

believers – *pistos* – in the NT one who trusts in God's promises; one who is convinced that Jesus has been raised from the dead; one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and author of salvation

1 Timothy 4:11

prescribe – *paraggellō* – to transmit a message along from one to another, to declare, announce; to command, order, charge

teach – *didaskō* – to impart instruction; to explain or expound a thing; to teach one something

1 Timothy 4:12

look down – *kataphroneō* – despise, disdain, think little or nothing of

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young...” – NLT

youthfulness – *neotēs* – youth, youthful age

speech – *logos* – the act of speaking, speech

conduct – *anastrophē* – manner of life, conduct, behavior

love – *agapē* – affection, good will, love, benevolence, brotherly love

faith – *pistis* – Relating to God: the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ; Relating to Christ: a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God

purity – *hagneia* – purity, sinlessness of life

example – *typos* – the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made

NEXT STEPS

WEEK 2

...keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good;
keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.

— 2 TIMOTHY 4:5 (MSG)

If you have not yet done the Spiritual Formation Planning Tool, we want to encourage you to do so as soon as possible. This is an important NEXT STEP that will give you a better idea of where you are spiritually and the kinds of things you might want to set as priorities in your spiritual life.



1. SOVEREIGN GRACE LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW PODCAST

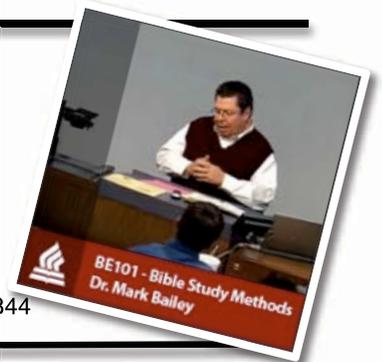
“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (1 Timothy 4:16 ESV). This podcast features a conversation on theology and leadership with C.J. Mahaney (president of Sovereign Grace Ministries), Jeff Purswell (dean of Sovereign Grace Pastors College), and Joshua Harris, (Senior Pastor of Covenant Life Church). While this podcast was aimed at pastors, everyone will find it helpful. You’ll find it on

itunes at the following link: <http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=274185464>

2. WATCH BIBLE STUDY METHODS BY DR. MARK BAILEY

If you’re more visual, why not check out the vodcast from Dallas Theological Seminary featuring Dr. Mark Bailey teaching on basic Bible Study methods. This is a great tool for helping you understand how to make your time in the Word more effective. Start with “7 Rules For Reading – Part 1 and 2.” You can watch the video or listen to the audio on itunes at the following link:

<http://deimos3.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/Browse/dts.edu.1582530842.01582530844>



3. READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

You’ll find them in your notebook. Take some time to read through and think about what they are saying. Discuss them with your accountability partner.

Belief and Practice by The Center for Christian Leadership

The Sacrament of Living by A.W. Tozer

Spiritual Formation and the Warfare Between the Flesh and the Human Spirit by Dallas Willard

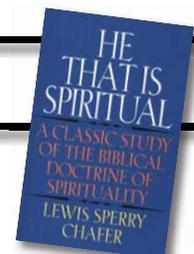
4. READ 2 TIMOTHY 2

Take some time this week to read this passage several times. Write down all the things Paul tells Timothy that you think you could apply to your own life. Ask God to reveal to you what He may want you to do as a NEXT STEP.

5. READ OVER THE LIST OF CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ON THE BACK PAGE

6. READ “HE THAT IS SPIRITUAL” BY LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER

A short, but powerful book that will give you new insights into your spiritual life.



Basic Christian Beliefs

What do you believe? The following are the basic Christian beliefs central to the Christian faith. They are the core doctrines of Christianity. Most of us would say we believe in all of them. But if we do, how does our belief in them impact our behavior? Spend some time considering how your daily life might actually reveal that you DON'T believe in some of these things because of the way you act. Take your time. Look up the passages. Be honest.

