

Old Dogs and New Tricks

2 Cor 5:17

Zeke Flores

Intro Have all heard the old cliché that you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

A. Immediately, we know what it means:

1. You can't change long ingrained patterns of practice.
2. So some are just content to let the b sleeping dogs lie.

B. But the dogs that are us, our character, don't sleep.

1. They change and evolve until they become the epitome of who we are.
2. Can be a good thing but for most, especially those outside of Christ, they can be devastatingly destructive.

C. For the Christian, though old dog you may be, there are new tricks to learn that should become as ingrained in you as all the old ones you seek to replace.

I. *Old dogs and new tricks at Corinth - 1 Cor. 6:9-11*

A. Evident that this church had problems

1. Factionalism, divisiveness, sexual immorality, suing one another, judging one another falsely, overly pompous of spiritual gifts, etc
2. They were people who couldn't let go of old mind-sets and grow into the kind of people God desired.

B. Paul wraps it up in 1 Cor 6:9-11

1. No doubt Paul could have expanded the list in vss 9-10
2. He simply drives it home: Such were some of you!
3. It's difficult when the finger of accusation is pointed at you. Harder still when it's true!

C. The wonderful thing is that God does not leave them in these deplorable conditions. They were:

1. Washed - Baptized in the blood of Christ; the only blood that washes away sin and continues to cleanse.
 - a. Is 1:16-18, 1 Pet 3:21, 1 John 1:7-9

2. Sanctified - Set apart, separated from all others to God
 - a. Acts 22:16, Col 1:13, John 17:14-21
 - b. It is a separation that is evident to all.
3. Justified - Put in a position of right standing before God
 - a. Rom 3:21-24, 5:9-11

D. These old dogs in Corinth certainly had some new tricks to learn!

II. *Old dogs and new tricks in Ephesus - Eph 4:17-24*

A. Paul paints a bleak picture of what they were like. Vss 17-19

1. Hardened hearts had become hardened lives!

B. BUT the change came through Christ - Vss 20-24

1. The key stems from vs 23 renewed in the spirit of your mind
 - a. It's not just a change in action, but a deeper, more fundamental change in one's way of thinking.
 - b. Rom 12:1-2
 - c. This mind renewal is at the heart of all spiritual renewal.
2. The old dogs at Ephesus needed to learn some new things!

III. *We old dogs must learn new tricks - Titus 3:1-3*

A. We will never change for the better unless we make the distinction between who we are (or were) and who God desires us to become.

1. The indictment in Titus 3:3 is true of everyone here, either now or in the past.
2. But again, the difference is not what change we effect on ourselves, but what God does for us by working in us!
 - a. Titus 2:11-15, 3:4-8
 - b. Notice how the charge of sinfulness is sandwiched between encouragement to rise above ourselves in spite of ourselves!

B. However long the old dog may have been about his old habits, there must come a time, whether for the sinner or the child of God, to simply say, NO MORE!

1. 1 Pet 4:1-11

Conclusion:

The old saying is false: You CAN teach an old dog new tricks!

A. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away, behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17

1. This is not some superficial change of habits. They are life changes wherein a new man or woman emerges, new and unblemished to live a life reflecting the relationship between you and your Lord.

B. Be assured it will be the work of a Master Renovator!

1. For I am confident of this very thing; that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6