

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups June 11th 2006

Live a new life! – Made New!

Ephesians 4:17 -25



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

At the heart of today's passage is Paul's call for Christians to get rid of the tatty old clothes of one way of life (the old self) and to dress in the sparkling new outfit of a new life (new self) given to us by Christ himself – read v 22 -24.

Recent Surveys have recorded the following: 25 years ago 12% of our population went to church on Sunday, today it's around 7% and by 2020 it could be 4.4%. The average age of churchgoers in 1980 was 37, today it is 47 and by 2020 it will be around 57. Today's 16 -20 yrs view religion as a consumer choice and have little concept of sin or a sense of the need of salvation. Combined spirits of our Post Modern Age – secularism, pluralism, materialism and moral relativism have led our society to a pretty dark and desperate place – read v 18. The key to understanding the desperate place that is life without Christ is Paul's phrase 'hardness of heart.' Paul is using a Greek Word associated with marble i.e. hearts that become as hard as marble, as insensitive as solid rock! Such a hardness of heart to God's ways leads to moral insensitivity and the inability to notice what is right and wrong and once that is in place anything goes! Read v 19. The ultimate and most terrifying consequences of a hardness of heart towards God and his love for us is to be 'separated from the life of God' – verse 18. To be separated from the one who gave us life, who brought us into being out of love, who gave himself totally for us – to be separated from God is surely the greatest tragedy that can befall anyone. No wonder Paul urges the fledgling Ephesian Church not to live a life shrouded in darkness but to live as 'children of light' read v 17.

Becoming a Christian is a radical life changing experience but **being** a Christian day by day is equally radical. Christ calls us to a radical life style that stands out from a pagan world, a life that is 'righteous and holy' v 24. Not many of us would describe our lifestyle as this and none of us can lead a holy life in our own strength however when we throw off our old self and put on a new self we mark a turning point for change; change which needs to be continuous and happening over a lifetime – 'being made new' v23 is better translated as continuing to be made new. Who better to teach us in this lifetime's work than Jesus himself – read v 20 and 21. We need to know him more, read and listen to what he is saying about how we should live our lives, let the Holy Spirit guide and lead us more each day, let him teach us new things and old and when we fall let him forgive and renew us and set us on our feet again.



Witness: Questions to discuss

1. What is your reaction to the statistics regarding Church attendance?
2. What do you think are your old tatty clothes?
3. Do you know of others who you would say have a 'hardness of heart' towards God? How can this change?
4. Read verse 17. What can 'living no longer as the Gentiles do' mean for us today?
5. Would you describe your Christian lifestyle as 'radical?' How is it different from others who are not Christians?
6. What areas do you struggle in most in leading a Christian lifestyle?
7. In what ways can Jesus help and teach us to live a Christian life?

