

Growing in Christ Lesson 5 4Q 2012

Growing in Christ

Read Memory Text: “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15).

Thoughts?

What does it mean to disarm principalities and powers, to expose them publicly and to triumph over them?

The lesson in the first paragraph states, “Jesus has defeated satanic powers and evil forces; through Christ, victory over these powers, including their past manifestations in a person’s life, is possible; and finally, there are conditions in order for these victories to be realized in a person’s experience.”

Thoughts?

What are the principalities?

What are the powers of these principalities?

How did Jesus expose them, triumph over them and disarm them?

How does that benefit us?

What do you think the lesson means by “through Christ, victory over these powers, including their past manifestation in a person’s life, is possible?”

Does it mean victory over habits, addictions and patterns of sinfulness, which would actually be ongoing struggles rather than past manifestations?

Does it mean victory over the punishment God must inflict for past sins?

Let's examine our memory text in detail starting in Col 2:8

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

What does it mean to be taken captive? What is being utilized to take people captive? False ideas, lies, misrepresentations, distortions, addictions (self indulgence), fear, abusive power structures. So, what kind of warfare is this? What weapons are used? Where is the battle fought?

Does this give any insight into what might be necessary to "disarm" the powers?

Does verse 8 give any insights as to what the lies might look like?

- They are based on human traditions and basic principles of the world.
- What are the basic principles of the world? Survival-of-the-fittest, retribution, kill or be killed, justice requires enforcement of punishment.
- In other words, isn't the Bible telling us we will be deceived when we conceive of God and his government to operate like worldly governments on the same principles?
- And how do such governments work?
 - The person must work to overcome on their own, prove their innocence, or in Jewish tradition, keep a bunch of ceremonial laws, and in our day our minds are taken captive when we teach God, like a Roman emperor must inflict punishment, be appeased, have payments made etc.

Verse 9,10:

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in

bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

What is important to note in this passage?

- Jesus is God, complete and full.
- What we see in Jesus is true of God.
- And because Jesus became human, we are given fullness, or health, or restoration via Christ who is over all things.

But notice in verse 11 and 12 how we are give fullness in Christ:

¹¹ In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

What does this mean? Is this describing a legal accounting of one's historic records, or is this describing an actual change occurring within the heart/mind of the believer?

Someone emailed me this week and was asking what Christ was doing in the heavenly sanctuary, would this passage have application to Christ's work in the sanctuary? Notice, Christ is doing something inside the heart and mind of the believer, would that be considered "cleansing" of the heart and mind? And are we not a temple of God?

Or is the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary unrelated to the work of Christ to cleanse the heart and mind?

When people talk about Christ cleansing the records in heaven, what do they mean? Can we give a better description?

What is the way Christ cleanses heavenly records? The answer typically given is, "by his blood." But Jesus said in John 6 the

blood needed to be ministered where? Into us – so how do we connect the blood going into us with the cleansing of our records?

The records in heaven are like medical records, they keep an accurate record of our actual condition, I even believe it is a perfect copy of our individuality and identity. So, the pathway to change the records in heaven is through the heart/mind of the believer. As Christ works in us to heal and restore the record of the condition of our characters is changed, why? Because we are actually changed by the internalization of Christ into the heart.

What about verses 13-15:

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

What does it mean dead in sin and uncircumcision of our sinful nature?

Isn't this describing an actual condition of being, rather than a legal predicament? Doesn't it mean living out of harmony with God's design for life? Having selfishness as the primary motivator of action in our hearts rather than love? Would it be saying you were in a terminal state, out of harmony with how God constructed life to operate? But God sent Christ, to take our condition and cure it!

But there is another level of understanding to Christ cancelling the written code and it has to do with having cancelled the fallen way the written code was used.

In his book, *Healing the Gospel: A Radical Vision for Grace, Justice and the Cross*, Derek Flood describes how God ordained entities, structures, or elements became fallen and how Christ's mission was also to redeem these things as well as individual people. He speaks of how families have become fallen and often injure, how conscience is fallen and gives cruel oppressive guilt. And how God's law had become understood in a fallen way. He writes:

To speak of the law only as 'abolished' and 'destroyed' does not take into account the large purpose of restorative justice, which ultimately seeks to restore these systems to serve their proper role under Christ. Second, at the same time—especially because of the church's history of collusion with abusive power—we dare not whitewash over the New Testament's very real critique of the abuse of religious authority exemplified in Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees, and in Paul's critique of the law which the early church picked up on in the language of 'abolishing' the powers. Just as we need to be self-aware and introspective, we also need to be aware of how authority can become fallen. As history shows, the church has not been particularly good at this, often defending the status quo rather than those on the margins.

