

46-13-04-Confronting the Inner Child

childishness, childlikeness, growth, maturity, love

1 Cor 13:11

For *childlike* spiritual growth, our *childish* ways must be confronted.

INTRODUCTION:

–In *cleansing the temple*, Jesus showed *His ongoing goal of purifying His people*. He enforced cleansing *on His people* in that ancient temple. Now, in us, the “temple of the Holy Spirit,” He does it *with His people*. As Jesus orchestrates the purification process, *our wills* are to participate.

–This is why, in 1 Cor 13 [often called “the Love Chapter”], Paul includes a key verse that involves our participation— v.11. *When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.* This transforms Paul’s *theological description of love* into a *psychological prescription for spiritual growth*.

–Jesus drove out “the money-changers” so that “the temple” might be “a house of prayer.” His goal for us, as *temples of God*, is to free us from the *ways of our old self* and fill our lives with the *loving behaviors* inherent in the *divine nature* that we receive in *our union with Christ*. **HOM.idea.**

–Christ’s light from this *Love Chapter* can help us distinguish the *childish* from the *childlike*. We need such help, because each of us has an inner child whose behavior must often be *recognized* and *put behind* us. [David A. Seamands, in *Putting Away Childish Things*, said “The hidden child of your past is very much alive and affects everything that you do, for good or for ill.”] To *confront unacceptable, immature behaviors* and *replace* them with the mature behaviors prescribed by love,...

I. We Must Let Jesus Shine His Light on our Inner Child

- A. When baby Jesus was brought to the temple in Jerusalem, the old prophet Simeon told Mary in Luke 2:34b-35a, “This child is destined to cause the **falling** and **rising** of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that **the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed**.”
 1. Simeon was foretelling that Jesus would bring a *decisional crisis* into people’s lives, so that there would be either a “falling” or a “rising,” depending on how each person responds to Him.
 2. When Jesus shines His light on human souls, “so that the thoughts of many hearts [are] revealed,” a personal *response* is elicited.
 - a. Jesus described the “falling” response in John 3:19-20, “This is the

verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

- b. He described the “rising” response in John 3:21, “But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been **done through God.**” (By coming “into the light” for a holy life, we attest that all our progress is “done through God.”)
- B. Our past inner child may act up and act out in conscious life, but its hideout is in our subconscious and repressed memories. (Jesus can heal the inner child, but we must pray for it to be exposed.)
 1. A familiar help from the OT is Psalms 139:23-24, Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (We’re to pray for exposure of the “offensive” and guidance into the “everlasting”.)
 2. It’s not a painless process, but a necessary one— Psalm 90:8, You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins [lit., *hidden things*] in the light of your presence. (The “light” shining from God’s “face” is *love, not a sentimental feeling but a passionate commitment to truth.*)

TRANS: Instead of “our hidden things,” the LXX, has “our eon,” which can be translated “our time period or lifetime.” Our life is open and naked before God. He sees it all. But when His light exposes our early life’s “hidden things” so we can clearly see them, we get to respond. God’s 1st children ran from His approach, hiding behind fig leaves and excuses. They had a “falling” response. But **for the “rising” response of childlike spiritual growth, our childish ways must be confronted.** We must heed Paul’s admonition in v.11, to “*put childish ways behind.*” That’s because...

II. Growth Only Happens When We Make Room for It

- A. This verb Paul uses, *katargeo*, is a contraction of *kata* and *argeo*.
 1. The verb *argeo* means to be idle, unused. [An idling car is running. It’s *stationary*, but the ignition’s on. In a moment, it can be put in gear with the accelerator down and quickly start going places.] (As we grow up, by adopting mature behaviors, we can put childishness into idle. However, in certain troubling situations, our inner child quickly grabs the wheel, puts it into gear, and steps on it!)
 2. But with the preposition *kata* prefixed to this verb *argeo*, it takes

on an intensified meaning: to *render ineffective*, to *do away with*, to *nullify*, *cancel*; *abolish*. [The ignition’s off, the engine’s dead, the car is *going nowhere!* In one dictionary, a Greek scholar says that *katargeo* “denotes a complete cessation, not a temporary or partial ceasing.”]

3. This verb’s *action* will become more clear as we move through this sermon series on applying the Love Chapter. (But the crucial point to see here is that God doesn’t get us to quit old patterns of behavior without helping us to begin new healthy and holy ones.)
- B. We’re not alone inside the car with our inner child: Jesus is there.
 1. With our inner child is in control, we will drive *immaturely*.
 2. But, in our union with Christ, He helps us drive in new, *mature ways*; not recklessly but carefully, so we reach our destination.
- C. Eph 4:13-16 (ESV) says Jesus will keep providing this help, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to **mature manhood**, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness of Christ**, so that we may **no longer be children**, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the **truth in love**, we are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, **into Christ**, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, **makes the body grow** so that it builds itself up **in love.**” (I’ll close with two brief points from this *truth-packed* passage.)
 1. Leaving *childish immaturity* for *spiritual maturity* is “to grow up” into “the fullness of Christ,” whose divine nature is “the **truth in love.**”
 2. Although very *personal*, this journey’s momentum comes from “the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly.” (This is a joint journey, because Jesus “makes the body grow so that it **builds itself up** in love.”)

CONCLUSION:

–Each of us has areas of immaturity to confront, but we’re *on a journey of doing it together*, helping each other along the way. In practice, this means *forming Christian friendships* and *having times of fellowship and prayer* beyond Sunday worship. In these informal but intimate meetings, Christ is present. We gain **childlike spiritual growth**, as we let Him cleanse us and bring maturity and healing to our *inner child*.