- **There is only one God** (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 8; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6; Galatians 4:8-9).
- **God is three in one or a Trinity** (Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; John 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Acts 2:32-33, John 10:30,17:11, 21; 1 Peter 1:2).
- **God is omniscient or "knows all things"** (Acts 15:18; 1 John 3:20).
- **God is omnipotent or "all powerful"** (Psalm 115:3; Revelation 19:6).
- **God is omnipresent or "present everywhere"** (Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Psalm 139).
- **God is sovereign** (Zechariah 9:14; 1 Timothy 6:15-16).
- **God is holy** (1 Peter 1:15).
- **God is just or "righteous"** (Psalm 19:9, 116:5, 145:17; Jeremiah 12:1).
- **God is love** (1 John 4:8).
- **God is true** (Romans 3:4; John 14:6).
- **God is spirit** (John 4:24).
- **God is the creator of everything that exists** (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 44:24).
- **God is infinite and eternal. He has always been God** (Psalm 90:2; Genesis 21:33; Acts 17:24).
- **God is immutable. He does not change** (James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Isaiah 46:9-10).
- **The Holy Spirit is God** (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:11-12; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
- **Jesus Christ is God** (John 1:1, 14, 10:30-33, 20:28; Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 1:8).
- **Jesus became a man** (Philippians 2:1-11).
- **Jesus is fully God and fully man** (Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- **Jesus was sinless** (1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15).
- **Jesus is the only way to God the Father** (John 14:6; Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).
- **Man was created by God in the image of God** (Genesis 1:26-27).
- **All people have sinned** (Romans 3:23, 5:12).
- **Death came into the world through Adam's sin** (Romans 5:12-15).
- **Sin separates us from God** (Isaiah 59:2).
- **Jesus died for the sins of each and every person in the world** (1 John 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Peter 2:24).
- **Jesus' death was a substitutionary sacrifice. He died and paid the price for our sins, so that we might live.** (1 Peter 2:24; Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).
- **Jesus resurrected from the dead in physical form** (John 2:19-21).
- **Salvation is a free gift of God** (Romans 4:5, 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 John 1:8-10).
- **The Bible is the "inspired" or "God-breathed," Word of God** (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).
- **Those who reject Jesus Christ, after they die, will go to hell forever** (Revelation 20:11-15, 21:8).
- **Those who accept Jesus Christ, after they die, will live for eternity with Him** (John 11:25, 26; 2 Corinthians 5:6).
- **Hell is a place of punishment** (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 19:20).
- **Hell is eternal** (Matthew 25:46).
- **There will be a rapture of the church** (Matthew 24:30-36, 40-41; John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).
- **Jesus will return to the earth** (Acts 1:11).
- **Christians will be raised from the dead when Jesus returns** (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).
- **There will be a final judgment** (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Peter 3:7).
- **Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire** (Revelation 20:10).
- **God will create a new heaven and a new earth** (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1).

Belief and Practice

Center for Christian Leadership

Dallas Theological Seminary

We want to be men and women of integrity with the Lord, in our homes, with our friends, and in the workplace. But what does that mean? This session will help us get a better grasp on the term *integrity*.

integrity: (1) soundness of and adherence to moral principle and character; uprightness; honesty; (2) the state of being whole, entire, or undiminished: to preserve the integrity of the empire; (3) a sound, unimpaired, or perfect condition: the integrity of the text; the integrity of a ship's hull

To have integrity is to live and think according to a standard of truth, which is God's character as revealed in His Word. Integrity involves wholeness or soundness. It is more than abiding by a list of dos and don'ts. It involves loving God in our hearts by affirming His standards in our minds through godly living with our bodies. Integrity involves a commitment to self-scrutiny to determine whether our affirmed beliefs match our daily lives.

Session Aims: To recognize the disparity between the biblical beliefs you hold and what you practice in daily life.

Introduction

It is not excess of thought but defect of fertile and generous emotion that marks [many intellectuals] out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary; it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so. —C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

Sometimes gaining more information about God and the Christian life can be oppressive. If that statement seems strange, consider a consequence of acquiring such knowledge. One major consequence is that learning brings a greater responsibility to live according to that knowledge. If we take our growth seriously, we can leave our sanctuaries many Sunday mornings burdened by an understanding of a new biblical principle that we feel obliged to practice in our lives. The more clearly we understand God's holiness and His expectation that we become like Him in holiness, the more the pursuit of holiness can seem an overwhelming task. Yet Jesus said that His "yoke is easy" and His "burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). Though following Jesus certainly involves a yoke and a burden, it is not meant to be overwhelming. As we look at the inner workings of our lives, remember that our Master is "gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29). If we remember the grace He bestowed upon us by granting us forgiveness, we will experience that grace anew as we honestly see our heart condition. In addition, we may be surprised to see how dramatically our Master has already transformed us from the time we placed our faith in Him.

Content

Theologians use the term *sanctification* to describe the process whereby Christians become set apart from the world's ways of thinking and behaving. Sanctification is how Christians grow in holiness. It describes how, for example, a person who approaches life with an attitude of "win at all costs" is transformed into a person who can turn the other cheek. Sanctification is all about life change.

However, if we honestly evaluate our lives, we might find that though we have beliefs about how to live the Christian life, we do not always practice them. While we won't list in this session all the biblical beliefs that ought to guide our daily practice, we must recognize the importance of biblically grounded beliefs and evaluate our own. The Savior commissioned the apostles to teach new converts "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus doesn't want us to conform to an ethic generated by the world and our own creativity. Our standard is what is laid down in Scripture, not what we fancy or what the world affirms:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Life change begins in our minds. Scripture reveals to us the beliefs we should profess.

The second step is equally significant. It is no easy task to practice what we believe, because the world operates by different standards. In addition, practicing biblical beliefs in the midst of a fluid and complex world is enormously challenging. Often, our biblical beliefs don't adequately permeate our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors in the course of a day. What we really value at any moment is expressed not exclusively by the beliefs we affirm but also by how we react or respond to our life events, role models, and cultural background —by the strategies we use to cope with life as a whole. We usually live by a mixture of principles acquired from sermons, Bible study, and fellowship, along with approaches we've acquired from what the Bible calls "the world" and "the flesh."

