

Building Relationships with God's love: Week 5

2 Corinthians 5: 14 – 21: "The old has gone, the new has come!"

As many of you may know we had our Annual iGnite Youth Residential last weekend, with 19 young people and 5 leaders at the Compass Christian Centre in Glenshee. We had a wonderful weekend with lots of fun, fellowship, worship and outdoor activities – including a Gorge Walk – that is walking up a gorge – in the water – up the gorge, over stones, some slippy and up mini-waterfalls. If you remember back to last Saturday and the weather, well there was a gale force wind and lashing rain – we were soaked before we got into the water!! But we had a great time with the young people.

One of the highlights of the weekend away though was on the Saturday evening when Ellie, Kirsty and Eilidh sharing stories about their visit to the Soul Survivor Christian Youth Festival at Lendrick Muir. They shared how God had overwhelmed them with his love and grace, touched their lives and challenged them to live for Jesus. They also provided some teaching on worship and shared stories of how since they had returned one of them had lost 2/3 friends because of making a stand for Jesus – not wanting to gossip about their friends – WOW!!

Amazing, so special, what a joy to see the touch of Jesus and young people progressing – THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW HAS COME. What was also wonderful though was that some of the younger girls were with us – they were looking up at these older girls, professing Jesus in their lives, living for Jesus but progressing!! I thought to myself, what wonderful role models for these young girls, "There are girls just like us, but following Jesus, God is working in their lives, I want that for myself too!!"

Today as we launch the new Pathway Postcard and reflect on Deepening our Relationship with God as part of the series "Building Relationships with God's Love", what we need to realise is that progressing in our Christian lives is not an optional extra – and that's what I saw in the girls last week, and indeed see in the lives of many of the young people we are ministering too!

How about you?

Where are you in relation to spiritual growth?

How can we help and support each other in this?

Introduction

The passage God has laid on my heart for this particular session in this series speaks into these things and the key verse for our reflection is

"Everyone in Christ is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" v 17

However, what on earth does this mean, "Old has gone, new has come" and most importantly how can it happen?

It might help to have your Bibles open as we work through the passage.

To understand the meaning behind "the old has gone, the new has come" we need to go forward to v 21 to be given insight into what this means.

"God made him who HAD NO SIN, TO BE SIN FOR US, so that IN HIM, we might become THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD."

So Paul describes Christ as one who knew “no sin”, we see this in various New Testament passages,

- Matthew 27: 4 – “Judas says “I have sinned for I have betrayed innocent blood”
- Hebrews 4: 15 – “For we have do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, YET WAS WITHOUT SIN.”

Paul here is stressing that God made his sinless, perfect Son Jesus Christ to become SIN – FOR OUR SAKE – AND THAT’S NOT ALL!!

Then the transfer v21, **“So that in HIM, WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD”**

This is truly amazing and mind-blowing – the power of the Gospel!!

The righteousness of God – understand this, this is what believers, people who accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross are given the gift of a RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. God through Jesus says:

“GIVE ME YOUR SINS AND I WILL DIE IN YOUR PLACE;

AND I WILL GIVE YOU MY RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIVE IN YOUR PLACE.” WOW!!

What a Gospel, what Grace, that would die for a sinner like me, but not but not only that but transfer his righteousness. You see God has adjudicated in our favour by refusing, because of the death of Christ in our place, refuses to take account of our sins, but to forgive them.

Please realise then, you see if becoming “the righteousness of God” means God has adjudicated in our favour and put us in a right relationship with himself – then – to “become sin” being the opposite counterpart will mean that God had to adjudicate against Christ because Jesus took it upon himself – the BURDEN OF OUR SINS – with the result that Jesus, the Son, had his relationship with His Father, momentarily, but terribly beyond all human comprehension – severed.

Now we can perhaps begin to understand something of the agony of Gethsemane, where Jesus says **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.” (Luke 22: 42, and “My God, my God why have you forsaken me” (Matthew 27: 46).**

When we trust in Christ an exchange is made, He takes our sin, and makes us right with God, fills us with the Holy Spirit, which brings the righteousness. Our sin was laid on Christ at his crucifixion, His righteousness is given to us at our conversion. Something of immeasurable worth for something that is worthless.

So now, in understanding this I believe we can make more sense, rather than in just a sentimental way “Everyone in Christ is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come”

Well,

THE OLD HAS GONE, SIN!! Forgiven, redeemed, saved, in a spiritual state, perfect in Christ – we are no longer slaves to sin, no longer slaves to human nature. Hallelujah!!

THE NEW HAS COME, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD –in the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the righteousness of God, no longer slaves to sin, but can overcome, we can make choices – to love!! For you see “love isn’t love until you give it away.”

“Everyone in Christ is a new creation” Christians are brand new people, on the inside. The Holy Spirit gives them new life, they are not the same anymore. We are not re-formed, not rehabilitated, not re-educated – WE ARE RE-CREATED!!

Living in vital union with Christ. At conversion we do not merely turn over a new leaf – we begin a new life, under a new master, living in the power of the Holy Spirit. In this present passage Paul is stressing the newness of life in Christ, and after stating “The old has gone - Sin, the new has come – the righteousness of God” he now goes on to illustrate in 3 ways how this should change us, and behaviours infused by the Spirit which will emerge.

1. **V 15 “ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him, who died”**

This love of God, which we have just seen demonstrated on the cross is what so deeply influenced Paul, and something which he gave his whole life too – the death and resurrection is the only reason to account for Paul’s motivation – and it should be ours too!! The possibility that those who have benefitted from this, should in anyway revert to living for themselves is an anathema to Paul, although it did happen them, and it does happen now, in our sometimes comfortable Christianity. The question today is where are we this? Are we now living for Christ, or just a bit, and still keep most of our lives to ourselves – Paul argues here that this should not be the case.

