

Dealing With The Past

Our Ongoing Repentance

The Holy Spirit through our study of the Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, or the preaching and example of leaders in the Christian fellowship we have joined will bring to our notice things in our lives that we need to change.

This part of our conversion has been likened to our dealing with what is found in a garbage can.

Our past in God's eyes is very much like the stinking contents of a garbage can.

At first God will just lift the lid and let us experience the putrid smell of what was our past life.

But gradually God expects us to bury all we find that stinks in His nostrils and thus get rid of it, so we become a cleansed receptacle for God's Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:16 [NIV] *“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?”*

This cleansing will only take place as we actively allow Jesus Christ to take His rightful place in our lives.

Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit, will begin to shine His light on the garbage of our past lifestyle.

We will discover attitudes, actions and behaviours that are unacceptable in God's eyes.

Proverbs 6:16-19 [NIV] *“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”*

We have a list here of things that are hateful in God's eyes.

If we meditate on these we will realise that they are all attitudes that are devoid of love, and are very self-centred.

We all need to be set free from such attitudes of mind if we are to mature as Christians.

Dangerous areas in society that we need to avoid

Occult

Before we became a Christian we may have opened our life to the influence of the many different areas of occult.

Ask God to clearly show us anything about our past life that we should get rid of.

Occult includes such things as horoscopes, fortune telling, witchcraft, including séances, use of Ouija boards, spirit-mediums, entering spirit houses or places where heathen gods are worshipped.

Mind-controlling drugs or hypnotism, use of a charm for luck or protection, reading occult or pornographic literature, should also be included in our list of rejections.

This list may not be complete and the Holy Spirit may bring other activities to our notice.

Deuteronomy 18:9-13 [NIV] *“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no-one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God.”*

These are danger areas that the Christian Bible clearly warns us to keep clear of.

Galatians 5:19-21 [NIV] *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **idolatry and witchcraft**; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Witchcraft [occult] is listed among the natural attributes of what should be our buried old nature.

If we have been a part of such activities, we need to renounce them and ask God to set us free from the influence these may still have in our lives.

Occult is also a part of the spiritual warfare that will be covered in a future article.

We cannot fully follow Jesus Christ if any of these things still have a hold on our life.

Any artefacts linked to the occult need to be destroyed, make a bonfire of them to show that our repentance is real.

Acts 19:18-19 [NIV] *“Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. **A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly.** When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.”*

An example of some who did this in the early church fellowship.

Idolatry

Exodus 20:3 [NIV] *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

Idolatry is more than just bowing down to an idol made of wood or stone or offering prayers and sacrifices to a spirit being.

Idolatry is anything that is in our life that takes the central place that Jesus Christ must have in our life.

Idolatry may be a person, a strong friendship or a relationship that is detrimental to our living a Christ-centred life.

Idolatry could be the desire for wealth, or material possessions.

Many people have become slaves to their work, their business, home, or some habit that they cannot [or do not want to] break, that is their idol.

Some give their best time to sport, to some hobby, or their car, or to watching tv or videos.

All of these activities can become like “gods” when we give them the best of our time and energy, and leave God with only the leftovers.

As a Christian some big changes have to take place if Jesus Christ is to be the centre of our life.

Controlling interests and activities will need to come in to line with our new commitment to Jesus Christ as our Lord and the Christian fellowship we are a part of.

We have to ask the question, 'Are we prepared to make these changes?'

This is part of what true repentance is all about.

Wrong relationships

Matthew 5:23-24 [NIV] *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there **remember that your brother has something against you**, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."*

Before we became a Christian (or even since then) we may have acted wrongly towards others.

It may **not** have been all our fault, we may even have been least to blame, but God may be telling us to at least do our part to put right as much as we can in that relationship.

Say "sorry", write a letter, apologise, confess our wrongs, make payment, or put something right where that is still possible.

Hebrews 13:4 [NIV] *"Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."*

If we have been living in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, we need to confess this to God, and turn away from it.

Matthew 5:27-28 [NIV] *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

Sex before marriage or unfaithfulness to your partner within marriage is against God's law of love.

True repentance is confessing and turning away from anything that God shows us is out of line with His way of life.

Are we prepared to do this?

Before we can mature with Christ as Lord of our life, we need to deal with our past.

1 John 1:8-9 [NIV] *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**"*

God will forgive what we confess to Him, and forsake.

Even if we have been a Christian for some time, there may be some things that God wants us to deal with.

Don't ignore or pretend that they don't matter when they are revealed to us.

Philippians 3:13 [NIV] *"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead,**"*

Once we have dealt with these things in our past we need to seek maturity by developing a close relationship with God.

Godly character [being created in God's "*likeness*"] can only come about through a close relationship with our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is God.

Memory verse:

Colossians 3:5 [NIV] *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”*

In the next study we will meditate on the reason for baptism and the deep meaning of this outward action.