

“Growing: How Jesus Changes A Sinful Heart”

October 7, 2007 * Colossians 3:1-17

I. “Growing”

A. *What are the 2 ways churches can grow?*

1. They can grow **outwardly large** in numbers.
2. They can grow **inwardly deep** in spiritual maturity.

B. *What does the Cross show us?*

1. We are radically **broken**.
2. We are radically **loved**.
3. We are radically **accepted**.

C. *What are some of the specific things we are to do in Colossians 3?*

Verse 1 says I am to “set my heart on things above.”

Verse 2 says I am to “set my mind on things above, not on earthly things.”

Verse 5 says I am to “put to death whatever belongs to my earthly nature” and then Paul lists numerous examples of what that might be.

In verse 7 he says I am to “rid myself of all such things” and he gives additional examples.

In verse 12 he says I am to “clothe myself” with certain virtues, and he lists examples of what these virtues are.

In verse 14 he says over everything else I am to “put on love”.

In verse 15 he says I am to “let the peace of Christ rule in my heart”.

In verse 16 he says I am to “let the word of Christ dwell in me richly”.

And in verse 17 he says that “whatever I do I’m to do it thankfully in the name of Jesus.”

Keys For Winning The Battle For Holiness

II. Key #1 – Know Where The Battle Is Fought

The battlefield is my heart and my mind.

A. *What was the Pharisee (legalist) view of holiness?*

The Pharisees, being legalists, were convinced that holiness was a matter of outward behavior, that the battlefield for purity was the body, that sin seeps in from the outside and works in. And so the Pharisees’ strategy for holiness was to keep the body from being exposed to sin, and you do this in two ways: 1) you rein in the body with lists and lists of rules, things you must not look at, must not touch, must not do, and 2) you protect the body by keeping clear of anything that might contaminate you, and inevitably that means keeping clear of sinful people.

B. *What is insufficient about living by rules?*

Rule don’t do anything to actually change our sinful hearts and minds. Rules also restrict the happiness we would enjoy otherwise (a Christian who has a rule against watching movies might avoid all the ‘contamination’ from the bad movies but would also miss out on all the inspiration from good movies.)

C. *Rules are important for 2 groups: who are they?*

Rules are necessary for two types of people: children and the weak. Children who have not yet developed the capacity for discerning right from wrong need rules to protect them. But the hope is that as children grow, they will develop the capacity and discipline for moral discernment. And rules are for the weak, those who have shown the capacity because of addiction or repeated failure to not be able to cope with temptations in a given area. For them, rules are good and necessary. The alcoholic who will never, ever take drink again for fear of giving way. Probably good that they live by a rule in that case. But...if that’s you – don’t you go judging other people who do not live by your rule. Remember, it’s you who is weak, not they.

D. What did Jesus tell the Pharisees makes us unclean?

Matthew 14:15-20, the Pharisees have just lambasted Jesus because the disciples were eating with unwashed hands. And Jesus opens up both barrels on them in verse 15. *“Are you still so dull? Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean’. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, lies, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’, but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”*

III. Key #2 – Know How To Fight This Battle

A. Paul’s approach in a nutshell. Rather than work from the outside in, work from the inside out, by:

1. **Discover** & **destroy** my sins’ roots.
2. **Develop** & **discipline** my heart and mind in godly thoughts and behavior

B. What two metaphors does Paul use to describe this?

Putting to death & making alive.
Undressing and reclothing.

C. What practical steps do these verses suggest?

1. I need to give Jesus permission to take me **deep** inside my heart and mind to find out specifically what is lurking there.

“SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TEST ME AND KNOW MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS. SEE IF THERE IS ANY OFFENSIVE WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING.” ~ PSALM 139:23

a. How am I like an iceberg?

In his book “The Emotionally Healthy Church”, Pastor Peter Scazzero says we’re each like an iceberg. There’s the part of us that is visible to everyone else, that sticks up out of the water, but most of who we are as a person lies hidden beneath the surface, just like with an iceberg, and that’s where we need to start looking

if we’re to become emotionally healthy. But most of us would rather “do” things, keep outwardly busy, rather than look inside, says Scazzero. But we’ll never be free till we make this inner journey.

