

“Becoming – How Jesus Changes A Sinful Heart”

September 30, 2007 * Colossians 3:1-17

I. Roger & Fred – SuperChristians

A. *What does Jesus promise to do if we follow him?*

To make us into a new kind of man or woman.

B. *What’s difficult about ‘becoming’?*

It might hurt. We prefer to keep things as they are because we don’t like change. We’re afraid of what others might think and so we put S’s on our chests, and masks on our faces and pretend to have it all together.

C. *How does Jesus change a sinful heart?*

It can only happen at the foot of the Cross.

How Do We “Become” What God Wants Us To Become?

II. The first thing I must do is come to the cross to receive from Jesus forgiveness and new birth.

A. *In Col.3:1-4 before I can do anything to better myself, what has to happen to me?*

I must “die” and be “raised” with Christ.

B. *What’s Paul referring to?*

Our conversion. When I first come to Christ to take him as my Savior, I have come to the end of myself. In repenting of my sins and asking Jesus to forgive me, I am admitting that I cannot save myself. I am lost without him. My sin nature is too much for me. I need to be born again. That’s what conversion is. In a very real sense, the sinful part of me which used to rule the show with no resistance from me, gets crucified when I accept Christ. And the spiritual part of me – the part of me that relates to God which had been stone-cold dead because of my sin – that part of me is reactivated, brought back to life when I accept Christ.

C. *What does Romans teach?*

Romans 3:20 – “No one will be declared righteous in [God’s] sight by observing the law.” No one gets to heaven by being good. Why not? Romans 3:23 – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” How then can any of us be saved, let alone become better people? Romans 3:24 – “[We are] justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.” Until you come to the cross, bow your knees there, accept by faith the grace of forgiveness and new birth which God offers you through the death of Christ, you will remain a prisoner of your sin nature.

D. *So “Being” must come before “Becoming” – what does this mean?*

Before I can *become* a better person, I must *be* a born again child of God. Faith must come before works. Justification must come before sanctification. The relationship comes before the religion. Mary comes before Martha. We can say it a hundred ways. Religion says, “Do all good things and maybe God will accept you.” The Cross of Jesus says, “God accepts you, now go and do good things.”

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III. *Two Great Truths Which The Cross Teaches Me: I Am Radically broken and Radically loved.*

A. *What might long-time Christians be tempted to forget?*

There are people who have been serving the Lord a long time, long-time Christians, and after while if they’re not careful they may be tempted to forget that they are radically broken. They look in the mirror and they say, “You know what, I’m not half-bad. I’m a pretty good person. My life is well-ordered. I love God. I love my

neighbor. I'm not nearly as bad as so-and-so. Yep, you and me God, we're a good team." And if you're not careful, you'll soon be on your way to becoming a Pharisee.

B. As Paul went on in his Christian life, what did he become more aware of?

It's interesting how the further along Paul went in his Christian life, the more aware he became of the full depth of his sin, and the full depth of his need for Christ, even as he was growing in holiness. And he reached the point of being able to just come out and say that he was broken and was nothing without the grace of God. You can actually trace that development in his writings. He'd say to Christians, "I am the chief of sinners." He'd say, "When I am weak, then I am strong." "We have this treasure in earthen vessels [jars of clay]," he reminded Christians. We're all crack pots!

C. Even if (a big if) you are a 'better' person, is that because you are 'good' and your heart is not as sinful?

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" ~ Jeremiah 17:9

D. What's the difference between a Christian & an unbeliever?

Your spiritual heart is just as sinful and diseased and corruptible as any other human being's. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt." That goes for your heart too. What's the difference between a Christian and an unbeliever? The only difference, O Christian, between you and the unbeliever, is that you are a recipient and beneficiary of the amazing grace of God which has helped bring to heel your sinful heart, helped crucify it.

Whether God *keeps* you from evil or *delivers* you out of evil is no difference - it is his grace bringing you to freedom.

E. If you see this, how is this going to affect the way you see people without the Lord in their lives?

You're going to look at them with a lot more compassion. You're going to want to bring God's grace to them, by sharing your faith, by inviting them to church, by reaching out to them, by loving them in a whole new way. You're going to want to get the harshness and judgmentalism out of your heart.

IV. "But I'm such a mess! How can someone like me ever change?"

A. Remember – because of the Cross, God gives me the time and space I need to grow.

B. Don't forget – God accepts you first!

1 Cor.6:20 – "You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." God accepts you first. Ephesians 4:1 – "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." God accepts you first. Psalm 37:3 – "Trust in the Lord, and do good." God accepts you first. Romans 12:1 – "In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices." 1 John 4:19 – "We love because he first loved us."

V. What truth did my heart need to hear this morning?