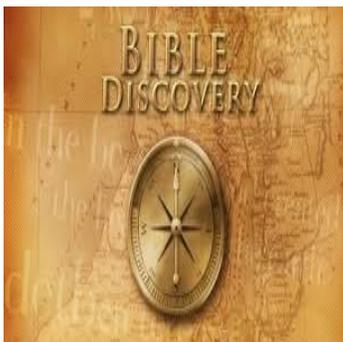


March 13, 2016

Galatians 2:20-3:5

The Pure Motivation of Sacrificial Love



Don't you love it when someone can be succinct? All we read from Paul's letter in Galatians 2:20-3:5 is summarized by Peter in just one sentence. Again we hear, *"Since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."* [1 Peter 4:1-2]

Several years ago, the computer company Apple ran an ad campaign called **"Think Different."** They wanted people to consider the possibility that "Windows", the most common computer program, wasn't the only way to see things. Well, God is asking those who profess Him as Lord to "think differently," too. Having our minds renewed, motivated to become like Jesus is a big part of it. God calls us to come out from and live different from the world, motivated by the sacrificial love demonstrated by God's Son Jesus who came and died for you and me.

Living differently means when we're crucified with Christ by faith in Him, we completely surrender every selfish desire, every self-directed ambition, every revengeful thought to the perfect will of God. Living for self-pleasing becomes the greatest obstacle between us and our relationship with God because in our nature we naturally want to please ourselves, and this self-promotion's the building block for sin, the gate the enemy uses to take control of our hearts.

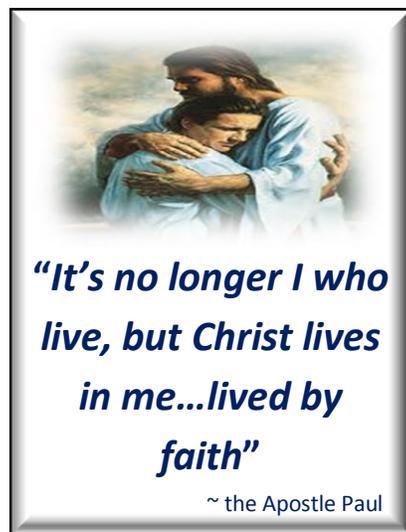
Living differently begins with a Christ-like attitude or viewpoint toward sin. In short, if we've become His people we're not only to be willing to die for Christ, we don't want to waste living our lives in sin? We've been liberated, so why would we want to put ourselves back in chains? Living differently starts with not letting our physical appetites direct our decisions which take us out of the grace of God. There's a word for that – *"lust"* (a justly considered dirty word within most of our society). Paul puts it this way – *"it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...lived by faith"*. To me this is one of the most beautiful and meaningful passages found in scripture. Maybe the reason this verse doesn't mean as much for many others today is they don't see this kind of commitment to Christ as compelling in today's Christians. That doesn't mean we shouldn't – indeed, I believe we must but we must be willing to live against the fashion of modern times.

Paul lays out our course of action if we would follow Jesus! As we thank God for His Son's substitutionary sacrifice knowing because Christ was crucified, because He carried our sins to the cross, because He became the bearer of our sin which separates us from God, we accept His death as full payment for forgiving us of our sins – as we've been made new; we must live our new spiritual lives remaining in step with our heavenly Father.

Because Christ was crucified, we accept His death as full payment for forgiveness of sins.

It's as though we're crucified so our sins are paid in full even as we're born again into a new life. What then must we do? For instance, say you bought a brand new car. What sense would it make to leave it parked in your driveway and continue to drive your old beat up car around town? Every day you go out and complain about the many things broken on that old clunker while the new car sits unused, at home. Do you not think the neighbours might think you a little strange? Well, God has given us a new life; why would we want to continue to walk around in our old, sinful nature when we've traded it in?

Must not Christ's example of sacrifice compel us then to live this new way of life? Must not we obey God, follow His instruction manual, pursue His purpose for our lives and set ourselves apart as belonging to Him? Must not we choose to resist the dictates of our human nature, allow



God's Spirit to undergird and equip us as living sacrifices? Every time we "sacrifice" our time, our pursuits, our energy, our desires, to serve God rather than merely pursue our selfish interests, we're following the sacrificial lifestyle of Jesus. We're to strive to live just as He lived.

We can't overcome our inherited sinful nature on their own; we need the power and assistance of the Holy Spirit to make this happen. The alternative is to try to live up to all the requirements of the law – crossing every "T" and dotting every "I". How's that been working for you? Paul found the answer, as he says, "*I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.*" [vs. 21] This, as Paul attests, is an ongoing process because our spirit, which we profess crucified with Christ, still resides within in our fleshly bodies - still very much alive! Yet Paul felt confident to say he was dead to the world, to ambition, to love of money, to the pride of life, and to the dominion of evil and hateful passions. Their power over him was gone; they'd ceased to influence him. He accomplished this by surrendering his own will to God's will, essential for elimination of *our* selfish desire's powerful motivation and enslavement. Such also is the essence of our repentance. True repentance isn't just asking for forgiveness from sin it's our *willingness, our eagerness* and *our commitment* to change that conforms to the perfect will of God through His wonderful grace.

