

Cutting Away – Part 2

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Some years ago, I was asked to help out during an archeological dig for children. Some adults were needed to support groups of children to do digs in search of the old furnace around Black Rock Road by Rummel's Farm and Codorus State Park. My group had to dig by some trees that bordered a farm field. We had to cut away the grass and keep record of the measurements and how deep the soil was until we reached a different color soil. The dug-up soil would be put into a screened wooden frame and shaken until all the dirt went through the screen. One time, we had a small piece of pink pottery that was left from the 1700's at the bottom of the screen. The problem we had was the cutting away of the soil from the squire. It appeared that we were where the all the furnace soot landed from the furnace that made canon balls and musket balls. So, the ground was all soot and we had a hard time in keeping the soot from where we had cut the squire from continuing to fall into the squire. In other words, the squire kept getting wider and wider. We had cut away the soot from the squire, but the outside soot from the sides kept falling into the hole. We had to stop after awhile because the sides became unstable. Sometimes, when we cut away something, something else will try to fill that void. Plus, sometimes it's hard to keep that something else from filling the void. Last week, we talked about the cutting away of the sinful nature and I want to take a closer look at what Paul is saying to the Church – then and now.

Let's turn to Colossians 2: 11 – 23 where we read this, "¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.^[a] ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He

canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed^[b] the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels,^[c] saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Last week, we had finished with what Paul said about when we come to Christ, we are "circumcised". The Greek phrase that Paul uses here means a cutting around made without human hands. This is a spiritual non-physical act of removing the "sinful nature" through the union of Jesus Christ (AI Overview). Paul used a well-known Old Testament term that was being used by false Jewish teachers to get the Gentiles to go through the old physical procedure of circumcision. When Jesus died on the cross and had victory in the grave, "circumcision" changed from a physical procedure to a spiritual procedure. So, when you allow Jesus into your heart and mind, you become a new person through Jesus because of the forgiveness of all our sin. The reason for this newness is the cutting away of our sinful nature when we allow Jesus into our heart and mind. In fact, Paul tells us that we were dead because of this sin and sinful nature because it had not been cut away. When our sins are forgiven, we become alive in Christ – we are no longer dead because all the sinful stuff has been cut away through Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit. This is why telling Jesus we are a sinner and confessing our sin to Him is an important part of the Gospel Message. Some false teachers today no longer teach this part of the

Gospel Message. Paul is telling us there has to be a cutting away of the sin and sinful nature that dwells in us before we can have a relationship with God. Sacrificing animals in the Old Testament didn't do it because it forgave the sin, but it didn't remove the sinful nature and so people continued to willfully sin against God and they kept on having to sacrifice animals. Jewish males had to have physical circumcision because they needed something to continue to remind them of the covenant between them and God. Paul is saying that old way was nailed to the cross by Jesus (verse 14). Paul throws more fuel to the fire by stating in verse 20, "You have died with Christ, and He has set you free from the evil powers of this world. So why do you keep on following rules of the world....(NLT). The cutting away of our sinful nature through Jesus has set us free from the evil powers of this world. So why are we so easily misled by human false teaching and empty human philosophies? I took a course this week at Hillsdale College on Marxism, Communism, and Socialism. It's amazing how easy it is for people to follow human teaching that leads to destruction, suffering, and pain. This stuff is not from God, but from human thought and this stuff has entered the Church in America as Christian socialism or what I call it – Religious socialism. These people preach their version of the Gospel Message because they don't want you to be set free from the evil powers of this world. They think they know what is best for you. No they don't. Jesus is the only one who knows what is best for you. When we allow what Paul says to come to full revelation, we will grow with the nourishment and strength that comes from God because we are connected to the body of the Christ and He is the head of the body. This is why the cutting away of our sinful nature is so important. If this sinful nature is not cut away, then how can we be connected to the body of Jesus still being sinful? It can't happen because Jesus is all holy and righteous. Paul states this in Romans 6:6, "Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. Why? Because our sinful nature has been cut away by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. This needs to be done to have a relationship with God. There is no shortcut to God. For us to understand this better, we need to look at Galatians 5: 16-26 because both Galatians 5: 16-26 and Colossians 2: 11-23 should be studied together to get the full picture and understanding of the cutting away of our sinful nature.

Let's turn to Galatians 5: 16 – 26 where we read this, ¹⁶So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the

sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

This piece of Scripture does cause an issue. When one first reads this, it almost seems like our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit share residence inside us. If this is the case, then we can use the excuse that it's not our fault when we sin because of our human nature is sinful. However, if you tie in what Paul states in Colossians, the sinful nature has been cut out because the blood of Jesus washed our sin away at our day of salvation. Yet, Paul states in Galatians that the two forces, sinful nature and Holy Spirit, are constantly fighting each other. Paul tells us in verse 24 that those who belong to Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to the cross and crucified them there. When that happens, Paul tells us that then the Holy Spirit moves in and we are to allow Him to direct our lives to the point where we following the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Paul doesn't state that the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature share residence. The battle is that human nature is tempted to allow sin back in. That is the struggle we will always have. I knew a person who stopped smoking when they became a Christian because they thought since the Holy Spirit lives within us, our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit and it shouldn't be treated with disrespect. However, over time, their friends who still smoked, put pressure on this person

and they finally decided to start back up. They knew it was wrong, but buckled under the pressure. The pressure of sin was too great and they allowed sin to enter back in. Their human nature had now allowed sin in instead of allowing it to be led by the Holy Spirit. James tells us in James 4: 17, "Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it. (NLT)" This is why it is so important to ask Jesus for forgiveness when we sin so that it can be forgiven so that the door can be closed again to sin and the Holy Spirit can go back in giving us full guidance for daily living. This is why temptation is so dangerous. We all go through temptation like Jesus did and that is not sin on our part. It is sin when we give into the temptation and allow sin back into our human nature and then the conflict between sin and the Holy Spirit begins. It's like having a war going on inside you. This is why there are so many miserable Christians out there. Paul tells us plainly that when our human nature is controlled by the Holy Spirit, He will produce good fruit in us like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (verse 22). The sinful nature produces sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, taking part in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. We have the choice on who will control inside us. It's either the Holy Spirit or the sinful nature. If we allow the Holy Spirit free reign inside us, then we must keep watch that we don't allow the sinful nature back in. That is the fight we must always fight until we're called home to be with Jesus in Heaven. If we allow our old sinful nature back in, Paul is very direct in verse 21 that anyone going back to the sinful way of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. So, the cutting away of our sinful nature is real. The important part for us now is keeping it out and allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work within us because of what Jesus did at the cross for us. It's just like the soot that kept trying to fall into the square our group cut out at the old furnace site I talked about at the beginning of the sermon. It was a fight to keep that soot out and it's a fight to keep that sinful nature out. It's a fight we can win when we ask the Holy Spirit to direct our lives. When we do mess up, then we quickly ask forgiveness from Jesus so we don't have that inside war between the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature. We should ask Jesus every day for the full guidance of the Holy Spirit so when temptation comes, the Holy Spirit can guide us out of the temptation. Since Jesus did cut our sinful nature out, let's make sure we keep it out daily.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 199