2 Corinthians 13:5 – “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”

2. I need to ask myself, “**Why** are these things here?”

a. Where did God do this with others?

God always tries to help us go into the depths of our heart to find out what’s churning there, and why. He appeared to Adam and Eve after they sinned, and said, “Adam, where are you?” He wasn’t asking for their location in the garden. “I’m three feet behind the apple tree, God. The one with the big fig leaf.” No, he was asking them what was going on inside their hearts. He appeared to Cain at the moment he was thinking about murdering his brother, and God said to him, “Why are you angry?...Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have but must master it.” And God is asking you, “Why are you lusting so?...Why are you angry?...Why do you have this need to gossip?...Why do you have to win every argument?...Why do you have to manipulate your husband?...Why are you always late to meetings?”

3. I need to ask for Jesus’ help in overcoming my sin by **teaching** my heart and mind new thoughts and perspectives.

a. Why is living by rules insufficient for this?

Because what the Holy Spirit speaks to me about my struggle with anger may not be what he speaks to you about your struggle with anger. Anger can come from different roots. Maybe your anger comes from a father you were trying to get to notice you and never did. Maybe your anger is rooted in childhood sexual abuse. Maybe your anger is rooted in having an alcoholic mother. Or maybe you came to find that anger was a pretty nifty tool for getting things done, or keeping people away. There’s a hundred different reasons why a person might struggle with sinful anger. And Jesus through the Spirit wants to journey with you to get at

the root of it – and then bring that root to the cross for forgiveness and healing, for putting that root to death, and then replace it with a whole new set of godly thoughts, desires and perspectives, to teach you to set your heart and mind on things above.

IV. Key #3 – Know With Whom We Will Win The Battle

A. What do verses 15-17 tell me to do to allow Jesus to teach me new thoughts, perspectives, and desires for my life?

Verse 15 – “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.” Here’s one thing Jesus wants to do in you and for you. By sitting at his feet and connecting to him each day through time spent with him, he’ll bring peace into your heart that you didn’t have before. You have to spend time with your Lord if you want to have this peace. It’s *with him* that you’ll change. And then he says, “And be thankful”. Well, here’s something practical that we can do to develop new thoughts, perspectives and desires – we can develop an attitude of gratitude. Just training ourselves to be more thankful can make a world of difference in changing our hearts and minds. With Jesus beside us, we can do this. **Verse 16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”** Look at those words. Let the word of Christ dwell *in you richly*. You just can’t read the Bible alone and expect that to do the trick. You just can’t apply a Bible bandaid to your brain and expect things to all be better for you. No – you have to let the Bible soak into you, as you read it and meditate on it and study it and memorize it – you allow it to saturate you and penetrate you. More often than not, the Bible is the surgical tool God the Holy Spirit will use to cut you open inside, and expose all that ugly sin in you that it could be brought to the surface and removed. The Bible calls itself ‘the sword of the Spirit’. This is the implement God likes to use to perform surgery on us. And so we have to allow it to dwell *in us*. Don’t you dare open up your Bible and have that devotion without at least asking God the question, “Lord, what are you speaking to me through this verse? What do I need to change on the basis of what I’m reading here?” And then Paul continues by saying, “as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...” How often does God use other teachers, other brothers and sisters to speak truth into our lives, to point out to us ways in which we may be hurting ourselves; and

through their example, their modeling, their encouragement, we’ll develop new thoughts and new ways of looking at our lives. And all of this taking us closer to freedom. Paul’s not done. He mentions something else that Jesus uses to teach us new thoughts, desires and perspectives. “...and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” Fill your heart with worship! There’s power in music to shape the way you think and feel and look upon your life. Christians need to have a steady diet of worship if they are to truly set their hearts and minds on things above.” And finally Paul concludes this amazing section by saying: **Verse 17 – “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”**