

Chapter 3

Remove All The Bad Roots

It Is Possible

A subtle but profound misunderstanding of what we are like inside has made it difficult for many Christians to see how there can be sin inside us. There is a prevalent view that implies that inside we are like a jar, a container with a single compartment. Therefore, when we give our life to Jesus, He forgives our sins and the jar is now clean. Now that we are pure on the inside, we should be able to act pure on the outside.

The reason this view is erroneous is that, unfortunately, this is never the way it works. I know of no one, including myself, for whom life has been this way. And it was not that way for Paul when he wrote the book of Romans (specifically Chapter 7) for us.¹

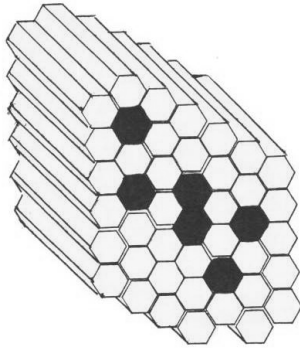
The truth is that inside we are more like a honeycomb than a honey jar. We have many compartments inside, not just one. Some of the compartments contain Jesus, and those are like the "good roots" referred to in Scripture, and which I referred to in the prior chapter. These good roots produce good fruit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness (Galatians 5:22-23).

¹ **Romans 7:15-17**, *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. . . Therefore by their fruits you will know them." (Matthew 7:17-18, 20).

However, some of the compartments still contain bad roots. These bad roots produce bad fruit, as I have previously mentioned, and they are still present and continue to produce bad fruit even after we become a Christian. These bad roots are shown as dark spots in the following honeycomb diagram.



Honeycomb



Honey Jar

We need to allow Jesus into each compartment of the "Honeycomb" that has darkness in it. This transformation is a process, not a one-time event.

This is the sanctification process which is addressed in so many places in the Bible. Bringing Jesus into each compartment is the process of being changed into His image.

This transformation is a process, and not a one-time event.

Once Jesus has taken up residence in that particular place in our "Honeycomb," He produces the good fruit automatically, because Jesus can do nothing but produce good fruit. It is His nature. As He takes over that part of our heart, His nature actually becomes ours in that area, not just positionally (by virtue of our rebirth), but as actual fact. This good

root, that now resides in that part of our "Honeycomb", then produces good fruit.

For instance, if we have struggled with lying, we have found that trying hard not to lie hasn't worked (trying implies use of our willpower). We find ourselves still lying. We need to find the bad root. Perhaps we realize that our father lied to us, and we judged him for it (we sinned by judging him). This bad root is causing our bad fruit. When we deal with the bad root and replace it with the life of Jesus, we find we just don't lie anymore.² There is now good fruit, which is evidence of Jesus in that place in us. It is now so natural not to lie that we may not even be aware that we are different, because it is a new "us."³ Does this sound too good to be true? Believe me, it is true. Better yet, believe Jesus when He said,

Jesus' nature actually becomes ours in that particular area in us.

*"Therefore you shall **be** perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Matthew 5:48, I added the bold).

When Jesus cleanses one compartment of the Honeycomb, it does not mean that all the compartments are clean. Other bad roots will undoubtedly remain, and they will be causing other bad fruit. We need to continue being transformed as God shows us areas in our heart that need healing. This is what Paul meant when he said,

We need to keep on being transformed as God shows us areas in our heart that need healing.

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

² In the next few chapters I will explain how to take out the bad root and replace it with a good one. Here I am simply showing the necessity for this change to happen.

³ God will change you inside, and thus cause you do what He does. **Ezekiel 36:27**: *I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them.* God will not coerce, compel, or require you to do it, because you can't. He knows He must do it in you. It is not a question of "if" He will do it. It is a question of "**how**" this can become reality in you, which is the purpose of this book.

See Endnote #3-1 for more scriptures which promise this transformation under the New Covenant.

We will look more fully at the necessity to keep working on this process in Chapter 17, "It Is A Journey."

Ripeness

All of us want to be completely healed and set free right now. Once you discover that healing and relief from your pain and bad fruit is possible, you don't want to wait. You may wonder why this process has to take the rest of your life. Doesn't God want you healed?

You need to be patient. Jesus is directing your sanctification process,⁴ and He is proceeding as fast as possible. You are not behind schedule. We may want Him to go faster; but if He is going slowly, you can be assured He is acting slowly for a good reason. For instance, if the bad root relates to a very traumatic event, the memory of the event may be deeply buried. Your defenses buried it specifically so you wouldn't have to re-live it. To see

Jesus is directing your sanctification process. If He is going slowly, it is because that is what is best for you.

it again before you are prepared might cause you to be re-traumatized. Because God loves you, He wants you healed, not wounded further. Before revealing such a root to you, He spends time preparing you. He will not let you see it until you will be able to see it without again being wounded. God's process will have made you ripe to deal with this root.

