

Romans 6:6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Hymn: Is He worthy? Andrew Peterson

<https://youtu.be/6aCWdnuP4QA>

Growing Pains

“Is it over once I surrender?”, he asked. “Is what over?” I asked. The young man had come to me at the church with questions about sin and salvation. I could tell that the Holy Spirit was manifesting in his life with a sense of unease over his life in relation to the dawning revelation of a holy and pure God. “Will my feelings of guilt and shame be over with once I accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour?” he asked. I was tempted to lie...I’m sorry, but I was. Instead I told the truth as I knew it. “You will be a new creation, your old life of sin, and your future sins will all be covered over by the blood of Jesus Christ. When God looks at you from this moment on He will not see you, he will see his son Jesus instead. You will know his love forever, in fact God is crazy in love with you, but there will be continuing moments of unease in areas of your life that need to change, that need to be transformed to further reflect the holiness of Jesus.” “In truth”, I said, “because God loves us so much, he can’t leave you and I where we are. He always wants us to grow deeper in our faith and in our life, and sometimes what the Lord shows us can cause feelings of guilt and disappointment. But those feelings are a sign that God is working in our hearts”.

What the young man was asking me was a perceptive question about

our growth in Christ. The big mucky muck word for it is “Sanctification”. A big word to describe the process of growing into holiness.

C.S. Lewis speaks of it in the following way: When I was a child, I often had a toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother, she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother--at least not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this: I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist the next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from my pain; but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they would start fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. Our Lord is like the dentists. Dozens of people go to him to be cured of some particular sin. Well, he will cure it all right, but he will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if you once call him in, he will give you the full treatment.

None of us like the pain of a revelation of weakness, or sinfulness that comes to light when the Lord is revealing something to our souls. But in Christianity, the reality is supposed to be that we are in a continual process of growth in grace. The Lord is continuing to prune the branches of his olive trees. He prunes us so that we can grow in a different direction, or so that we can grow more fruit. But He always prunes us. John 15:1-4 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you.” If Jesus says that he was pruned and shaped by His Father, why would we expect any less? Instead let us look upon the pruning of the Lord whenever, and however it comes, as a sign of His love for us. For that is what it is. For the Lord disciplines those he loves (Hebrews 12:6).

Prayer:

O Lord, I confess I'm not a fan of bodily pain. Even more, I'm not a fan of heart pain, of sin pain, of confession pain. In fact, I'd chose body pain over soul pain if it were up to me. I know where the Tylenol is. I confess Father I'd stay where I am most days and not take the risk of the pain of growth. But I praise you Lord God that you love me so much that You refuse to leave me where I am. I thank You for the pain that comes from Your holy pruning of my heart, of my mind, even of my soul. I thank You that You have never let me down...that Your love has never taken me to a place from which Your grace cannot save me. Father I declare my trust in You. I submit my life and my soul to Your careful and loving pruning because I know that Your pruning leads to my growth in Your grace and in more fruit from my life to Your glory. Therefore I thank You for the pain of pruning which is a sign of Your love and an affirmation of the worthiness of my life in Christ. In the strong Name of Jesus I pray. Amen.