Notes for Life Groups: Series: 'Spirit Empowered People' Sunday 29 June 2025

'A DIFFERENT WAY OF LIFE' #3

We humans have a propensity to make comparisons, and, when it comes to character and achievement, this creates a tension between wanting to stand out, to excel beyond our peers in some good way on one hand, and, on the other, to stick with the crowd, go with the flow, and blend in for matters when we are unsure or uncomfortable. Yet our Lord Jesus clearly calls us, as his followers, to live every moment of every day in a way of life clearly different from the crowd. He did not expect this to be easy; neither should we.

Read 1 Peter 2: 9-12 Peter is writing to encourage the young church (writing about 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection), a church comprising an eclectic mix of people from different backgrounds, beliefs, hopes and fears. *How different do you think the young church was from our own today? What are those differences, if any? And are they relevant to our study subject?*
Peter urges his readers to now live 'as aliens and strangers in the world', as to continue the former lifestyle (now you are committed to Christ) will 'war against your soul.' *What is the point of wisdom Peter is making here? Has this anything to do with the tension mentioned above, or something different? Is it possible to be 'at peace' with yourself (and God) if one's lifestyle is part new lifestyle and part old?* Peter makes clear that the 'people belonging to God' …. are chosen to 'declare the praises of him who called you' …. by 'living such good lives among the pagans' …. that 'they may see your good deeds and glorify God.' *Why is this so important, not only to God, but to you and I, and the pagans also?*

Read Colossians 3: 12-17 This passage has much in common with Peter's writings above, also disciple John (see 1 John 3). Its unanimous, Paul, Peter and John make the same argument in their own way. Here Paul is describing the characteristics that a changed heart within God's chosen people should produce. Here is the battleground for us all, where tensions between our old self and new self sometimes surface, where influences from outside our Christian bubble deflect our good Christian endeavours and intentions. *Do you see the characteristics detailed by Paul as virtues promoted as beneficial within society in general?* These characteristics could all be categorised under the heading of 'soft virtues' as opposed to descriptions like ambitious, powerful, direct, unwavering. *Does this mean that Christians are required to be somewhat 'wishy-washy'? Can the Christian characteristics also be 'strong'? How might this be manifested?* As has been our emphasis these past weeks, we need the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to enable and facilitate a Christian lifestyle. Paul finishes this passage with 'whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks.' *Perhaps your group would like to finish with singing a worship song, or reading a praise Psalm (suggestion Psalm 96).*

Prayer: *Grant, O God, that I may speak so boldly and so lovingly that the greatness of Christ may shine out clearly in my person, through the indwelling of your Holy Spirit.* Donald Coggan

In a new development for prayer, we ask the Life Groups when they meet, to pray for the charity identified by our church for prayer support each month – *Please pray for The Taunton Area Debt Advice.*