Thoughts?

The written code itself, given to help teach and lead people to a right knowledge of God, had become perverted and misused to misrepresent God and actually damage people. Thus the system had to be taken away and God's law put in its proper place – which is “written upon the heart and mind” and the organized church was to operate from God's methods of love, including loving one's enemies, and not as a hierarchical top down authoritative dictator.

What does the passage mean “he forgave our sins?” The Greek means literally our shortcomings and mistakes, our falling

short of God's ideal wasn't held against us, and that God's grace, forgiveness, not holding it against us preceded the change and healing brought about by Christ in us.

So, it isn't we repent, experience a transformation and then God doesn't hold our mistakes and shortcomings against us. But it is very much like a doctor, with a patient who is sick, coughing, vomiting, spitting up blood etc. and the doctor doesn't hold any of those symptoms, those evidences of coming up short of good health, against the sick patient. Rather the doctor acknowledges the symptoms as evidence of sickness and sets about healing the condition. This is what God is doing in Christ, healing and restoring.

What about cancelled the written code that was against us?

Paul is dealing with a mindset of people, who operate in a legal framework of ordinances to be done to merit, achieve, or earn salvation. They misunderstood the purposes of the OT sacrificial system with its rules and regulations.

What was the purpose of that system? Was that system devised as a means to bring salvation? Did that system heal sinners? Did the blood of animals achieve restoration with God? No!

That entire system was a primitive method of teaching, for primitive minds. It was a theater, a drama, a play to act out with symbols the future reality to be achieved by Christ. But it had a deeply visceral purpose as well, to bring sin and God's plan home to the heart. Flood states in his book:

We cannot truly understand something when we observe it "objectively" from a distance. We understand when it pounds in our chest, when it *impacts* us. We only truly know something when we are in the middle of it. These are vital matters of life and death that cannot be captured in a simplified formula, but must be articulated

narratively and poetically as living ideas that move and touch us at the core of who we are.

Do you see how the OT sacrificial system would have made salvation issues pound in your chest? If you had to put the knife to the throat of the lamb, as the lamb looks into your eyes and then you have to cut its throat?

Did that experience save, or was that experience designed to reach into the substance of a person and make real what is transpiring for their salvation?

But the Jews forgot the purpose of the symbols and thought they somehow had merit in themselves and had come to misconstrue the meaning as appeasement. Thus the system had to be replaced, so when Christ achieved the reality that the symbolic play was to teach, there was no longer any purpose in continuing on the play, drama, symbols as they would only obscure the reality achieved in Christ. Thus, Christ put an end to the drama, play, or script, nailing it to the cross as fulfilled.

Now, as we go to verse 15, what do we understand thus far?

- We are in a war waged in our minds/hearts with weapons of deceit, distortion, fear and selfishness which promote methods of the world, survival-of-the-fittest, and principles of earthly governments projected upon God and heaven
- When we believe God is like earthly governors we are taken captive by evil forces and our healing is obstructed
- God battles with truth, love, freedom and actual restoration achieved through Christ in order to heal us and cleanse his universe
- When we trust Christ we experience actual transformation of our hearts and minds and have the worldly methods cut away and are renewed with God's law of love within

- The old system of symbols is replaced with the reality of Jesus

And thus in verse 15 how did Christ disarm the powers of evil, triumph over them and expose them?

