

Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

We are encouraged to live out the new life that God has given us. To acknowledge the presence of the new nature we received as we turned to Christ and to leave the old nature behind. In other words its **off with the old and on with the new...**it is more easily said than done but never the less this process of being made new is not done in our own strength but by the saving work of Jesus on the cross, his resurrection and ascension and he is now on the throne ministering the power of His life in and through our lives now. That being so ensures that we can approach our exploration of this passage and subject this morning with every confidence. For He who has begun a good work in us will complete it! Phil 1 v 9

There are many who think that they are Christians but do not think of themselves as disciples even though every Christian is called to be a disciple. The word "Christian" is only mentioned 3 times in the bible. What's more – those of us who are Christians, who have committed our lives to Jesus are called by him to "Go and make disciples" So what exactly is a disciple? A **disciple is a follower of Christ**. One who strives to make Jesus the Lord of his or her life. **Someone who follows His instructions and teaching and seeks to live out a life worthy of their calling.** To be a disciple means that we willingly claim the new nature which is already ours in our salvation through Christ Jesus our Lord. Read verse 24!!! The St Paul's vision statement is that we love the Lord, love one another and love those who do not know Him yet. This is a good and worthy vision. Preceding these 3 statements however is a prerequisite without which we cannot possibly begin to exercise or live out the proposed vision. The prerequisite is this... That we need to understand and receive God's love for us. **He chose us since before the beginning of the creation to be pure and blameless in His sight** – amazing. Look back with me on Ephesians Chapter 1...v 4 and 5... verse 11 and 18... a great prayer for disciples. Then ahead to Chapter 2 ... **Made alive with Christ..** end with verse 10 in Chapter 2... **we are God's masterpiece** ! Brilliant. It is with this fundamental and critical exposition of the true nature of God and of His love for us that Paul is able to springboard into His instruction in Chapter 4 that we are looking at today... he is able now to explain to us **how we walk the talk!**

Firstly then Paul reminds the disciples what the pagan lifestyle is really like. See verse 17 and 18... Paul is wanting to help the Ephesians understand that **when they committed to Jesus as Lord they were given a new nature... a new self.** If we have said yes to Jesus, we have received his forgiveness and committed our lives to him and were **given a new nature sealed by the power of the Holy Spirit** the moment we surrendered to Christ. That means that we already have "citizenship" in God's Kingdom. Nothing can ever take that away from us. We have already been given a new nature – one which is the key to each of us knowing and fulfilling our potentials. It just simply that **we have got rather used to our old nature – our old ways.** Most of us are creatures of habit and bad ones but habits are hard to break! We really are better off putting off the old and embracing the new nature says Paul but somehow our minds – for that is the battlefield – habitually cling onto the old. Paul is trying to help us discover and live out the benefits of the new life in Christ – of course he understands that it takes some getting used to... for it is a **supernatural life where we learn to "work-out" that which God has "worked in us"**. Some of us only get half way there... I came across this quote from Martin Luther "**Most Christians have enough religion to feel guilty about their sin but not enough to enjoy life in the spirit**". Often the cause of our internal misery is down to pride and a lack of ability to forgive either ourselves or others. CS Lewis said this on the **subject "I think that if God forgives us then we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him"**

Here is a list of various character traits in this passage and later in chapter 5 describing our old human nature and the new mature nature in Christ. the old ones.. **Futile thinking, a hard heart, insensitivity, impurity, deceitful desires, falsehood, sinful anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, brawling and slander, malice, greed, obscenity, coarse joking, foolishness, drunkenness and debauchery...** And here's the new ones **Humility, patience, bearing with one another, gentleness, striving for peace, Righteousness, holiness, truthfulness, hard work, sharing with those in need, kindness, love, compassion, forgiveness, thanksgiving, goodness, truth, wisdom, making the most of every opportunity, understanding god's will, being filled in the spirit, joyful worship!** The life and new nature of the disciple is vastly different to the pagan's life and nature. whilst we struggle to exhibit the lifestyle and attitude of our new nature in Christ we can still live it out – not in our own strength but because we have been sealed with the holy spirit and already given this new nature when we became a Christian. We are encouraged to go on being a disciple, following Jesus or being imitators of Christ through the renewing of our minds. Paul gives us practical hints;

The Holy Spirit grieves. · All sin pains the heart of God. · The sins of believers especially cause God to grieve.- *Ephesians 1:13*· Grieve in Greek is *lupeo*: "to distress, to sadden, to cause heaviness and sorrow."

As believers, we are to do away with lying.

As believers, we are to always speak truthfully. Since Satan inspires lies, when we lie, we give him glory and promote his kingdom. However To “speak truth” does not mean to tell everything we know. We are called to be loving and wise.

As believers, we should have no room for misplaced anger. (Stop seething and start forgiving (vv. 26–27, 32b).) We can be angry without sin. The word for *anger* here refers to “a deep-seated, determined, and settled conviction.” Believers are to have a righteous indignation, an anger against evil, injustice, immorality, and godlessness.

As believers, we should always resolve angry feelings. Unresolved anger becomes malice, which leads to the desire to seek revenge. Malice breeds bitterness. Eventually malice will give way to wrath, an explosive type of anger. If we refuse to resolve our anger, we “give place to the Devil.” Nothing makes the Holy Spirit happier than when we exercise grace to forgive.

Believers are not to be thieves.

Believers are to work honestly for a reason and to give to those in need. There is great value in good hard work We work that we may “have something to give him who has need.”

Believers are not to corrupt others (v. 29a, 31).