I had the opportunity to visit my dear friend Catalin in Romania at Easter time. Catalin is someone who I have mentioned a few times, he can’t walk and can’t talk, but preaches using inflections from his voice box, and when he preaches people come to know Christ, totally amazing. I stayed with them for 3 days, and stayed at their house, and we lived in one room for these 3 days. We ate, we talked, we prayed and we slept - all in the one room. No bathroom, no toilet, an outside toilet. They had so little, but what they have they give away. They were counting some money one day, trying to sort something, so asked them what was happening “Our friend has fallen off a ladder and broken his leg, the family now have little or no income so we want to give them what we have!!” I thought to myself, how amazing, “ Here are people not living for themselves, but for Christ. Very challenging for me though as I reflected on this on my trip home.

The old has gone – the new has come!! So we no longer live for ourselves.

2. **V 16 “From now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view”**

Do you/I look at the world/at people the way God does? We are no longer going to view people through the lens of the world, but through the eyes of Jesus!

Paul and his colleagues now have a completely different outlook. As part of this new creation being effected by God in Christ, the old attitudes towards people have passed away or they should have? From now on we regard no-one from a human point of view.

At Powerpoint on Friday evening we were listening to Patrick Regan, OBE, Chief Executive of XLP, an organisation that works with over 2000 teenagers in London, being excluded from school, joining gangs and getting involved in all sorts of dangerous stuff – and they are right in the midst of them, loving them and seeing God break into their lives – young people disregarded by most of society, and if we’re honest by most of us and the church too – because they don’t fit into our cosy system of church. Patrick said “Jesus was known as “friend of sinners”, but is the church today “friend of meetings or friend of Christians?” “Love isn’t love until you give it away”

Very challenging and this verse reminds me of the brilliant Hillsong song, “Hosanna”

“Heal my heart and make it clean

Open up my eyes to the things unseen

Show me how to love like you have loved me.

Break my heart for what breaks yours

Everything I am for your kingdom’s cause.”

This participation in the new creation – the old has gone in terms of sin, the new has come in terms of the righteousness of God is reflected in the CHANGED OUTLOOK of which v 16 speaks. This I believe completely changes our outlook on the purpose of our lives and how we relate to people.

How are we growing in this my friends? Are we progressing in this area of our walk with Jesus, will you let God break your heart today, for what breaks His? Will you open your heart and grow?

3. **In v 18 – 20, “and gave us the ministry/ message of reconciliation...we are therefore Christ’s ambassadors”**

An ambassador is an official representative of one country to another, as believers, those who are a new creation – we are Christ’s ambassadors sent with his message of reconciliation to the world. The preaching of reconciliation has to be carried out. When we fully realise what God has done for us in Jesus, that our sins are forgiven and we are made right with God, v 14 **“the love of Christ compels us”** to share this with others. You see unless people are given that opportunity and respond personally to that call they cannot experience reconciliation with God. Because God entrusted him with the message of reconciliation Paul is able to say “we are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God was making his appeal through us” God who reconciles the world to himself, now actually appeals to the world – to our friends, neighbours, family to be reconciled to Him.

“Everyone who is in Christ is a new creation” The old has gone, the new has come. So the old was having no interest in sharing the message of reconciliation, the new has come where we see it as our responsibility and get on and do this – into the needy world we live in.

Application

So, how does this apply to our lives today?

To be growing, we need to ask ourselves this, “What is God doing in our lives?”

Why is this important, why are we launching this Pathway Postcard today – because I believe God is saying to us as a church this. There are so many exciting things and activities going on in our church, God is opening so many doors into the very heart of the community that we seek to reach for Him. So many wonderful things happening, God moving, in the lives of families, of young people, and into the schools. Many, many things, many blessings as a church. However, it is important that our spiritual growth matches and keeps up with our busyness.

Often when we think of the story of Mary and Martha, we think it should be the one or the other. Either Martha busying herself to look after Jesus and many guests, or like Mary sitting at her Master’s feet, soaking in his love, grace and guidance. No, it needs in the life of the church both, to serve yes, but as important, if not more, sitting at the feet of Jesus. This is the point Jesus makes, Mary has chosen at that time a better thing.

The **“old has gone the new has come”** means:

- ✚ No longer living for self, but for Him who died for us.
- ✚ No longer viewing people from a worldly point of view, but through Jesus’ eyes.
- ✚ Taking the message and ministry of reconciliation into a need world.

So today the challenge from God’s word is:

- ✚ Are we on a regular basis able to hear from God – guiding us, aware that he is working in our hearts, our lives, feeling promptings from his Holy Spirit. This then feeds into our relationships, with each other in the church and to others who don’t yet know Christ. It also means that we are seeking to be reconciled to those that we have fallen out with, especially in the church as Paul says it is also a “ministry of reconciliation”
- ✚ Are we talking and sharing with others about how God is moving in our lives? Maybe, today over coffee, why don’t you share with someone about today’s message, or a particular way that you feel God has been working in your life, or an area of discipleship where you feel Pathway might help you? Why not? Let us be a church where we celebrate, and it becomes natural for us to share regularly what God is doing in and through our lives.

May we all reflect today, after the service, in our quiet times, in our house group discussions – where are we on God’s Pathway and how can we grow and show – **WE ARE INDEED NEW CREATIONS, THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW HAS COME!!** For His Glory!! Amen.

Gary Torbet

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