- At the cross love and selfishness stood face to face, Satan was exposed as a liar and fraud
- Christ was revealed as love and Satan as selfish and malevolent
- Death was revealed to come out from Satan and his methods NOT from God
- Christ was revealed to be safe with all power as he wouldn't use power to protect self, thus Satan's lies about God abusing power were destroyed
- Christ destroyed the infection of selfishness in man thus restoring mankind back to God's original ideal, within the human brain Christ assumed
- Christ victory, achieved by the exercise of his human brain also revealed there was nothing wrong with mankind when God created him, i.e. no manufacturer's defect – God wasn't to blame for Adam's fall. If Christ could choose perfectly in a humanity defective by sin, Adam could have done so in Eden in a perfect humanity.
- Therefore:
 - Satan's weapons of deceit were destroyed by the revelation of truth at the cross,
 - his weapon of selfishness within mankind was destroyed by perfect love chosen and exercised by Christ's human brain at the cross.
 - Thus Satan's methods were exposed as the source of suffering, pain and death, while God's methods were revealed as the basis for life, health and happiness.
- Satan's power has been broken

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “Christianity is...”

Thoughts?

I found the language interesting as it appears to be a mixture of legal and healing language, which to me wasn't as clear as it could have been.

What does it mean that the people without Christ are enslaved to sin and “under a death sentence”? Does it mean that death sentence is a legal imposed punishment, or that is the death sentence of a terminal condition? Does it make a difference which way we understand it? Why?

I like very much how the lesson states “The sinner’s plight required outside intervention, and this intervention comes at a price.” When you hear this what comes to mind?

A person in renal failure requires outside intervention, and that intervention comes at a price – means what? Is that what is happening with sinful mankind?

The lesson rightly points out that the price of our salvation was “the death of Jesus on the cross.” But it doesn't explain why. Why is that the price?

The paragraph rightly points out we are enslaved to sin, so if our salvation requires freedom from such enslavement what would Christ's death need to accomplish?

We are talking about the “price” for our salvation. To whom is the price paid?

What is the price to save someone in renal failure? Is it simply the medical bills? What about in a society where all medical care was provided freely, is there still a price to pay to save

someone in renal failure? What is that price? Isn't it a new kidney – and to whom is that price paid?

What is the price of our freedom from sinfulness? Is it not a new heart and right spirit, and new nature, having the law written on the heart, having the mind of Christ, being circumcised in the inner man? Who achieved this perfect human condition? Christ! And to whom is this condition given or paid?

Is it given to God? Did God need a new humanity, a new nature, to have the law written on his heart? Or is it given **FREELY** to human beings!

And besides our own sinful/selfish natures that enslave us, what else entraps us? Lies about God! And Christ is the truth, and brought us the truth, and exposed the truth at the Cross at great expense to himself. To whom was this truth “paid”?

Who is the only being in the universe who did not need this truth? God! The only being in the universe who **DID NOT NEED** the death of Christ is God! All the other intelligences did, yet Christianity teaches Christ's death was for God, how twisted.

What are Bible metaphors for truth?

- Light
- Sword
- Salt
- Blood

Here is what one Christian author wrote:

- In the *study of the Bible* the converted soul eats the *flesh* and drinks the *blood* of the Son of God, which He himself interprets as the receiving and doing of His words, that are spirit and life. (Fundamentals of Christian Education 378).

- The leaven of *truth* works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By it [*the truth*] the impure are cleansed, washed in the *blood of the Lamb*. (Christ's Object Lessons 102).

Who is the only being who did not need truth presented to him? God – then if we understand the truth is symbolized by blood, we realize God is the ONLY being in the universe who didn't need the blood of his Son.

We need to “eat the flesh and drink the blood” but the Father didn't need it.

Col 1:19,20 states: “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Notice heavenly things were reconciled to God at the cross, through the shed blood. Heavenly beings needed to see the truth about God as revealed in Christ, to see Satan exposed, to see what humanity can be when in perfection as God designed. Thus, the only being in the universe who didn't need the Cross is the one we have the “blood” of the Cross being directed toward.

Do you see how backward it is to suggest Jesus is in heaven ministering his blood to the Father?

Do you see a problem with this? Why do we do it? Because we have accepted exactly what the Paul is warning us against, we have accepted human tradition and the principles of the world as models for God's character and government.

Read the second paragraph, “From the New Testament...” thoughts?

This is right- Christ did take our place, our condition and suffered in our place for the purpose of exposing Satan, destroying Satan's lies about the Father, revealing the truth about God's character and government AND curing and healing our condition!

