

November 17, 2019

"...so that you may know him better..."

"So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking..."

"You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light..."
Ephesians 4:7-20



As those who follow Jesus who are we? Last week we talked a bit about the importance of maintaining the unity of the Spirit especially in the church, the body of Christ. But, why does it matter? Why must we do everything we can to maintain unity in our relationships?

Beginning in chapter 4 and verse 7 of this letter the Apostle Paul is going to make the answer to that question very clear. In fact, so clear, that he writes, ***"So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do..."*** When the Apostle writes, that he insists on something it is a fundamental demand that believers must live.

So, Paul insists that we know longer live as those who pursue the selfish gratification of our own desires. Selfishness, in any form, can no longer be a part of our lives. In fact, our task as believers, is, as Jesus would tell us, to die to that self.

Paul would explain it like this, ***"You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."***

So, as a disciple or follower of Jesus, I must put off the old self and its inherent selfishness. I have to. My Lord has commanded me to. Jesus said, ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*** (Matthew 16:24-25)

So, I must put on a new self that is like God. Every day, for the true believer, the struggle is to overcome the self. The enemy is not outside of me. It is found within me. In my selfish pursuit of gratification I sin. I eat too much, sleep too much, spend too much time watching TV,

playing video games, or working to 'get ahead'. I am consumed with an overwhelming drive to own more stuff, win more praise, gain more attention. I am struggling with my own selfish desires. We all are.

The new self seeks to overcome that selfish being that I am. I struggle to live a selfless life. Instead of choosing my own way and being my own person, I am attempting to become the child of light that I am in Jesus.

So, I no longer live by my standards, but my Lord and Master informs my every thought and action. It no longer matters what I want, or what I think, or how I feel. Jesus is my Master and it only matters what he wants, what he thinks, what he feels. He is in charge and I am not. I have surrendered to his direction, or, in all honesty, I am trying to.

I seek to be honest when I want to lie, I seek to love when I want to hate. I seek to build up when I want to tear down. I am working to overcome my own selfish bitterness and rage and anger replacing them with selfless kindness and compassion. Why am I doing this? Because I am a child of God. I am a child of light!

