

## Dead to Rights

Last week I spoke about offenses and the curse of the grudge, where anger comes from and how it affects our relationship with God and others. We spoke about dealing with anger and unforgiveness. And we learned that grudges are the result of a refusal to forgive and a refusal to forget.

This week, we will focus on the cause of the offenses that bring us anger. And instead of looking outside of ourselves at the things that hurt us, we are going to do something different...we are going to look inside ourselves, and deal with the root of the problem.

### 1. Scripture

- a. You may recall the Sermon on the Mount, the part where Jesus is telling his disciples that are aren't to repay evil with evil (Mt 5:38-42).
- b. *"You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'<sup>39</sup> "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.<sup>40</sup> "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.<sup>41</sup> "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.<sup>42</sup> "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you*
- c. I can imagine the crowd's reaction to hearing Jesus say this.
  - i. "You're crazy, Jesus! You mean I am supposed to let someone steal from me? Mug me? Borrow from me till I'm broke?"
  - ii. I wouldn't be surprised to see people literally walk away from the crowd about this time in his sermon.
- d. And I don't think our modern day reaction would be any different. Think about how we respond to offense in our society.
  - i. If someone hits us, what do we do? In Texas, they shoot them.
  - ii. If someone sues us, we counter sue.
  - iii. If someone tries to beg from us, we turn our eyes away.
  - iv. If someone takes our turn at the stop sign we become agitated.

### 2. Violated Rights

- a. Why do you think this is so?
  - i. It is because someone is violating our perceived rights.
- b. What does it feel like to have someone violate what we feel are our rights?
  - i. We get angry.
    1. Anger is produced in response to hurt, frustration and fear.
    2. The goal of anger is reduce this pain you are feeling, so you won't have to experience it again.

3. Unfortunately, our response to this need for reduction in our pain is to produce pain in someone else.
  4. We explode with angry words.
  5. We say things or do things to inflict a bit of the sting we are feeling.
  6. Not necessarily intentionally, but nonetheless, we hurt others because we have been hurt.
  7. Maybe it is to get some distance.
  8. Maybe it is to protect ourselves.
  9. Maybe it is to get revenge.
- c. We feel hurt, offended or as if our rights have been stolen.
- i. Americans are obsessed with the concept of individual rights.
    1. Just look at the explosive growth of personal lawsuits.
  - ii. Listen to some of the things we say when we are pinched:
    1. "I know my rights."
    2. "Respect my rights."
    3. "Give me my rights."
    4. "Stop denying me my rights."
    5. "I demand my rights."
    6. "You have violated my rights!"
  - iii. As a people, we are preoccupied with the concept of individual rights.
    1. That preoccupation often becomes an obsession.
    2. It makes us selfish and self-centered.
    3. It even says its okay to mistreat other people to acquire "my rights."
      - a. What happens when someone cuts in line in front of us? Look out for the fight!
  - iv. It is as if the inalienable "right to happiness" is in our constitution. You've heard of this right?
    1. Actually, the "*right to a pursuit of happiness*" is in the Declaration of Independence .
    2. We hold these rights sacred.
    3. That is, they come from our Creator.
  - v. But there is an opposite principle at the heart of our faith, more essential than our external freedom.
    1. Our American freedom has to do with what happens to us from the outside, in terms of laws, controls and constraints.
    2. There is an opposite principle having to do with what happens inside our hearts.
      - a. This principle has to do with being willing to surrender our rights.
    3. **It is when we willingly surrendering our external rights that we find internal freedom.**

4. Concern for rights may become a bondage.
5. Oddly enough, I believe the larger system of freedom (our national freedom) only works when the inside principle is at work of freely giving up our rights for the sake of others.
- vi. A source of great sorrow to God is that inside the Church there is a strong sense of our rights as well.
  1. We operate on a kind of Christian social contract.
  2. I'll do what I believe is my share, but you've got to do yours.
  3. I'll be reasonable with you if you're reasonable with me.
  4. But this isn't what God designed us for or called us to:

3. Listen to what the Bible says about Jesus:

- a. *Philippians 2:3-11 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being <sup>7</sup> made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
- b. I believe that this “attitude” that we are commanded to have is one of the secrets to a contented, joyful and fruitful Christian life.
- c. Though he was in the form of God, he was God in his own right, not because he snatched it from somebody else.
  - i. He did not use his exalted position to exploit others, to manipulate others.
  - ii. He had the rights of being God, but put them aside so that He could give us something we could not get on our own...forgiveness and a relationship with God.
  - iii. He set aside his position and all of the privileges and rights that came with it for the sake of others, for the service of others, and for the salvation of others.
  - iv. For the sake of fallen humanity, he emptied himself of his glory, position and power, became a slave to you and I, and finally died on the cross for our sake
  - v. And He did this while we were still sinners...that is, while we were undeserving.
- d. Paul is making a contrast between the ways of human beings and the ways of God.
  - i. Human beings try to climb up to heaven; they want to be like God, standing on the shoulders of fellow human beings and pursuing their ambition at others' expense.