"Ripeness" is like picking apples. If you try to pick an apple before it is ripe, it is difficult to pull off the tree, and you are likely to damage the branch. However, ripe apples fall off easily in your hand. So the Lord ripens you so that when you pray (when you apply the blood of Jesus), it is easy. Then the process brings healing. But you can't rush your healing any more than you can speed the ripening of the apples on a tree.

⁴ See Chapter 6, "God Is On Your Side" for more about God's involvement in your life.

Inside-Out!

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

When we read a scripture like this, we tend to strive to keep His commandments, because we want to please God. We want Him to know that we love Him, and it seems as though this scripture is telling us that the way we can prove our love for him is to keep His commandments. How can one reconcile this with what we have been discovering about our inability to keep His commandments in our own strength (that is, with our willpower)?

Fortunately, Jesus clearly explains what He meant in the context surrounding the above scripture. The explanation is in John 15:5, which is sandwiched between two scriptures that talk about keeping His commandments.

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

*" I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for **without Me you can do nothing**" (John 15:5, I added the bold). ⁵*

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

What could be clearer than "**without Me you can do nothing**?" Keeping this in mind, then John 15:10 is saying something like, "If you keep My commandments this is evidence that you have been changed into My image, because on your own you could not do it. When you have My

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John 15:1-10, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

nature, you love the Father in exactly the same way that I do." Jesus loves the Father because that is His nature.

The reason that we can be thrown into striving to keep God's commandments is that we are confused about how we go about pleasing God. We focus on our behavior (keeping the commandments) rather than the cause of the behavior (our heart condition). We try to keep the commandments in order to prove that we love God. That is backwards.

Our Christian life is meant to be lived from the inside-out, not from the outside-in.

We can only please God by first being changed into the image of Jesus in our "Honeycomb," and then we will keep the commandments because that is now our new nature.⁶ The heart has to change first, and then the behavior will change. Changing our behavior does not change our heart.⁷ 1 John 4:19 says,

We love him because He first loved us.

This is the direction of the flow, from God to us, not the other way around. If you are not clear on this, you can misread many scriptures.⁸ I would suggest that you read John 14:15 through 15:17 in your Bible to get the full flow of what Jesus is saying.⁹

⁶ **John 15:10**, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." We will do it just like He did. Was the Father's love of Jesus conditioned on His behavior? No, it is clear that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, and what He did was the result of the presence of God in Him. "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19).

In these scriptures in John in which God's love seems to be conditional, Jesus is actually saying that we will be keeping His commandments as a result of His presence (His love) abiding in us, because it will be an overflow of a heart that has been changed. Then John 15:10 would be saying something like, "He who keeps My commandments (the symptom or good fruit) must have My love abiding in him (the cause or the root), or he couldn't do it."

When Jesus says we should keep His commandments He is simply saying that is how we can tell whether there is a good or a bad root inside.

⁷ Our behavior is the evidence of our heart condition, and it actually expresses what is in our heart. But it is not the basis, of our heart condition. (Hulbert, Lesson 68).

⁸ See **Endnote #3-3** for more scriptures illustrating this confusion.

⁹ Trying hard to obey God in our own strength is sin because we are under the illusion that we can do God's job. We are subtly taking God's place. Hopefully you can now see that when we are reaping bad things in our life it is the consequence of sin. Jesus is the only One who can stop this. This tendency for us to try to keep the Law in our own strength is a subtle and deadly trap. For a more detailed discussion of

Let me illustrate this with a parallel. Imagine that I break my leg. It hurts, so I take a painkiller, and it hurts less (I manipulate the symptom). But the leg is still broken (the cause). If I neglect the painkiller, it hurts a lot. If the doctor said that a healthy leg shouldn't hurt, I would agree. If mine weren't broken, it wouldn't hurt. But saying my broken leg shouldn't hurt doesn't keep it from hurting. The only way for my leg pain to go away (the symptom, or bad fruit) is for my broken leg (the cause, or bad root) to heal (be changed to a good root).

