

Series:	Reference:	Title:	Date:
Ruin to Renovation	1 John 3:7-10	How We Know...	02.18.18
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
We can't address spiritual formation without a discussion of the Lordship of Jesus in life. The terms Savior & Lord cannot be separated when it comes to this life of faith - let's see how that's revealed throughout our lives in how we live.			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Thanks to Dallas Willard, this series is born out of his book, *Renovation of the Heart*. Many of his thoughts & words make it into these sermons; read the book as you follow along.

We've said a lot in this series so far. Some of which may feel redundant, but just as one drop of water doesn't soak a sponge, redundancy's a helpful teaching tool. We need quite a bit poured into us until we're soaked with Truth.

We've talked a lot about the heart. How we can't get caught in the thicket of the outward behavior of a person, but in witness, and in our personal lives we shoot for applying Jesus & the Word of God to the heart. We want to avoid being moralistic or legalistic, and rather look for true spiritual change & ongoing transformation of the soul. **Since we know, Jesus changes a person at the core, and in addition to the benefit of eternal life, it leads to a healthy outward life & betterment in community now. This was illustrated in the World View model which has been helpful to form our thoughts.**

Last week we looked at what Dallas Willard said of Human Nature, that it's made up of 6 essential aspects...

1. Thought (images, concepts, judgments, reasoning & conclusions we make)
2. Feeling (sensation, emotion)
3. Choice (will, decision, character)
4. Body (actions & interaction with the physical world)
5. Social context (personal & structural relations to others)
6. Soul (the factor that integrates all of the above to form one life)

We said the ideal spiritual life is one in which all these things are ordered around God & being restored, renewed & sustained by him. So, spiritual formation's the process leading to that end, and the result is love of God with all heart, soul, mind & strength - and also the neighbor as oneself as in Luke 10! We want to be the person fully integrated under God - actively residing under grace. Since we're convinced Jesus is our hope for self & everyone else as well.

**So we see in this diagram, the Word & Spirit of Christ enters into our lives permeating every aspect of our being & enlivening our spirit. This in turn evokes faith in Christ which reestablishes communion with God as it says in 1 Peter 1:21, *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.***

We can also apply this to our World View model as well, knowing the heart is changed, at the world view level, and begins to enact change outwardly to & including the

behavioral & artifact levels. Which is why we've said not to get too caught in the thicket of the outward behavior of a person when it relates to their standing with Jesus. Eventually behavior will change.

I remember as a boy at times my friend would stand on the side of the road with a stick as I was riding my bike downhill. When I got close he'd try to shove it in my spokes effectively stopping my bike flat, sending me hurling through the air. These are the things boys do to friends. I imagine girls don't do such things.

But that's what I'm gonna do to you this morning - put a stick in your spokes. Because after this nice leisurely ride down 'heart' lane, you may think behavior doesn't matter. It does, and we've said that, but maybe not loudly enough. Scripture's clear on this fact, and the stick I'm going to shove into your spokes is found in 1 John 3:7-10 (however, this is not the only stick I could use, there are plenty)...

*7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. (1 John 3:7-10)*

So, we've agreed not to be too concerned about outward behavior, but this passage seems to place our focus right back on it, since doing, or not doing right can only be judged by outward words & actions! These are the passages which give us pause. We read this & what's the first concern? V9...if I'm a Christian, does this mean that I have to be perfect? And if I'm not, does that mean I'm not a Christian? I don't know about you, but I'm not perfect. I can pinpoint times in my week when my attitude & behavior were somewhere in the range of questionable at best, to outright sinful at worst.

V7 is key, '*don't let anyone lead you astray*'...the constant warning to our waywardly prone hearts which get caught so easily in the ebb & flow of cultural think. In this day & age the current philosophy is, like we said last week, there's no base human nature, we're just animals. No original sin inherent in all of us. This humanistic philosophy influencing the church translates to a loose theology of sin & human depravity. It denies the darkness within us for which Christ died & rose from the grave. Grace & mercy are therefore, preached strongly, but sin & depravity are mentioned only in passing, if at all. And we're left with Christians who loosely wear the clothing of religion, but aren't changed from the inside out. Looking somewhat healthy, but inwardly riddled with disease. Whitewashed tombs. It's a belief in the twisted truth, which is no longer truth, but a lie in disguise.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this 'cheap grace' in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, published in 1937. Bonhoeffer defined cheap grace as "*the preaching of forgiveness*

*without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.”*

It's cheap since the emphasis is on the benefits of Christianity without the costs involved. It's the opposite of legalism, although it's become a liberal legalism in & of itself; carnality implemented as rule under the guise of freedom. It's the staying on the throne of your own life, while claiming the goodies of Jesus' community - it's eating the icing off the top of the gospel cake. It's tolerant & accepting of bad sinful behavior. And in the circles where it's preached, it's not to be challenged, which makes it legalistic - because for them it is the rule to live by.