- ii. In contrast, Christ came down from heaven, crossed the boundary between heaven and earth for the sake of fallen and alienated humanity.
    - 1. He stood at the place where human beings suffer, are rejected and lonely.
    - 2. He took upon himself the misery of humankind and gave up his life for you and I.
4. Surrender of Rights:
- a. **When we become Christians, we surrender our rights to obtain the privileges of our new citizenship.**
    - i. Think about what Jesus says when he calls people to follow Him...
      - 1. Sell all you have...and follow me.
      - 2.
      - 3. When people were called to follow Him, several asked if they could go say goodbye to their family or bury a relative, to which Jesus told them that they would have to leave those attachments behind.
    - ii. It is not unlike marriage. When you were single...
      - 1. You had the right to your privacy, you alone had the key to your apartment.
      - 2. You had the right to your money, your checking account was in your name alone.
      - 3. You had the right to your body, it was yours alone.
    - iii. But when you get married, you willingly, cheerfully, and happily surrender these things to your spouse!
      - 1. I do the marriage vows. I see a close up of your eyes and your voice. I know you are doing it willingly.
      - 2. And the marriages that I see that have the glow of life are marriages in which the two people practice this principle of surrendering their rights for the good of one another.
    - iv. But just like in marriage, as Christians, after awhile, we sometimes forget that we have surrendered our rights to ourselves.
      - 1. We forget that what we gave up was just a fraction of what God has given to us.
      - 2. And we demand our rights, or we find ourselves complaining when what we want isn't given to us on a golden platter.

5. The Sermon on the Mount "Surrender of 5 Rights"

- a. I believe that these four areas of our lives are "representative" of what God desires to do in every corner of our lives. They are some of the areas that are most public.
  - i. ***Turn The Other Cheek* - - This deals with my right to **dignity & respect**.**  
[1 Peter 3:8-9](#)
    - 1. How do you feel when someone takes your dignity away? Or doesn't give you the respect you feel you deserve? They call you by an insulting term? Or they don't give you the privacy you feel you deserve or need? They interrupt you in the middle of something without any regard for how you are feeling about it.

2. But our bodies are not ours anymore, they belong to Jesus.
    - a. Our dignity isn't dependent upon how others treat us. (Search for Significance).
    - b. Our significance isn't in what we have, who we are, what we do or where we go.
    - c. **Our significance is in WHOSE we are, (Jesus) and not who we are.**
  3. Our significance (and dignity) is found in a person (Jesus) and nothing else.
- ii. ***Give Up My Cloak* - - This deals with my **legal** rights.**
1. How does it feel to have someone steal from you?
    - a. Have you ever been burglarized?
    - b. Have someone break into your car?
    - c. You feel violated. You feel as if someone has taken a piece of you. Imagine someone coming and saying that you have to move out of your house...how would that make you feel?
    - d. Or someone taking something that belongs to you right in front of you! Imagine the pain and anger you would feel.
  2. Imagine instead, seeing all your belongings as Christ's, so that when someone comes to take what belongs to you, whether it is your place in line, your money, or your home and your treasures, you give it up willingly.
    - a. You know that **your true treasures are in heaven.**
- iii. ***Go The Extra Mile* - - This deals with my rights as a **citizen** .**
1. In bible days, an occupying soldier could demand you accompany him for a mile to carry his belongings. That was Roman law.
  2. You were expected to comply.
    - a. And Jesus says to go not just the required mile, but an extra one, willingly.
    - b. What kind of response would that produce in the soldier who was expecting to take his load back after 15 minutes?
    - c. Exactly the kind of response that Jesus wants it to produce, so that others can hear about who He is that saved you.
  3. Willingly go, willingly give...
    - a. Because **your citizenship is in heaven** and not on earth.
- iv. ***Give To Those Who Ask* - - This deals with my right to my **possessions** .**
1. Beggars are tough enough to cope with. We try to understand their need.
  2. But Jesus tells us that **what we have isn't ours but his.**
    - a. That leads us to a different view when God confronts us with someone who asks for what we have (that belongs to God).

3. Most Christians dread sermons on giving or on money, because they view it as meddling or as manipulation by a preacher.
  - a. In fact, at HHBC, I rarely even mention money, except to speak of our attitude of surrender of the ownership of our wallets.
  - b. A mature Christian has an attitude like this:
    - i. The money is God's.
    - ii. It belongs to Him.
    - iii. I won't get insulted if someone else needs it more than me.
    - iv. God has plenty of it.
    - v. So He can give me more where this came from.
    - vi. Lord, just give me enough guidance so that I know it is You guiding me in how I am using it.
4. **All of our possessions belong to God.** Our Money. Our Homes. Our Cars. When disaster strikes, like in California, we have two significant responses, which will show us where our heart is:
  - a. We cry in desperation, because the home represents our entire life. It represents all we have, and all we have put into it. When it is gone, we feel like we are gone.
  - b. Or we look heavenward and recognize that it belonged to God and that He will provide for our needs. We are only managers of the possessions we have, using them for His work.
5. The 5<sup>th</sup> Right, which isn't mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount is **the right to our own lives.**
  - a. **Mr 8:34** *And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*
  - b. Jesus tells us that we have died to this life.
    - i. Our life is no longer ours but His.
    - ii. *Yield [present] yourselves unto God, as ... alive from the dead"* (Rom. 6:13).
    - iii. Crucifixion comes before consecration
    - iv. Uncrucified self refuses to be consecrated.
      1. This is why so many people with all sincerity walk down the aisles again and again, consecrating uncrucified self to God" (H. Duncan).
    - v. We are to apply the cross to our lives and live lives that are dead to self and alive to God.
  - c. Every place I find myself offended is a place where dead flesh is trying to be alive.