Our past life experience and our culture often hinder us from practicing our beliefs more fully. For example, even though a believer may intellectually understand that God is faithful, if he never experienced consistent care and protection from his own father, he may operate as if God is not trustworthy to provide for his basic needs. Instead of trusting God during a financial crisis, he may react to the crisis with overwhelming anxiety and decide to compromise his Christian business ethics.

Conclusion

No matter how biblically accurate our beliefs are, head knowledge alone cannot make us holy, because our hearts still hold to the patterns of the flesh (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:14-23; James 1:15; 1 John 1:8). Even though we know we are utterly dependent upon God for life, we all try to manage our lives independently of God at some times and to varying degrees. To understand more deeply why we fail to live by our beliefs, in the next session we will look at the biblical concept of the flesh.

Lest we become too discouraged by the gap between our beliefs and practice, we should celebrate our progress with Christ thus far. By evaluating our past attempts at life change, we can better understand how we help and hinder God's sanctifying work in our lives.

Spiritual Formation and the Warfare Between the Flesh and the Human Spirit

By Dallas Willard

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A publication of The Institute for Spiritual Formation at Biola University.

ABSTRACT: In response to the common assumption of perpetual moral and spiritual failure in human life, this article offers a view of personal transformation and, in particular, of the role of the human will in such formation, that clears a way forward in progressive conformity to the character of Christ. Drawing from St. Paul's understanding of the "flesh" and the human "spirit," distinctions are made between the impulsive, the reflective, and the embodied will. It is the embodied/reflective will of the person that is captured by Christ through inner transformation, such that the crucifixion of the flesh and walking by the Spirit brings about routine, easy obedience to Christ, from the inside out.

"Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace." (Romans 6:12-14)¹

Spiritual formation in Christ is the process through which disciples or apprentices of Jesus take on the qualities or characteristics of Christ himself, in every essential dimension of human personality. The overall orientation of their will, the kinds of thoughts and feelings that occupy them, the "automatic" inclinations and "readinesses" of their body in action, the prevailing posture of their relations toward others, and the harmonious wholeness of their soul—these all, through the formative processes undergone by his disciples, increasingly come to resemble the personal dimensions of their Master. "A pupil is not above his teacher," Jesus said, "but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

This holistic transformation is what Paul means by "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14), and by "Lay aside the old self...and put on the new self" (Eph. 4:22-24). His are not just pretty words, but the practical directions of an intelligent and divinely inspired man who knew by personal experience the reality and truth of what he was talking about. Routine, easy obedience to Christ with reference to specific actions, then, is the natural outcome of the transformation of the essential dimensions of our personality

into Christlikeness. But such obedience is neither the direct aim nor the standard of discipleship. And any idea that we can achieve such obedience to perfection or that we can do it in our own strength alone is emphatically ruled out by the New Testament writers. Very well. But is such obedience then possible at all?

Today there is the wide spread conviction—and corresponding levels of practice—that sin wins. Certain statements also made by Paul, or elsewhere in the Bible, are wrongly understood and applied to the life of the disciple, and are taken to mean that we must remain in perpetual spiritual and moral defeat. In short, spiritual formation in Christlikeness is impossible. The power of sin and its penetration into fallen human nature requires, it is thought, that the ideals of transformation and obedience clearly set forth in many parts of the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, cannot be realized. Goodbye to the Sermon on the Mount, I Corinthians 13, Ephesians 4 & 5, etc. etc. Goodbye even to "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8) We just can't have such a life, according to this view, but must live in constant moral failure and spiritual defeat.

It may seem like that is certainly the New Testament view, if you choose your verses carefully. Paul says that "the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you wish." (Gal. 5:17—That sounds so grim that we suddenly forget the previous verse, where he tells us, precisely, how to foil the flesh. More on this later.) And then there is Paul's most famous statement on this point: "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom.7:19 KJV). This can easily be made to sound like a declaration of the perpetual human condition. And did not Jesus himself say, when confronted with a peculiarly poignant case of human failure, that "the human spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"? (Matt. 26:41) And then there is Jeremiah: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (17:9).

The problem that confronts us here is not, we should note, one that is peculiar to Christians. It is a severe difficulty at the heart of humanity. It is the problem of not doing the good that you would sincerely say you intend to do, that you clearly wish you would do, and that you grieve over and regret not having done. It is a fundamental problem for all who see life clearly and think deeply about it. Greek thought and civilization (such as it was) eventually failed in its attempts to solve the problem of how to do and bring others to do what they knew to be right. Socrates, famously, insisted that if you really knew what was good and right you would do it. Such "moral optimism" clearly puts too much weight on knowledge or on our cognitive faculties. Aristotle struggles with the problem at length under the heading of "weakness of will," in Book VII of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Although he regards Socrates' position as simplistic, he still locates the essential factors of failure at the level of cognition. But the Apostle Paul had a deeper view of the dynamics of human action. He understood sin as a condition of the

human self with which the Greek thinkers never came to grips. And he knew how to deal with it.