True repentance isn't just asking for forgiveness from sin, it's our willingness, our eagerness, and our commitment to change that conforms to the perfect will of God through His wonderful grace.

This proves to be a great challenge for many because we still attempt to control our sinful nature on our own resulting in repeatedly falling into the same old, sinful ways we've attempted to escape. If it's possible for us to overcome the sinful nature by our own willpower, there'd have been no need for Jesus to die for our sins. Many Christians want to be obedient yet continue to stumble in sin because they try hanging on to parts of their old self they think they're able to control. **Read my lips – it can't be done!** This self-defeating behaviour relies on the idea we can save ourselves by our own works. The Bible teaches us quite clearly there's nothing we can do to save our soul; that salvation's only by the grace of God out of **His** abundant love and mercy. Through this gift of grace, we're born again, given a new nature to replace the old, sinful self.

When Paul writes to the foolishness of the Galatians I feel like he could've been speaking to me. How about you? Are we also guilty of being bewitched, of failing to obey the truth, of trying to live up to the standard by manipulation of the law? Are we at times guilty of working to perfect ourselves? It's like directing traffic south on a northbound one way street! Rather we must live allowing the word of His Spirit to direct us. Paul states those who walk after the Spirit ". . . *do not do the things that (they) wish*" [Galatians 5:17]. NO! We must live doing, being, living the way Jesus lived, following His example, remembering by the grace of God we've been given this

A committed life to Christ doesn't come by accident. It's a life purposefully lived – it takes fully being alive in Jesus!

victory through the unmerited gift of spiritual rebirth but only if we're willing to fully surrender in repentant contrition to our heavenly Father's will. That's why Jesus came – "*to destroy the devil's work*" [1 John 3:8] the very work we pursue if we continue to willfully do what's sinful. Do you really want that? A committed life to Christ doesn't come by accident. It's a life purposefully lived as Paul explains; "*I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" It takes a great faith to live for our Lord – a faith also given by our Lord. Many who observed Paul didn't understand how he could love and have such a great faith in Christ. Yet that's exactly what it takes to live a life of love, to have great faith – it takes fully being alive in Jesus!

Once we've committed to a life of love and faith in Jesus, once we've discovered our pure motivation of sacrificial love bound solely in God's gift to us, once we've abandoned any precept, any worth, any work we think we can accomplish in our own flesh, then and only then will we fully surrender holding nothing back and receive the gift of God's Spirit to lead and guide us in a life full of God's abundant grace and love. Only then, trusting not in what we bring to the table but in the supply of God's Holy Spirit will we witness His miracles

worked among us finding contentment in our circumstances and longing to share that love with all we meet. Still not sure this is for you?

There are 3 things I ask you to do this week.

- 1) **Assess your life.** Are you all you can be? Is your “self” nature taking precedence forcing you to fit in with the crowd or is your goal to be a Christ-follower changed from within by Christ within you? The adage is “*if the world fits, you’re the wrong size.*”
- 2) **Pray.** Seek God’s strength and direction to help you not waste your life living for sin but to live for the will of God and seek to please Him in all you do, wherever you may be, whatever your circumstances. Ask Him to make you a lamp to light the path of others and to comfort those who hurt. Prepare yourself through His Word to “*have an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have...with gentleness and respect.*” [1 Peter 3:15]
- 3) **Take action.** Never be content to be hearers of the word only but doers. Allow the pure motivation that spurs you on through Christ not only to enable you to be an overcomer, but to live a committed life doing and living the way Jesus lived never satisfied to live the rest of your earthly days pursuing evil human desires.

Only then, equipped with the power of God’s Holy Spirit will you have the joy found in living free from any pursuit of sin, set free, lifted up, established firmly in the loving hand of a loving Father. Only then will you have peace that passes all human understanding and know that you know that you know that you belong to Jesus.

The Good News is that as long as we have breath in our body, it is not too late to surrender, to begin a new life in Christ, enjoy our Heavenly Father’s amazing grace. If you have never thought yourself worthy, if you have never considered your life needed forgiveness, if you have never said yes to Jesus, then I encourage you to do so today. Jesus is waiting and wants to come in to your heart and give you a new life – an eternal life. Are you ready?

Give us a call if you would like to tell us about your decision. Let us know if we can be of any assistance to you. We’d love to hear from you.

Blessings,

Pastor Dave



**Set free, lifted up,
established firmly in the
loving hand of a loving
Father.**