

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 20th September 2009

## Kingdom, Power and Glory – The Holy Transformer - Col. 3:12-17



### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Colossians 3 is headed 'rules for holy living' and as we explore this passage we'll see that we are called to take an active part in the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, to transform us to be more like Christ in who we are, what we do and in what we say. The Holy Spirit is a gift of grace bringing us into union with Jesus (John 14:20). He applies grace to our lives and that is why in Galatians 5: 22, 23 the marks of true maturity – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control – are called the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of our efforts. The reading uses active verbs to communicate our part in spiritual growth. It won't just happen on its own! It's the result of the Spirit's initial empowering work and our active cooperation. There has to be both event – initiation, and process – our active cooperation; for change to come about – holy transformation. There are 3 key points where the Holy Spirit's work and our cooperation result in growth. These are firstly *Word*, secondly *Life's Circumstances* and thirdly *Fellowship*.

**Word:** The first and primary means of grace is the word of God, the scriptures that have been handed down to us. Jesus prayed, 'sanctify them – make them holy by the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17). Scripture has the power to teach, introduce clear thinking, inform our consciences, conform our lives to God's standards as it is described in 2 Timothy 3:16 We must find a way to act on what we learn from the word of God, or our belief and knowledge will not be authentic. The knowledge of God is progressive: we hear God's word and believe; then we act on our belief; and as a result our knowledge of God increases and we then have a new opportunity for belief and action. We have to put the word into action if we are to grow - *Bear with each other; forgive one another; put on love.*

**Life's Circumstances:** The Holy Spirit orders the circumstances of our lives to draw us closer to himself. (Rom.8:28) Things that other people - or even Satan – intend for evil, God uses for good (Gen. 50:20) God uses the events of our lives to mould our character in conformity to his son. When we suffer we are confronted with a choice. We can believe that God is unjust and does not care for us, or we can believe that he is good and that whatever comes from his hand is tempered with mercy and his desire for our growth. In Hebrews 11 we read: *faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*". Faith is characterised by people believing God's word regardless of their circumstances. This is not blind faith, but informed faith; trust in a God who overcame the most evil circumstances in all of human history – the cross.

**Fellowship:** The Greek word for fellowship means 'holding our lives in common', something that the first Christians demonstrated through their social and material generosity towards one another. As we read the Acts of the Apostles we see that there was a relationship between the believer's warmth of heart towards God and their generosity towards one another. These early Christians did not see themselves as isolated individuals but as 'members one of another', joined together in communities where individuals experienced the Holy Spirit, grew to maturity, and cooperated with each other in advancing God's kingdom. Our reading from Colossians reveals the active cooperation that they were called to make to enable them to gain strength, support and protection from the corroding influences of the world. God has called us to grow to maturity in the body of Christ. We are called to *reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God growing up into him who is the head, that is Christ. From him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work* (Eph 4:13, 15 -16)

**Summary:** To be part of a fellowship of faith, of a people who are on a journey together, whose desire is to be transformed and to allow the Holy Spirit to go on transforming and renewing each one of us, we need to actively respond to the Word of God, to trust that He is in control of the circumstances of our lives and that through fellowship with Him we will know what it is to be clothed with compassion, humility, kindness, gentleness and patience, so that we are being changed from one degree of glory to another.



### Witness: questions to discuss

**Guidance:** Before discussion read the Bible passage, ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Consider one or two questions below – don't feel you have to use them all but do consider the key question! Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.

**Recommended books:** John Wimber 'The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth and Grace Turner - 'The King's Gold'

**Worship:** You might like to use Psalm 24 or Ps 15 during a time of worship and reflection

1. Use the following texts as you explore what it means to be transformed by the Holy Spirit: Gen: 50:20; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:13; John 14:20; Eph 4:1-6.
2. Does God allow suffering for our good when we go astray? (Ps 119:67)
3. Jesus learnt obedience through suffering (Heb. 5: 8) Why is it so hard for us to trust in God's goodness when we suffer?
4. Share with one another what you believe it means to be holy? Have you ever met someone who you would describe in this way and what was it you felt made them holy?
5. Galatians 5: 22 & 23 describe the characteristics of Christian maturity. What actions can we take to facilitate the fruit of the spirit growing in our lives?
6. What are the hallmarks of true fellowship?

**Key question:** *This all feels like hard work! I have spent years of my Christian life striving to be a better Christian...Is that what this is really all about...just try a bit harder?*