In his book Derek Flood writes of the early church fathers in the first few centuries after Christ:

For example, Athanasius writes, "The death of all was consummated in the Lord's body; yet, because the Word was in it, *death and corruption were in the same act utterly abolished.*" Here we have substitutionary language, "the death of all was consummated in the Lord's body," understood in the context of Christus Victor, resulting in "death and corruption" being "utterly abolished." The death sentence is not fulfilled, it is erased. Athanasius writes that Christ "assumed a human body, in order that in it death might once for all be destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image." Similarly, Gregory of Nazianzus writes, "For my sake he was called a curse, who destroyed my curse." Again vicarious language (Christ cursed "for my sake") is coupled with a Christus Victor theme (the curse – that is, the sentence of the law—is "destroyed" not satisfied)....

Here the medical paradigm, prevalent among the church fathers, is helpful: Seen through the lens of the patristics' image of salvation as *healing*, we can think here of a doctor who, while recognizing that certain behaviors can lead to injury and sickness, nonetheless seeks to heal the patient. We have a grave wound, but Christ is a greater physician. As Augustine puts it, "Of my own so deadly wound I should despair, unless I could find so great a Physician." Punitive justice wounds, but restorative justice heals. The purpose of Christ's taking on human wretchedness, suffering, and sin, was for the sake of our healing and renewal.

This view of salvation as healing, sanctification, and re-creation is captured well by Gregory's well known formulation, "What is not assumed is not healed, but what is united to God is saved." ... It is succinctly stated in the classic formula of Irenaeus: *God became what we are, so we could become what he is* (i.e. Christlike).

Thoughts?

MONDAY

Read top paragraph, "When we understand..." thoughts?

How would you answer this question?

Does the answer to this question give insight as to Christ's purpose and what he accomplished for us?

Are we bound by God's anger and wrath at sin? Is God angry and wrathful at sin? Yes, why? Because sin binds and destroys his children! So where is God's anger and wrath focused as the sinner or the sin?

Does God need to have his anger at sin propitiated, assuaged, or in any way mollified? No! God's anger at sin will NEVER change. God's anger at sin is like a doctor's anger and wrath at cancer, or Ebola, or HIV – Doctors never lose their anger and wrath at disease, and will always want to destroy disease. But doctors NEVER want to destroy their patients.

So, if we are not bound by God's anger and wrath at sin, did Christ need to do anything to free us from God's anger and wrath? No! Christ's entire mission was the express will and acting out of the Father's purpose to destroy sin and restore humanity back to unity and at-one-ment with God!

Read fourth paragraph, "What makes it so bad..." thoughts?

How do we experience freedom from temptations that originate within us?

Let's discuss practical and real actions we can take to experience victory!

- Can we free ourselves? Do we need outside help? Then what is the first step to freedom? Admitting we have a terminal condition, that we didn't choose, that we cannot fix ourselves. Then, we must find the outside solution
- Where do we find the solution to our condition? In Christ. What does this require of us? We must trust God/Jesus, but what does trust require? That we must actually know him, not merely know about him. Then what is required to know Jesus? We must actually spend time with him. How do we do that?
 - Bible study, thoughtful exploration of the meaning
 - Examine nature and science studying God's character revealed there, harmonizing it with scripture
 - Experience – what impact does love, altruism, someone genuinely putting you first, loving you, forgiving and accepting you despite knowing your shortcomings have upon you? What impact does it have when you love others like this? What impact does it have to forgive? What impact does it have to act selfishly, to hold grudges, to seek revenge? What impact does it have to leave others free? What impact does it have to try and control others?
 - Which methods heal and restore, which methods damage and alienate?
- Pray, talk to God daily as with a friend
- Care for the spirit temple, with healthful living and regular sleep and rest for mind. Not because such actions merit or earn you salvation points, but because such actions keep your brain healthier and reduce the pressure of insecurity, fear, doubt, anxiety, and allow you to think more clearly and stay calmer. And the mind can