People today rarely do justice to Paul as a great thinker and one who, as a slave of Jesus Christ, laid the foundations of the millennia-long Western understanding of human life. Sir William Ramsey, of another day and with a clearer view, remarked that "In Paul, for the first time since Aristotle, Greek philosophy made a real step forward."² In his *A Man in Christ*, James S. Stewart remarked that "For sheer mental force, apart altogether from spiritual experience, Paul's place is with Plato and Socrates and the world's giants of thought."³ To understand the battle between the flesh and the human spirit, according to Paul, and to learn how that battle can be won for Christ in the process of spiritual formation, we must take pains to use his words as he himself understood them.

"Flesh," on Paul's understanding, consists of the natural human abilities, considered in themselves and on their own, unaided by Divine assistance and direction. Flesh is not necessarily bad, and it certainly is not "fallen or sinful human nature." For one thing, it is not human nature, but only one part of it. For another it is not essentially sinful, fallen, or bad. It is a good creation of God, and needs only to keep or be kept to its proper function in life before God. Thus, "the son of the bondwoman (Hagar) was born according to the flesh" (Gal. 4:23)—that is, from normal human abilities. But "the son of the freewoman" (Sarah) was born through the promise and action of God, along with her and Abraham's normal human abilities. The mark of the action of the Holy Spirit with our action is always the incommensurability of the result with the outcome you could expect from normal human abilities and efforts alone. The "mind set on the flesh" is death (Rom. 8:6), because it draws upon natural human abilities alone, not upon the gracious actions of God in our life. Those who invest solely in their flesh get back only "corruption" (Gal. 6:8), for that is the only outcome of natural human abilities on their own, dominated by desires. To be corrupt means to be broken into pieces, to perish through internal disintegration.

Flesh naturally works by desire. Obsessive desire (ἐπιθυμία)—the kind of desire that can rule your whole life—is usually translated as "lust" in the New Testament. Desire is the impulse toward possession or experience of its object. Desire "locks on." It cares for nothing else but its own satisfaction. "I want what I want when I want it," the song says. Of course anyone caught in the grip of "lust" is already in real trouble. They will sacrifice what is good, for themselves and others, to get what they want. This overriding drive for gratification is the genuine root of "weakness of will," and Paul and the other New Testament writers saw it clearly. Desires taken by themselves are inherently chaotic (James 4:1-3), each clamoring for its own gratification. And they are deceitful (Eph. 4:22), for they each promise a fulfillment which they cannot deliver, and they drive us ever onward in the blindness of sensual futility (Eph. 4:17-19). Thus, "fleshly lusts wage war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11), against the inner principle of personal unity and integrity. And we all have to be delivered from "the corruption (the disintegration of life) that is in the world by lust" (II Peter 1:4).

The terrible "deeds of the flesh"—"sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these"—which Paul enumerates as he continues his discussion in Galatians 5 are the natural and inevitable outcomes of "lusts" given free rein.⁴ What is good and right is lost before the onslaught of human desire. The will, the human spirit, cannot prevail going one-on-one with desire. That is the situation described by Paul in Romans 7:19 and Galatians 5:17.

The human will or "spirit," by contrast, is very different from flesh actuated in unrestrained desire. It considers alternatives. That is its essential nature. It is our God-given ability by which we have an interest, not just in this, but in what is better or best. It takes a broad view of possibilities: not just of one desire and its object, but of other desires and goods. That is where choice comes in. Choice involves deliberation between alternatives, with a view to what is best. It seeks light. It treasures the law. The conflict between "the flesh" and the (human) spirit is the conflict between desire—what I want—and the will for what is best. And hence it is also the conflict between desire and love, which is always directed toward what is good for its objects. Love is will-to-good. Desire and love are two utterly different kinds of things. You may say you love chocolate cake, but you don't—you don't will its good, nor perhaps your own—you just want to eat it. That is desire.

Law also is directed toward what is good. That is why it conflicts with desire. Desire says "Let's have sex" or "I wish you were dead." The law says: A greater good is at issue here—the purity of human love and faithfulness toward other human beings, or the preciousness of human life. So: "Thou shalt not." And beyond the explicit law is the general drive toward what is better and best. That is "the spirit of the law." That is love, which is committed to the well-being of its objects and so is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10). Hence in my will or spirit "I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good" (Rom. 7:16).

So the human will or spirit, the power of choice, always seeks a wider perspective than "what I want." But in the lives of people who are "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), desires actually enslave the will, or even pose as the will. Many people lose any understanding that they have a will that is distinct from their desires, and they come to think that freedom is doing what they want, not what is good. We might even speak of a "vital" or "impulsive" will. That would be a willing that is outwardly directed and moved by and moving toward things that simply are attractive. You see this in a baby. A little baby very quickly begins to be attracted to things, to reach for them, and to move in relationship to them. That's all there really is to will in the baby. If the person does not develop beyond this stage, they will identify themselves with their will, and their will with what they want. They will never subordinate themselves to God and what is good, as a whole person living in God's world. Thus, "I want to" and "It pleases me" are now widely regarded as overriding reasons for doing something, when in fact they should

never function by themselves as a reason for action. The meaning of the cross of Christ in human experience is that it stops any mere "I want to" from functioning as an adequate reason for action. The cross is therefore central to the moral life of humanity.

