

Evotional – 17 August 2014 – Colossians 3:1-17

FEELING AT HOME

Home is normally where we feel relaxed, comfortable, secure; where we 'belong'. Abraham was in his 70s when he left his home; obeyed a call to leave his security to follow where God was leading even though he wasn't sure where. Abraham's earthly calling was to an unknown and temporary home in the Promised Land. Hebrews 11 says:

By faith Abraham, when called to go ... obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents as did his children.

But his ultimate calling was to another home:

For he was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

In fact all people of faith have a similar perspective on life:

They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own ... they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

In Colossians 3:1-4, Paul also talks about where our real home is:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

We discovered last week (in Colossians chapter 2) that Jesus died, was buried and rose again, to deal with sin. And that if we identify with him, we also have died, been buried and been raised - because we are 'in Christ'. Paul now writes that our true life, is 'hidden' with God, but will one day 'appear' for what it is – glorious.

Q1: Where is your real home, and what does that mean in practice?

STOPPING AND STARTING

Paul uses six very vivid images to describe what this should mean for how we live (bad luck if you weren't in church on Sunday to see these acted out!):

1. Put to death (v5), 2. Get rid (v8), 3. Take/strip off (v9)

... then (moving to the three positives) ...

4. Put on (v10, 12, 14), 5. Be ruled / umpired (v15), 6. Live / dwell (v16)

What about the things Paul says to stop or start doing? Our minds quickly jump to the sexual things, but on his list there are also: greed, rage, and a lot about what we say (slander, abusive/dirty language, deceit).

And positively: humility, patience, forgiveness, love, gratitude.

There will be something in those lists which is an issue for you (maybe several things, but focus on one of them).

Q2: How easy is it to stop/start doing that thing? Probably not very, or you would have done it. Perhaps you have struggled with it for years. So what do you do, except feel guilty? Paul says:

(A) Set your hearts / minds on things above (v1-4)

(B) Just do it (v5-9)

(C) Do it together (v10-17) ...

Q3: Why do you think Paul does not mention the Holy Spirit?

DOING IT TOGETHER

Practice doing it here in this place called church, a safe place, a community where we can learn from and challenge each other. There are no perfect people here (we are all 'saints', v12) and there are no hopeless people here (we are also all 'chosen and dearly loved'). There are no categories of those who have made it and those who haven't (v11). Many of you are much better at some of the things on Paul's list than me, so I can learn from you.

Q4: What things are you good at and could help others with?

Ten practical suggestions from the non-expert:

1. Know yourself: recognise what you need to work on.
2. Practice assuming the best not the worst about people's motives. Don't take offence.
3. Don't assume, if you see a need, that someone else will meet it. Even if you think they would do it better.
4. We are not called just to love the people we like or the people of our own age or other group, but everyone.
5. Has someone at Bessels grieved you? Or you grieved someone here? Do you need to do something about it?
6. Some of us need to be prepared to be supported. Some us (especially us men) don't find that easy.
7. Some of us need to step out of comfort zones and open ourselves up to others in confession and accountability.
8. Some of us need to stop doing something good to do something better.
9. When we come together to worship, this is part of the process. But we do have to decide to let it happen (v17).
10. [This one is for you to insert what God is saying to you! If necessary, re-read v1-17 slowly and listen to what God is saying.] **Q5: What have you inserted?**