- comprehend truth and a higher order of thinking when healthy, thus grow and expand.
- Exercise our choice to do what we know is healthy, right and reasonable because we know it to be so, regardless of how it feels or what others think
 - Avoid filling our minds with material that is contrary to God's principles. By beholding we are changed, our neural networks rewire based on the materials we spend time thinking about and focusing upon.
 - Guard our hearts, what we love and attach to, whether it be political parties, sports teams, property, money, stocks, movie stars, alma maters, family, friends, religious organizations, or missions.
 - Build your belief systems upon evidence-based truths and don't believe non-sense.
 - Think for yourselves and don't let others think for you, as Paul said, "every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind."
 - After examining the evidence of God's trustworthiness as revealed by Christ. After examining the evidence of beneficence versus selfishness and the consequences to both. After examining your own experiences in light of Scripture, do you find God trustworthy, his methods perfect, supreme, and utterly desirable? Do you find yourself in need of a change? Then, humble yourself before God and invite him into your heart to enlighten, transform, renew, ennoble, guide, strengthen, direct.
 - Then choose, to act upon the truth you understand and practice in your daily life the principles of God's government, ever expanding your thinking and understanding of God's character and government.
 - This would include living to give, sharing what you know and have to bless and reach others to set their minds free.
 - After choosing to do in governance of self that which you understand is right, is in harmony with God's design and purpose, then trust God with how things turn out.

- Finally, don't confuse feelings and temptations with being renewed. We will experience temptation until glorification, but temptation is not the same as love for sin and selfishness.

Thoughts?

WENDESDAY

Read third paragraph, "In Isa. 24:21..." thoughts?

How were they subjugated in Christ? What does that mean?

That their weapons were effectively neutralized with the truth Christ revealed and the perfection of character he achieved? In other words once vaccinated we don't fear a disease? The truth about God as revealed in Christ, once solidified in the character inoculates the mind from deception, our trust in God becomes grounded and we become so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that we cannot be moved.

Our hearts become changed that we love God and others more than self, we stop acting on fear based self first mode and trust God with our lives, our families, our futures, our finances, our very being and instead focus, moment by moment of living in harmony with God's methods. Like Job, in the face of trial, understanding only partly, we still trust God!

What do you think it means that evil men and angels will suffer punishment? How do you understand such an idea?

Are there ways to teach this that actually serve Satan's agenda, that obstruct God's healing plan? How?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Christ came into the world..." thoughts?

What are the works of the devil?

- Lies, primarily about God
- Distrust in God
- Selfishness (lawlessness)
- Fear of God
- Death
- Others?

How does Christ destroy these works?

- Reveals truth, which destroys lies and restores trust
- Loves perfectly with his human brain thus destroying selfishness in the humanity he assumed, thereby perfecting humanity and destroying death, which results from being out of harmony with God's design for life (lawlessness).

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Many people..." thoughts?

What do you understand this to mean? What do you understand naturalistic or naturalism to mean?

It means there is no God, therefore all things happen naturally without any supernatural input.

I have had discussions recently with people who don't believe in God. Those who take the naturalistic approach claim they are being scientific. They claim they are going on the scientific evidence, which means evidence which can be reproduced and verified by experiment.

Can we currently, by scientific experiment show anyone God?

Can scientists show us the big bang?

Neither can show us evidence of the origination points for the universe in a scientific reproducible way.

But what about the premises upon which each theory is built, which is more “scientific” evolution or creation?

Evolution: Something comes from nothing – can we demonstrate this in any experiment? No, not scientifically valid premise.

Creation: Something comes from something else – can we demonstrate this in an experiment? Yes, scientifically valid premise.

Evolution: Life comes from non-living matter. Can we demonstrate this in an experiment? Not scientifically valid premise.

Creation: Life comes from living matter. We can demonstrate this over and over again. Scientifically valid premise.

Evolution: Complexity comes from chaos without any intelligent input whatsoever. Can we demonstrate this in an experiment? No, so not a scientifically valid premise.

Creation: Complexity comes from chaos with intelligent input. We can demonstrate this over and over again. So, this is a scientifically valid premise.

Evolution: Random mutation of the genetic code, which happens through unintelligent random forces, combined with natural selection, results in advancement of a species over time. Can we demonstrate this with experiments? No, thus scientifically invalid premise.

Creation: Random mutation of the genetic code, which happens through unintelligent random forces, results in slow

degradation of a species over time. Can we demonstrate this with experiments? Yes, thus a scientifically valid premise.

So, what we find is that the premises upon which evolutionary theory are based are not scientific, while the premises upon which creation is based are all testable, reproducible and thus scientific.

Thoughts?

FRIDAY

Discuss questions 1, 3, 4