Impulsive will must give way to reflective will. The reflective will is oriented toward what is good for the person as a whole, in their communal setting, not merely to what is desired. So here arises the conflict that we all know too well, between the good and the bad, the good and the not so good, and the good and the better and the best. This conflict goes on constantly in human lives, and it trips up people at all levels of life in contemporary Christian circles. Moral and spiritual failure happens in cases where, for whatever precise reason, the reflective will has not effectively guided life. We then "do what we would not, and fail to do what we would."

By contrast, when we bring the reflective will to life in Christ (birth "from above"), and add the instruction of the law and the presence of the Holy Spirit, along with the fellowship of his Body, we have the wherewithal to live in such a way that God is glorified in everything we do. The anticipation of this is seen in such great passages on the life in Christ as Colossians 3:17: "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father through him." That becomes a real possibility, and progressive transformation toward inner likeness to Christ makes it increasingly actual.

Vital or impulsive will is where you simply choose what you desire, and reflective will is where instead of just doing what you want, you choose what is good—and especially, as Christians, what is good under God, in the kingdom of God with Jesus. A crucial third perspective on the will (human spirit) is to see it as embodied will. Embodied will is where impulsive will or reflective will has settled into your body to such an extent that you automatically, without prior deliberation, do what they dictate. This is a sad—even a tragic—condition for those who have allowed their desires to enslave their will, but that is the standard situation for most human beings on earth. Their body is running their life in terms of desires ("pleasures") that have enslaved their will and positioned their desire-enslaved will in their body. In this sense the body becomes the immediate, but not the ultimate, source of "the deeds of the flesh." This is perhaps what Jesus had in mind when he said that "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34).

Peter's denial of Christ perfectly illustrates this. It was an exercise of his embodied will. He did not reflect on the situation and then decide to deny Christ. When concretely faced with the accusation of association with Jesus he blurted out the denial. It was just sitting there in his tongue, ready to go. Such is embodied will for evil. After the fact, Peter discovered what he was really like "inside." He discovered what Jesus already knew about him. To take another case, when people are verbally assaulted, what do they do without having to think about it? They assault back. When they are hurt, they hurt back. That is embodied will as it exists in a fallen world. When you are driving your car and don't do what someone thinks you should, they may honk at you, or make an

obscene gesture, or other such things. The responses that then arise in the ordinary person are similar in kind. They are expressions of the embodied will. When someone "disses" another person, the other person (usually) does not say, "Huh, I have just been dissed. What shall I do?" No. It's WHOOSH! "Right back at you!" Just like that. We can call that an "epidermal response," because it lies right at the surface of your 'skin'—in your embodied thoughts and feelings.

Now it is the embodied will that must be captured by Christ through inner transformation. That will cannot be effectively controlled by "watchfulness" alone, by conscious monitoring, for it is always "out in front" of any conscious monitoring that we might do. Once Christ has captured the embodied will, watchfulness becomes very effective. But if we are living for desire, our embodied will will have already embroiled us in evil before we can reflectively take up a different direction. Our body must be spiritually developed to the point that what it is "ready" to do is what is good and right—what we "would" do. It then becomes a primary resource for living the life to which Christ calls us and for which he prepares us.

Let us say, then, that Christian spiritual formation is the process through which the embodied/reflective will or "spirit" of the human being takes on the character of Christ's will. Think of Paul's magnificent statement: "The life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). Not just faith in Christ, but the faith of Christ—the one by which he lived. I have taken his faith into me. I am now being inwardly the person that Christ has called me to be, and this inward faith has now spread throughout my social, embodied self—more or less, and progressively more than less.

Let us be as clear as possible. When we speak of spiritual formation we are speaking of the formation of the human spirit. The spirit is the will or the heart, and, by extension, our character, which, in practice, lives mainly in our bodies. The main reason why the idea of spiritual transformation through merely being preached at and taught usually doesn't work is because that does not involve the body in the process of transformation. One of the ironies of spiritual formation is that every "spiritual" discipline is or involves bodily behavior. We have to involve the body in spiritual formation because that is where we live and what we live from. So now spiritual formation is formation of the "inner" dimensions of the human being, resulting in transformation of the whole person, including the body in its social context. Spiritual formation is never merely inward but is always also explosively outward.

In direct confrontation between human flesh and human spirit, between what is desired and what is good, sin wins. The futile human struggle with evil proves it. But fellowship with Jesus Christ in the new life from above brings new possibilities into play on the side of the human spirit in carrying out its intentions for good. Sin then loses as the desires of the flesh are ordered under the goodness and power of God in us. Thus, Paul tells us to "walk by the Spirit (now the Holy Spirit), and you will not carry out the desire of the

flesh" (Gal. 5:16). After listing the deeds of the flesh and outlining the fruit of the Spirit, he continues: "Now those who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by (or follow) the Spirit." (vv. 24-25) In the other masterful passage in which he deals at length with the opposition between flesh and spirit, Romans 8:1-16, he states that "if you are living in terms of the flesh, you are about to die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live on." (vs. 13)

Instead of engaging in futile, direct confrontation with the desires of flesh, organized by the evil one into a "world" set against God and what is good (Eph. 2:1-3; cp. I John 2:15-17), the wise and inspired Apostle gives us a twofold counsel of indirection: (1) To crucify the flesh, and (2) to walk by or follow the Spirit. These are well summed up in his admonition to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to lusts" (Rom. 13:14)—that is, merely to achieve what the flesh wants. I believe that in following this counsel we should think of the two parts as being carried out simultaneously.