**God's commandments
are a way of measuring
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root inside.**

Similarly, when I commit a sin that plants a bitter root, there is a wound in my heart. The bitter root causes emotional pain and I have bad fruit, so I try to act differently (I manipulate the symptom). But it doesn't work very well, because there is a wound, a bad root, inside me (the cause). When Jesus says that I should keep His commandments, I would agree. It is like the doctor saying a healed leg shouldn't hurt. If I didn't have the bad root in my heart, the bad behavior wouldn't happen. But saying I should keep His commandments does not make it possible as long as Jesus isn't abiding in that particular area of my heart (my heart is wounded). The only way I can keep the commandments (the symptom) is for my wounded heart (the cause, or bad root) to be healed and for Jesus to take up residence there (the bad root to be changed to a good root).

The symptom is not the cause. We have had it backwards, and have focused on the symptom (the fruit outside) and not the cause (the root inside).

Keeping God's Commandments

When Jesus says that we should keep His commandments He is simply saying that is how we can tell whether there is a bad root inside us. Be careful not to be confused about this. The emphasis is never on the fruit, but is always upon the root. Focusing on the bad fruit can set us to striving to keep the commandments with our willpower - and thus doom us to failure. It is a subtle but deadly trap,¹⁰ and we so easily stumble on this stumbling stone.¹¹

There are many scriptures that can be misunderstood if we confuse the fruit with the root. The book of James has some significant examples of these kinds of scriptures, such as:

- *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead* (James 2:17).
- *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only* (James 2:24).

These scriptures are simply saying that if there are no "works" (no good fruit) this is evidence that there is no "faith" (no good root). They are not mandating "trying" with our willpower. Good fruit is all about outward evidence (our behavior), whereas good roots are all about the cause (condition of our heart).

So when we find it difficult to obey a commandment of the Lord, we are stuck in producing "bad fruit." The Apostle Paul describes our situation: *For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do* (Romans 7:15).

¹⁰ Read Endnote #3-2 and Chapter 13, "The Bad Part" for more details on this subtle and deadly trap.

¹¹ *But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone* (Romans 9:31-32).

We then have three choices:

1. We can ignore the command.
2. We can try to obey the command in our own strength (our willpower) - - - The Destructive Path shown below.
3. We can have the Lord deal with the bad root through forgiving and being forgiven (apply the blood of Jesus) - - - The Healing Path shown below.



We Plant New Bad Roots

The healing path is to bring Jesus into each bad root in our "Honeycomb." Unfortunately we also frequently plant new bad roots inside.

There are many ways that we all sin and thus plant more bad roots in our "Honeycomb." However, the sin that produces most of the damage and destruction in our lives is the sin of judging. Jesus singled out this sin when He said,

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:1-2).

When we judge another, we will surely reap bad consequences.¹² When we plant a bad root in our "Honeycomb" by judging, we can call the bad root a "bitter root" and the action of judging a "Bitter Root Judgment."¹³ I will frequently use these terms in the rest of the book. In the next chapter it will become more clear why this particular sin of judging is so serious and so destructive.

Not Just For A Sick Few

Now that you understand the truth about bad fruit and bad roots, it should be clear that this process is not something for only a few Christians who are really sick emotionally. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and Jesus died to set all of us free from this bondage. This process of being changed into the image of Jesus, which is also called "Inner Healing" by some people, and referred to as "sanctification" in the Bible, is the normal walk for all Christians. In the Chapter 6, "God Is On Your Side," I will explore in detail how very important this process is to God. It is His gift to us.

¹² **Galatians 6:7**, *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Luke 6:37, *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."*

Read **Chapter 4**, "Judging Causes Problems," for more on this.

¹³ **Hebrews 12:15**: *Lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*

Summary

We have a tendency to sin often. When we do, we plant dark places in our "Honeycomb," and these prevent us from following God's laws in those particular areas of our life. These bad roots produce bad fruit. When we repent and allow Jesus into those dark areas of our "Honeycomb," one area at a time, we are changed into His image, step by step. As He takes up residence in those particular areas, the cursing side of the law stops. The good root of Jesus produces good fruit.

God's commandments are a way of measuring whether we have a bad root inside. If we misunderstand and thus try to keep them with our willpower, we will fail.

Even though we have the tendency to sin often, we have the living presence of Jesus, and He provides His blood to wash us clean every time. There is no shortage of the blood of Jesus. Through this provision, He has provided the way for us to be set free from the sins that beset us, by changing us into His image.

Now perhaps you can better understand why Matthew 11:28-30 and the title of this book so clearly describe your struggle.¹⁴

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

¹⁴ See Endnote #3-5 for a detailed description of Matthew 11:28-30.