

Christian Growth Course - Lesson 6

Crucifying the Old Self

Introduction: Behind all specific sins and bondages is a basic bondage common to all people. Behind the problem of sins is the problem of sin. Unregenerate man is basically an enemy of God, a rebel, determined to be independent of God, in charge of his own life. He has a sinful nature that refuses to obey God, except perhaps on his own terms. Christ came to set us free from this old, selfish, rebellious nature and to make us new creatures, born again with a new nature like God's which lets God be God and fully accepts the Lordship of Jesus over every part of one's life.

1. Before conversion we are controlled by "the flesh," or "sinful nature" (NIV) - Romans 7:5.
 - A. The sinful nature is hostile to God and cannot obey him or appreciate his truth - Romans 8:7, 8; 7:14-25; 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2; 2:14.
 - B. This has been true ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, who wanted to be "like gods," independent of God - Genesis 3. (Behind them was Satan, who fell through pride and rebellion - 1 Timothy 3:6; compare Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17).
 - C. The sinful nature fights against the Spirit to keep us from obeying the Spirit - Galatians 5:17.
 - D. By "the flesh" (translated "sinful nature" in the NIV), Paul does not mean the body, but the rebellious sin principle that controls fallen man.
 - E. The fruit of the sinful nature is evil and destroys the good - Galatians 5:19-21. The final result is eternal death - Romans 7:5b; 8:13a; Galatians 6:8.
 - F. The sinful nature can become very religious or respectable when it is in its selfish interest to do so. But it cannot obey God in the real trials because its basic commitment is to self.
 - G. Some characteristics by which you can recognize the sinful nature:
 - 1) It is self-centered rather than God-centered.
 - 2) It looks out for its own interests, not those of Christ - Philippians 2:21.
 - 3) It glorifies itself, not God.
 - 4) It rationalizes away or rejects what conflicts with its own will.
 - 5) It uses religion and God rather than being used by God.
 - 6) It does religious acts for selfish purposes rather than for God.
 - 7) It prefers legalism and outward formality rather than heart-righteousness.
 - 8) It does not like to be accountable to anyone.
 - 9) It often conflicts with others because it insists on its "rights" and desires.
 - 10) It is centered on the world.

- H. The old sinful nature cannot be reformed and is only fit for execution.
2. The old nature is "crucified" (executed) when one comes to Christ - Romans 6:6.
- A. Baptism symbolizes the burial of our old nature and our resurrection into the new life - Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:11, 12.
- B. In baptism we are symbolically joined to Christ in his death, burial and resurrection - Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:20; 2 Timothy 2:11.
- C. Through repentance and baptism, we are "dead to sin" but alive to righteousness - Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:3; Galatians 5:24.
- D. This involves not just death to specific sins but death to "self" - Matthew 16:24; compare Philippians 2:6, 7. This is basic to this study.
3. A new nature is born in us at conversion.
- A. We are "born again" to enter God's kingdom - John 3:3-6; compare Titus 3:5.
- B. The "seed" which produces our new nature is God's word - 1 Peter 1:23.
- C. We will not now practice sin as a way of life because our seed remains in us - 1 John 3:9.
- D. We are a "new creation" - 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- E. God's image is being restored in us - Colossians 3:9, 10; Ephesians 4:24; 2 Peter 1:4.
- F. The Holy Spirit is producing in us the nature or character of Jesus - Galatians 5:22, 23; 4:19.
- G. Our hearts are softened and made submissive to God's will - Ezekiel 11:19, 20; Psalm 40:8; Jeremiah 31:33.
- H. This can only happen if our hearts are first broken and contrite at conversion because of our sin - Psalm 51:17.
- I. Some characteristics of the new nature:
- 1) Selfless love - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
 - 2) Complete submission and surrender to Christ as Lord in every area of life - Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Jeremiah 29:13. A spirit of willing submission.
 - 3) Acknowledges that Jesus has the right to tell us how to live.
 - 4) Is willing to be accountable to others and to submit to God's leaders.
 - 5) Wants more than anything to please Christ; wants nothing to do with things that sadden Christ or weaken others.
 - 6) Not just looking for benefits but for service.

- 7) Is more concerned with redemption of lives than with its own "rights."
 - 8) Has God's law in its heart, not just in the written letter.
 - 9) Loves unity and gets along readily with others.
 - 10) Is a "friend of God," understanding God's will, loving what God loves and hating what God hates - John 15:15.
 - 11) Is centered on heaven and on God.
- J. This complete surrender is a decision that the convert makes from the first, but the surrender becomes more effective as the convert matures spiritually and knows himself better.
4. Though the old nature is legally dead at conversion, it tries to reassert itself and must continually be "put to death" - Colossians 3:5.
- A. Just as Canaan was legally given to Israel but had to be conquered in order to be actually possessed, so with the death of our sinful nature.
 - B. God respects our freedom and personhood. He wants us take part in choosing good and rejecting evil. Thus we grow more like him. If God simply programmed us to do only good, we would not be persons but machines.
 - C. We have to decide repeatedly to yield our bodies to serve righteousness, not evil - Romans 6:12, 13. We have to decide to "put off" evil and "put on" good - Ephesians 4:22-5:4; Colossians 3:5-14.
 - D. The Holy Spirit helps us put sin to death - Romans 8:13.
 - E. Asceticism is of no value against the sinful nature - Colossians 2:20-23. Neither can law or rules conquer it - Romans 8:3.
 - F. Practical steps in crucifying the old nature:
 - 1) Be committed to an on-going effort.
 - 2) Make the basic decision to let Jesus be Lord in everything (many church members haven't).
 - 3) Study how to make Jesus' Lordship real and effective in worship, church work, lifestyle, marriage and family, employment, citizenship, finances, school life, dating, personal relationships, etc.
 - 4) Deal with rebellious thoughts as soon as they appear - 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.
 - 5) Feed the new nature and starve the old:
 - a. Prayer and Bible study.
 - b. Christian association - Hebrews 10:24, 25.
 - c. Concentrate on the life and teaching of Jesus - Hebrews 12:2.

- d. Ask for the help of the Spirit - Luke 11:13; Romans 8:13.
 - e. Cut loose from everything that feeds the old nature - Hebrews 12:1.
 - f. Above all, guard your thought-life. As you choose the right thoughts often, the habit will grow - Proverbs 4:23.
 - g. Consider how slipping back into your sinful nature would affect Jesus who died for you, as well as other people who look to you for an example - Hebrews 6:6.
- 6) Bring spiritual discipline and planning into your life.
- a. Learn how to use fasting - Psalm 35:13.
 - b. Decide and learn to say "no" to yourself regarding anything that would hurt your spiritual life.
 - c. Make concrete requirements of yourself.
 - d. Drive down some "stakes" to symbolize your dedication to Christ, such as:
 1. Attending all church services, and not considering being somewhere else when the church meets.
 2. Voluntarily giving at least 10% of your income to God.
 3. Honoring your parents in practical ways such as regularly visiting with them or communicating with them. Clearing up any relationship problems with them.
 4. Having a daily time of private Bible reading and prayer.

(People who are willing to be under this kind of discipline are the ones who grow).
 - e. Make yourself accountable to your leaders (as far as they follow Christ and his word) and to fellow-believers (as in a support group).
 - f. Unwillingness to come under accountability and discipline shows that the old, proud rebellious self is not being crucified.

Conclusion: Though it takes effort and patience, by God's help your old rebellious selfish nature can be killed. There are people all around us who are truly yielded to Christ. There is nothing on earth more beautiful than a joyfully submitted Christian life, a life like that of Jesus.

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