(1) You will notice that crucifixion is not something you can do to yourself (you do not have enough hands). That is why Paul says, "if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live" (Rom. 8:13, KJV). Endless grief has come to the people of Christ through efforts to use natural abilities and arrangements to restrain the flesh. Such efforts produce the many "circumcisions" that are found in "religious" life. Restraining the flesh is an essentially divine work, though we also must act. And what do we do? We simply refuse natural desires the right to direct our life. We decide that we shall not live for them to be satisfied. Living to satisfy natural desires is, as Jesus pointed out, how "Gentiles," those who don't know God, live (Matt. 6:32). We make a general surrender of the right to get what we want in favor of the call to do what is good under God. This is the right and healthy understanding of "death to self."

Following upon this general surrender is the practicing of specific disciplines, such as solitude, silence, fasting, study, worship, service, and so forth, to quell our desires that have been running our life and embed the will of Christ into our body in its social setting, making his will our embodied will. That is what Paul has in mind with "I bruise my body and make it my slave" (I Cor. 9:27). The radical disciplines of abstinence, solitude, silence, and fasting, are especially useful and necessary to re-train our body, along with the other active components of the self. "Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me" (Ps. 131:2). That is our new reality. The chaos and turmoil of the self-life is now quieted, and I can stand firmly and effectively for what is good and right in the strength of the Lord. I am walking by the Spirit.

(2) And what does that mean? It means, above all, to count on, to expect, that the Holy Spirit, God, Christ—the unbodily personal power that is the Trinitarian God—will act in my life to enable me to do the good and right in all things I am engaged with. I no longer

"have to" do what is wrong in order to make things "turn out right." The ancient wisdom of the Proverbs says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own cleverness. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will smooth your paths" (3:5-6). To walk by the Spirit means to recognize Him in everything you do and to expect His action. It means that you "set your mind on the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5; II Cor. 4:16-18). It means, negatively, that you do not place your hopes in what natural abilities by themselves can accomplish (Jer. 17:5).

Jesus has arranged with the Father to give us a "Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My; name" (John 14:26). He will always be with us, and will direct and empower us, as we rely upon him and invite him into our activities. Now obviously the experience of God in our affairs will strengthen our commitment to not having "our way," and the use of spiritual disciplines will train us away from trying to run things on our own. So (1) and (2) encourage and reinforce one another. They make for and fill out a life that is "from above," a "resurrection life that is already beyond death" (Col. 3:1-4), a life that is even now an eternal one (John 17:3 and I John 2:17).

In such a life the desires of "the flesh" retreat to the very subordinate role for which they were created. Natural desires are good within the proper ordering of life. But they no longer control us, dictate our actions, and defeat the will for what is good: the love that fulfills the law and goes "beyond the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20). Now, by intention, discipline and grace, I do the things I would and do not do the things I would not. Integrity is restored to my soul and spreads throughout my life. No doubt that is not yet perfectly so, but it is increasingly so as I grow in grace and knowledge toward a scene in which "that which is perfect has come and that which is in part is done away with" (I Cor. 13:10). The peace of Christ and the joy of Christ and the love of Christ possess us, and, whatever battles remain to be fought, the outcome of the warfare between the flesh and the human spirit is no longer in doubt. Spiritual formation in Christ conquers the flesh and makes it the servant of the spirit, human and divine. That is the testimony of Paul, and the testimony of disciples through the ages.

NOTES

1. All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise noted. (Return to text)
2. William M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul: Their Influence on His Life and Thought* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), p. 4. (Return to text)
3. James S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ* (New York: Harper), 1935, p. 21. (Return to text)
4. Paul gave much thought and expression to the dreadful chaos of the sinful life. See his lists in Romans 1:29-32 and 3:10-18, as well as II Timothy 3:2-7. (Return to text)

The Sacrament of Living

A.W. Tozer

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. – I Cor. 10:31

One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas, the sacred and the secular. As the seas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we live a divided instead of a unified life.

Our trouble springs from the fact that we who follow Christ inhabit at once two worlds, the spiritual and the natural. As children of Adam we live our lives on earth subject to the limitations of the flesh and the weaknesses and ills to which human nature is heir. Merely to live among men requires of us years of hard toil and much care and attention to the things of this world. In sharp contrast to this is our life in the Spirit. There we enjoy another and higher kind of life; we are children of God; we possess heavenly status and enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ.