Corrupt comes from *sapros*, which describes rotten fruit and spoiled food. A “corrupt word” is something that pollutes, such as off-color jokes or vulgarity. We are to “put away bitterness.” We are not to corrupt with wrath—explosive fits of anger. We are to not corrupt with anger—deep-seated, smoldering anger. We are to not corrupt with clamor—a public outburst, reflecting a loss of self-control. We are not to corrupt with evil speaking—ongoing defamation or subtle revenge on someone else that rises from an unforgiving heart.

Believers are to edify others (v. 29a, 32). What we say should edify or build up those who listen. When people speak with us, they should feel a sense of God’s love and encouragement..

Winston Churchill said **we are all worms but I like to think of myself as a glow-worm!** I think that’s helpful – we can think of our glow being our inner life with Christ.

We all need a work-out ! Work out what God has worked in you and its God who does it...God who works in you to work out his purpose.... Being a disciple is about a process. **Daily your mind, your thoughts and attitudes to the new nature** – that is Christ within you...the hope of glory. Its easy to look around Church or even your small group and think that everyone else seems so much more together than you are or that everyone else seems to find this being a disciple so much easier than you...not necessarily so! It may be that everyone else finds being vulnerable and telling it how it really is real tough. Impressions are just that – impressions! So how can we really go about adopting our new nature by the renewing of our minds? **1/ its not**

an overnight job! It’s a continual process. Look up John 8 verse 31. We need to practise Jesus teachings...practise what we have learned about Jesus as Paul says in verse 20. Its about listening and acting. The more we do that the more our new nature will work its way through our whole selves. We will be surprised at discovering who we really are when we go deeper into the nature of Christ Himself. Great quote from Oswald Chambers... Discipleship is built entirely on the supernatural grace of God. Walking on the water is easy compared to walking on dry land as a disciple of Jesus. Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus, but He followed Jesus afar off on the land. We do not need to grace of God to stand crises, human nature and pride are sufficient. We can face the strain magnificently, but it does require the supernatural grace of God to live twenty-four hours in every day as a saint, to go through the drudgery as a disciple, to live an ordinary, unobserved, ignored existence as a disciple of Jesus. It is inbred in us that we have to do exceptional things for God, but we have not. **We have to be exceptional in the ordinary things, to be holy in mean streets, among mean people, and this is not learned in five minutes."**

2/ Commit as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of God and then the Lord shows you more things and then you learn more about yourself and more about Him...a continuous journey. As we submit our will to God's we are responding to his loving purpose for us. Jer 29 v 11 1 john 4 16 – 19 Living bible Roman 12 v 1 -2.

3/ Study and live by the scriptures 2 tim 2 v 15

4 / Pray and praise continually

5/ through Fellowship with others. This may be in a small group or a friendship group. You may like to approach a couple of people and become prayer pals. encouraging each other, praying for each other and disciplining one another as the Lord teaches you... heb 10 v 24-25, acts 2 41 – 47 RSV

6 / By Resisting the enemy - The devil has to have our consent before he can gain influence in our lives... James s 4 v 7..."Humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you" Not may – will!. However this is not always easy as I well know and when we get it wrong and sin we must try to confess failure, takes a stand and command him to go.

7 - Beware of self pity and maintain your victory...Its really easy to slip into a “woe is me attitude but its dangerous and can easily lead to us living in defeat instead of victory!

8 -Guard your thought life - a conscious act of will. It is our responsibility to disagree with any negative attitudes and choose to agree with the positive life of Jesus in you.

Read 2 Peter 1 v 3 – 11 Lastly **“By this shall all people know that you are my disciples if you love one another as I have loved you”**. we must begin with understanding and receiving God’s love for us. If we have not received his love then we are incapable of loving one another and living out the life of a disciple. BUT if we know deep in our inmost being that we are God’s child, that we have already a rich inheritance in and through Christ then we are free to live out the love. The Father knew that his son had already been given and received his rich inheritance in Christ. What greater gift can we receive . We are called to live in the light of Christ to be glow worms.. to keep turning the light on inside us so that we can be true disciples and so that we can help Jesus make more disciples. How ? well its all in Ephesians. If you haven’t done so try reading it through from beginning to end and as you do submit your mind to Christ’s – allow your mind to become transformed into His likeness. Find time to spend with Jesus.. – the servant King, all powerful in meekness and majesty, all loving – our Lord who got alongside people, loved them, met them where they were at and said “follow me”

Witness: choose from these questions to discuss

1. Discuss how you feel about being a child of God?
2. Share what you think about your mind being a battlefield and any experiences you have of transforming your mind...
3. Do you think of yourself as a disciple or a Christian – in what ways would it help you to grow as a disciple?
4. I have deliberately left the notes as long this week – sorry! Perhaps they raise questions for each of us – share your thoughts as openly as you can with each other...
5. There are many bible references – perhaps end by Reading 2 Peter 1 v 3 – 11 together and let this passage lead you into a time of prayer and worship...
6. Encourage each other by sharing how you see one another's “glow” . Christ in you – the hope of glory

For reflection:

I need to listen to people, to really listen to them...

To stay out of the way of their thoughts....

To be a safe place for them to share their...

Fears

Hopes

Frustrations

Brokenness

Anger

Dreams

Desires

Embarrassments

Loneliness

Confusion

I will listen to their story no matter how long it takes...

No matter what is said...

No matter where it takes us...

I will be...

Caring

Humble

Compassionate

Open

Understanding

Fun

I will be a friend.