- i. When I am offended, I must admit that the person is wrong to hurt me, steal from me, take what belongs to me, etc. They are wrong. I am not.
    - d. But...by renouncing my rights at the Cross of Christ, as “all I own belongs to Jesus,”
      - i. **The Cross takes the power of a personal offense away.**
      - ii. No longer are they hurting me.
      - iii. I am dead!
      - iv. They are attacking Christ.
      - v. And He is big enough for both of us!
    - e. We can deal with offenses at the anger stage...ie, forgiving.
      - i. Or we can go even further back and deal with them before they can occur.
      - ii. This is by looking to Jesus and allowing His character to be fully formed in us.
      - iii. So that we, like Him, don't claim our rights, but surrender them.
6. **Summary Statement: “To demand your rights is to condemn yourself to emotional poverty, because that is all you will get -- your rights.”**
- a. **When God asks me to give up my rights, He isn't asking me to do anything He hasn't already done for me . Philippians 2:3-11**
  - b. **Ultimately, the advancement of God's kingdom is more important than the protection of my rights . I Corinthians 9:1-27**
7. According the gospel of Jesus Christ, these are your new rights:
- i. The right to die to your self-directed will.
  - ii. The right to surrender your life completely to him.
  - iii. The right to lay down your life for another.
  - iv. The right to lose your life so that you can find it.
  - v. The right to bear in your body the marks of Christ and suffer in the name of Jesus.
- a. Now here's the mystery of the gospel: when you surrender your selfish will to God and die to your own rights and agenda, this is indeed where true happiness is found.
  - b. You will never be happy as long as you are ordering your life by the perverted notion that life is all about my comfort, my ease, my pleasure, my happiness
  - c. Jesus taught us, **Whoever would save his life must lose it.**"
  - d. Won't you deny yourself and take up your cross today?.

## NOTES:

God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him. - Andrew Murray

What sort of "rights" do we surrender for the sake of making Christ known? (1 Corinthians 9:20-22a) 20 *"To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like..."*

I Cor. 7:3-4 - *"Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."*

**The Rights We Possess** (1 Cor 9:1-2 NIV) *"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? {2} Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."*

### **The Right To Surrender Our Rights** (9:15-23)

But now Paul comes to his point. All this has just been building up to what he has been wanting to say. He proves that he had the right to be supported, but he did not always exercise that. When he came to Corinth he had deliberately chosen not to, although he did receive support at times from other churches, as he tells us in his letter to the Philippians and so on.

#### **A. We have the Right to Set Aside our Rights** (15-18)

(1 Cor 9:15 NIV) *"But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast."*

1 Cor 9:19 NIV) *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."*

"I am free," he says, "I am an apostle. I have knowledge beyond anything you have. But that does not mean that I demand my rights. No, I am glad to give them up, freely, willingly, that I might win the more."

C. Metcalfe sees both the problem and the answer: "The modern teaching of consecration, which is tantamount to the consecration of the 'old man,' seeks to bypass the death sentence and, therefore, only leads to frustration and failure. When, however, you and I are prepared, in simple humility, to make the *fact* of our death with Christ our daily basis of life and service, there is nothing that can prevent the uprising and outflow of new life, and meet the need of thirsty souls around us."

Here is the crux of the matter. The question is: Which life is to be consecrated to Him—the old self-life, or the new Christ-life? God can accept absolutely nothing from the old—He sees and acknowledges only that which is centered in His Son, who is our life. Hence God has but one stipulation for consecration: “Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Rom. 6:13).

“Yield [present] yourselves unto God, as ... alive from the dead” (Rom. 6:13). “This is the true place of consecration. For believers to ‘consecrate themselves to God’ ere they have learnt their union with Christ in death and resurrection (identification) is only to present to God the members of the natural man, which He cannot accept. Only those ‘alive from the dead’—that is, having appropriated fully their likeness with Him in death—are bidden to present their members as instruments unto God” (J. Penn-Lewis).

“God asks us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him (Rom. 12:1). Until we have done this there is nothing else we can do. Notice this exhortation comes after Romans six. There is a reason for this order—crucifixion comes before consecration. Uncrucified self refuses to be consecrated. This is why so many people with all sincerity walk down the aisles again and again, consecrating uncrucified self to God” (H. Duncan).