This tends to divide our total life into two departments. We come unconsciously to recognize two sets of actions. The first are performed with a feeling of satisfaction and a firm assurance that they are pleasing to God. These are the sacred acts and they are usually thought to be prayer, Bible reading, hymn singing, church attendance and such other acts as spring directly from faith. They maybe known by the fact that they have no direct relation to this world, and would have no meaning whatever except as faith shows us another world, 'an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' (2 Cor 5:1)

Over against these sacred acts are the secular ones. They include all of the ordinary activities of life which we share with the sons and daughters of Adam: eating, sleeping, working, looking after the needs of the body and performing our dull and prosaic duties here on earth. These we often do reluctantly and with many misgivings, often apologizing to God for what we consider a waste of time and strength. The upshot of this is that we are uneasy most of the time. We go about our common tasks with a feeling of deep frustration, telling ourselves pensively that there's a better day coming when we shall slough off this earthly shell and be bothered no more with the affairs of this world.

This is the old sacred-secular antithesis. Most Christians are caught in its trap. They cannot get a satisfactory adjustment between the claims of the two worlds. They try to walk the tight rope between two kingdoms and they find no peace in either. Their strength is reduced, their outlook confused and their joy taken from them.

I believe this state of affairs to be wholly unnecessary. We have gotten ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, true enough, but the dilemma is not real. It is a creature of

misunderstanding. The sacred-secular antithesis has no foundation in the New Testament. Without doubt a more perfect understanding of Christian truth will deliver us from it.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our perfect example, and He knew no divided life. In the Presence of His Father He lived on earth without strain from babyhood to His death on the cross. God accepted the offering of His total life, and made no distinction between act and act. 'I do always the things that please him,' was His brief summary of His own life as it related to the Father. (John 8:29) As He moved among men He was poised and restful. What pressure and suffering He endured grew out of His position as the world's sin-bearer; they were never the result of moral uncertainty or spiritual maladjustment.

Paul's exhortation to 'do all to the glory of God' is more than pious idealism. It is an integral part of the sacred revelation and is to be accepted as the very Word of Truth. It opens before us the possibility of making every act of our lives contribute to the glory of God. Lest we should be too timid to include everything, Paul mentions specifically eating and drinking. This humble privilege we share with the beasts that perish. If these lowly animal acts can be so performed as to honor God, then it becomes difficult to conceive of one that cannot.

That monkish hatred of the body which figures so prominently in the works of certain early devotional writers is wholly without support in the Word of God. Common modesty is found in the Sacred Scriptures, it is true, but never prudery or a false sense of shame. The New Testament accepts as a matter of course that in His incarnation our Lord took upon Him a real human body, and no effort is made to steer around the downright implications of such a fact. He lived in that body here among men and never once performed a non-sacred act. His presence in human flesh sweeps away forever the evil notion that there is about the human body something innately offensive to the Deity. God created our bodies, and we do not offend Him by placing the responsibility where it belongs. He is not ashamed of the work of His own hands. Perversion, misuse and abuse of our human powers should give us cause enough to be ashamed. Bodily acts done in sin and contrary to nature can never honor God. Wherever the human will introduces moral evil we have no longer our innocent and harmless powers as God made them; we have instead an abused and twisted thing which can never bring glory to its Creator.

Let us, however, assume that perversion and abuse are not present. Let us think of a Christian believer in whose life the twin wonders of repentance and the new birth have been wrought. He is now living according to the will of God as he understands it from the written Word. Of such a one it may be said that every act of his life is or can be as truly sacred as prayer or baptism or the Lord's Supper. To say this is not to bring all acts down to one dead level; it is rather to lift every act up into a living kingdom and turn the whole life into a sacrament.

If a sacrament is an external expression of an inward grace, then we need not hesitate to accept the above thesis. By one act of consecration of our total selves to God, we can make every subsequent act express that consecration. We need no more

be ashamed of our body-- the fleshly servant that carries us through life-- than Jesus was of the humble beast upon which He rode into Jerusalem. 'The Lord hath heed of him' may well apply to our mortal bodies. If Christ dwells in us we may bear about the Lord of glory as the little beast did of old and give occasion to the multitudes to cry, 'Hosanna in the highest.'

That we see this truth is not enough. If we would escape from the toils of the sacred-secular dilemma the truth must 'run in our blood' and condition the complexion of our thoughts. We must practice living to the glory of God, actually and determinedly. By meditation upon this truth, by talking it over with God often in our prayers, by recalling it to our minds frequently as we move about among men, a sense of its wondrous meaning will begin to take hold of us. The old painful duality will go down before a restful unity of life. The knowledge that we are all God's, that He has received all and rejected nothing, will unify our inner lives and make everything sacred to us.

This is not quite all. Long-held habits do not die easily. It will take intelligent thought and a great deal of reverent prayer to escape completely from the sacred-secular psychology. For instance it may be difficult for the average Christian to get hold of the idea that his daily labors can be performed as acts of worship acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The old antithesis will crop up in the back of his head sometimes to disturb his peace of mind. Nor will that old serpent the devil take all this lying down. He will be there in the cab or at the desk or in the field to remind the Christian that he is giving the better part of his day to the things of this world and allotting to his religious duties only a trifling portion of his time. And unless great care is taken this will create confusion and bring discouragement and heaviness of heart.

