved her. For him it was just another conquest. For her it was something very special. The next day a message was written on the wall of the boy's toilet naming her as a slut.

God intended sex to be used in the confines of a loving, devoted, marriage relationship for the purpose of reproduction and as an expression of our love and commitment to each other. Sex outside of marriage is morally wrong and can cause have long term damage to ourselves and those involved, emotionally, relationally, psychologically, and spiritually.

It's interesting that Paul lists greed along with sexual immorality and lust. They are all concerned with the same thing. Satisfying my selfish, lustful desires.

Think of all the suffering in our world that has been caused by lust and greed.

As Christians we may feel smug about the fact that we have never committed adultery, at least physically, but what about greed?

III. Man who had been a Roman Catholic priest for many years said that in all his years of hearing confession, no one had ever confessed to the sin of greed.

And yet Paul says in 1 Tim 6:10 that greed is the root of all kinds of evil. And he goes even further and says that

greed is idolatry. Why? Because Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Greed once again is distorted love because we love things instead of God and people and there are so many who driven by greed have betrayed the Lord and abused others. Remember Judas.

Love, genuine love is for God and people, I’m sure we can slip in a few animals there, but not things.

It’s interesting how in our culture we use the word love for everything from clothes to food and goodness knows what else.

Paul says here that if we don’t deal with this greed and all its manifestations, it will bring God's judgement upon us. It will destroy us believers in this life and destroy the unbelievers in the next.

Destructive hate v8-10

I used to say to my children when they were young, “Only use the word love for God and people and only use the word hate for Satan and sin.”

But sadly we have chosen to direct our hatred, resentment, malice and rage towards our fellow human beings and results speak for themselves.

In v8-9 Paul gives a list of those destructive attitudes and practices that ruin our relationships.

Anger. The Greek word here is *orge* and it speaks of the hurts, resentment, bitterness and unforgiveness that seethe away under the surface. One of the reasons we refuse to let it go and forgive those who hurt us is because we think that by holding onto it we can somehow punish them.

Nelson Mandela put it well when he said, “When we refuse to forgive, it’s like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die.”

When we refuse to deal with this stuff it affects every relationship we enter into. We read into the words and actions of others things that were never intended. We become suspicious and distrustful.

That destructive anger and resentment will always prevent us from experiencing a deep and meaningful relationship with God and with others. For believers it's like the deadwood of the past that blocks the new life of Christ from breaking forth and blossoming in our lives.

I have had Christians tell me that they have never experienced the love of God and in many of those cases I have noticed that they are critical and resentful towards others and hold onto grudges and hurts so easily. That stuff is actually hindering them from experiencing the love of God.

Rage –Greek word is thumos explosive anger. This is when the anger and resentment explode in words and actions causing so much damage and pain.

One man said to a workmate, “When I get upset with someone I just explode and get it all off my chest.” And the workmate replied, “Like a shot gun, but look at the damage you do.”

Malice....spiteful and vindictive. Deliberately begin to say things and do things to hurt others.

Slander....we not only seek to hurt others to their face, but say damaging things about them behind their backs. The word for slander is blasphemy....to insult not only God but others.

Filthy language...why do people have to swear, curse and use obscene language? Jesus said that out of the heart the mouth speaks. When the heart is full of anger, resentment, unforgiveness it's not long before it starts coming out our mouth.

It is interesting that most cursing and swearing has sexual and religious connotations. Behind the sexual expressions is the intent to offend people's sensitivities and behind the religious expressions is the intent to attack God. Many people are not even aware that they are doing it, that is how subtle it has become.

III. Bloody. That evolved from swearing an oath on the blood of Christ. Now Satan uses it to make people unconsciously curse the blood of Christ that was shed in love to save them.

Lying.....Jeremiah 17. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt. Who can understand it."
We have become experts in deception, hiding, perverting and distorting the truth. We not only deceive one another but we deceive ourselves.

This is all the dead wood that we believers must get rid of.....it belongs to the old life, it is destructive to our progress as Christians and it will prevent the new life within coming forth.

How do we get rid of that dead wood?

As I said at the beginning it's not a one off procedure, it's a life-long practice and God's Spirit is within us to help us carry it out.

Each day ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of when those attitudes and practices from the old life are wanting to express themselves and when He does, trust him to help take the necessary step to get rid of them.

How does it work?

The beautiful is this and it is one of those things that makes Christianity unique. God helps us to do this through His Spirit. Romans 8:13 For if you live according to your sinful desires you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

God never commands us to do anything without giving us the ability and the power through His Spirit to carry it out. Grace.

So how does it work in practice?

Ill. Have you ever tried to turn the steering wheel of your car when the ignition hasn't been turned on? Its jolly hard work, but when you switch on the ignition and fire up the engine, the power kicks in and assists you to turn that steering wheel. Power steering. So it is with the power of the Holy Spirit. When you begin to obey God, the power kicks in and He enables you do it.

ENCOURAGE THE NEW LIFE TO DEVELOP v10-11

That new life that has been placed within us by God's Spirit is longing to express itself.

Listen to this from *Philippians 2:13 "God is at work*

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within you giving you the desire and the ability to do what is pleasing to Him.” Not only does God provide the power to assist us, but he provides the “want to.”

If you are a genuine believer you will find that you want to please God more than anything else and that very desire is the expression of the new life within you.

Another scripture that says a similar thing is *Hebrews 13:20-21* “*Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.*”

When those God given desires arise within –express them and He will even help you to do that.

Paul now tells us in v10-11 what are the characteristics of this new life within.

Renewed in relationship – The word knowledge here is not just head knowledge, it is personal knowledge that comes from knowing Christ. It is relational knowledge. This new life within keeps developing and being renewed as we get to know Jesus more and more through the scriptures, through experience and through His Spirit within us.

Godly in character – this new life within expresses itself in godly behaviour and attitudes. Fruit of the Spirit
Galatians 6:22

Impartial in love – This new life expresses unconditional love, acceptance and forgiveness to everyone regardless of who they are. It doesn’t judge people according to their race, religion, background or status. It sees them all as people God created and loves and longs to see them all united with God through Jesus.

Single in focus – This new life within is centred on Christ. He is the focus of this new life. He is the source and force of this new life. He is the goal of this new life. For without Him we are nothing and can do nothing without Him. In fact whatever we do without Him will amount to nothing in the end.

What further can I say except to quote the words of John Newton

Jesus, my Saviour, Shepherd, Friend,

My Prophet, Priest, and King; my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,

Accept the praise I bring.

If you are listening today and you have never given your life to Jesus. If you don't know Him you have missed the very purpose for which you were put on this planet.

In those quiet times when find yourself alone and deep in thought you may be aware of an emptiness, a deep longing, a meaningless hole in your life that nothing and no one has been able to fill. Only Christ can fill and satisfy that. And I can say that after 53 years of following Him, He has more than filled and satisfied those deep longings and that meaningless emptiness.