We can meet this successfully only by the exercise of an aggressive faith. We must offer all our acts to God and believe that He accepts them. Then hold firmly to that position and keep insisting that every act of every hour of the day and night be included in the transaction. Keep reminding God in our times of private prayer that we mean every act for His glory; then supplement those times by a thousand thought-prayers as we go about the job of living. Let us practice the fine art of making every work a priestly ministration. Let us believe that God is in all our simple deeds and learn to find Him there.

A concomitant of the error which we have been discussing is the sacred-secular antithesis as applied to places. It is little short of astonishing that we can read the New Testament and still believe in the inherent sacredness of places as distinguished from other places. This error is so widespread that one feels all alone when he tries to combat it. It has acted as a kind of dye to color the thinking of religious persons and has colored the eyes as well so that it is all but impossible to detect its fallacy. In the face of every New Testament teaching to the contrary, it has been said and sung throughout the centuries and accepted as part of the Christian message, the which it most surely is not. Only the Quakers, so far as my knowledge goes, have had the perception to see the error and the courage to expose it.

Here are the facts as I see them. For four hundred years Israel had dwelt in Egypt, surrounded by the crassest idolatry. By the hand of Moses they were brought out at last and started toward the land of promise. The very idea of holiness had been lost to them. To correct this, God began at the bottom. He localized Himself in the cloud and fire and later when the tabernacle had been built He dwelt between holy and unholy. There were holy days, holy vessels, holy garments. There were washings, sacrifices, offerings of many kinds. By these means Israel learned that God is holy. It was this that He was teaching them. Not the holiness of things or places, but the holiness of Jehovah was the lesson they must learn.

Then came the great day when Christ appeared. Immediately He began to say, 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time...,but I say unto you...' (Mat 5:21-22) The Old Testament schooling was over. When Christ died on the cross the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. The Holy of Holies was opened to everyone who would enter in faith. Christ's words were remembered, 'The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:21-23)

Shortly after, Paul took up the cry of liberty and declared all meats clean, every day holy, all places sacred and every act acceptable to God. The sacredness of times and places, a half-light necessary to the education of the race, passed away before the full sun of spiritual worship.

The essential spirituality of worship remained the possession of the Church until it was slowly lost with the passing of the years. Then the natural legality of the fallen hearts of men began to introduce the old distinctions. The Church came to observe again days and seasons and times. Certain places were chosen and marked out as holy in a special sense. Differences were observed between one and another day or place or person. 'The sacraments' were first two, then three, then four, until with the triumph of Romanism they were fixed at seven.

In all charity, and with no desire to reflect unkindly upon any Christian, however misled, I would point out that the Roman Catholic church represents today the sacred-secular heresy carried to its logical conclusion. Its deadliest effect is the complete cleavage it introduces between religion and life. Its teachers attempt to avoid this snare by many footnotes and multitudinous explanations, but the mind's instinct for logic is too strong. In practical living the cleavage is a fact.

From this bondage reformers and puritans and mystics have labored to free us. Today the trend in conservative circles is back toward that bondage again. It is said that a horse after it has been led out of a burning building will sometimes by a strange obstinacy break loose from its rescuer and dash back into the building again to perish in the flame. By some such stubborn tendency toward error, Fundamentalism in our day is moving back toward spiritual slavery. The observation of days and times is becoming more and more prominent among us.

`Lent' and `holy week' and `good' Friday are words heard more and more frequently upon the lips of gospel Christians. We do not know when we are well off.

In order that I may be understood and not be misunderstood I would throw into relief the practical implications of the teaching for which I have been arguing, i.e., the sacramental quality of every-day living. Over against its positive meanings I should like to point out a few things it does not mean.

It does not mean, for instance, that everything we do is of equal importance with everything else we do or may do. One act of a good man's life may differ widely from another in importance. Paul's sewing of tents was not equal to his writing an Epistle to the Romans, but both were accepted of God and both were true acts of worship. Certainly it is more important to lead a soul to Christ than to plant a garden, but the planting of the garden can be as holy an act as the winning of a soul.

Again, it does not mean that every man is as useful as every other man. Gifts differ in the body of Christ. A Billy Bray is not to be compared with a Luther or a Wesley for sheer usefulness to the Church and to the world; but the service of the less gifted brother is as pure as that of the more gifted, and God accepts both with equal pleasure.

The `layman' need never think of his humbler task as being inferior to that of his minister. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called and his work will be as sacred as the work of the ministry. It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it. The motive is everything. Let a man sanctify the Lord God in his heart and he can thereafter do no common act. All he does is good and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For such a man, living itself will be sacramental and the whole world a sanctuary. His entire life will be a priestly ministration. As he performs his never so simple task he will hear the voice of the seraphim saying, `Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.' Lord, I would trust Thee completely; I would be altogether Thine; I would exalt Thee above all. I desire that I may feel no sense of possessing anything outside of Thee. I want constantly to be aware of Thine overshadowing Presence and to hear Thy speaking Voice. I long to live in restful sincerity of heart. I want to live so fully in the Spirit that all my thought may be as sweet incense ascending to Thee and every act of my life may be an act of worship. Therefore I pray in the words of Thy great servant of old, `I beseech Thee so for to cleanse the intent of mine heart with the unspeakable gift of Thy grace, that I may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee.' And all this I confidently believe Thou wilt grant me through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.