There are whole religious denominational systems living & promoting cheap grace, that is, the salvation of Jesus, without the lordship of Jesus. But in every church, there are also those who live this cheap grace quietly as individuals. From the guy coming on Sundays just to troll for women. To the nice soccer mom who goes to church for the benefit of friendships, but has no intention of allowing Jesus to challenge her heart in loving her neighbor. From the couple who'll allow Jesus into life as far as to the door of the bank, but not beyond - because for them Jesus has no say so in their finances. To the guy or girl living privately in sexual immorality given, to them, Jesus has no right to make demands in such private matters.

In the 80's & 90's there was a ruckus in the theological world revolving around the term Carnal Christian. It centered around the fact that some were teaching basically that you could profess Christ, and that's enough, that there didn't have to be a life change.

It was a teaching that the call to salvation doesn't also necessarily include a call to repentance & holy living at the same time. Some in the camp may've taught that salvation was followed by sanctification (the transforming work of Christ), but that they were totally separate things - that there can be a call to salvation, without a call to discipleship. But Scripture teaches one can't have Jesus as Savior without also acknowledging Him as Lord - Jesus himself said in Luke 6:46, *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”*

The salvation & lordship of Jesus are inseparable. There must be life change, repentance, and a start of transformation from the moment of salvation, or it's cheap grace which isn't grace at all. Discipleship, a call to follow in holiness & repentance, allowing Jesus control over every aspect of life, emulating him as best we're able in our reliance on his grace. The word 'Savior' is only used 24 times in the New Testament, whereas the word 'Lord' is used 667 times in reference to God the Father or Jesus. That's not to downplay Jesus' role as Savior, but it's to point out that this idea of Lordship is of utmost importance in our relationship to him.

Any serious discussion of true spiritual formation must address the whole person under the lordship of Christ. Outward behavior does reveal something about the inner heart. Sometimes that outward behavior is so blatant & so consistent we know there's been no

heart change - Christ isn't lord of that person. Other times it's not so clear, and time will tell if fruit occurs at all - this is where personality types come into play. Some of you are very amiable people, but amiability does not a Christian make. The truth is, someone can come to church their whole life & be very involved, look great on the outside, but still not know Jesus in any intimate saving way. The real questions for ourselves are: Do we love God with the whole self, allowing him to transform every aspect of our nature, and also love others as ourselves? Is true faith revealed in a 360 degree devotion to holiness & holistic spiritual formation in Christ?

When the writers says, *"The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous,"* it's reminiscent of Jesus in Matthew 7 where he says, 15 *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."*

These two passages speak in the same voice. Once a persons heart's changed by the incoming of Christ, something has happened to them. The old has gone the new has come. The residual effects of sin are still there in the members of our body, our natural reactions to life, our motorized responses to outward stimuli (remember our alcoholic salivating at the bottle last week), etc. But, something has come about in the middle of us. The Spirit, Heart, or Will has come alive in Christ, and over time it will bleed out to change all else about us. If NOT, if this Jesus thing has only been a social experiment for us, or behavioral modification, then we will be shown for what we truly are, a bad tree which can't bear good fruit. And all this is shown over time. So this idea is descriptive not prescriptive - in other words we don't read this & say, "Wow, I better start producing good fruit or Jesus is gonna cut me down!" Instead we say, "Thank you Jesus that you've redeemed & regenerated my heart to be able to produce good fruit!" And we participate with him in that truth.

When a person comes to Christ there are things which change in them in a flash. If they were drastic personalities in certain ways before Jesus, those around them are typically overjoyed at major change in the character of a person who's just come to faith. Other things linger, we have our struggles, they're engrained in our flesh, as God is working those things out of us over time. Human nature as we've seen is a complicated system of interrelated aspects from thought, to feeling, to social context, etc... And it takes time to change those things. There are mistakes & setbacks along the way which are confronted with grace & mercy. Part of the good fruit produced in us is the fruit of integrity. Where we don't hide our need & weakness any longer - we become open honest repenters of our sinful mistakes & choices. Integrity isn't trying to look perfect when you're actually not, it's the pursuit of strong moral principles in open honesty of not being perfect.

Having said all that, let's bring this passage up once more: *7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is*

*righteous. 8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. (1 John 3:7-10)*

Let's take the sting out of this, while still leaving God the proverbial bite. V7... *The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous....*remember, righteousness is defined as being rightly related to God - it's not about your perfection, but Christ's! How does Scripture define our being rightly related to God, or our gaining of righteousness? In Romans 1:17 it says, *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."* And we know that faith itself is a gift, righteousness is also a gift from God. Romans chapters 3 & 4 also speak about this righteousness being credited to us; imputed, or given to us by way of Christ.

Philippians 3:9 speaks of not having a righteousness of our own which comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. In other words, Christ's righteousness is laid upon us, it has nothing to do with our performance, rather it's based on his perfect record & sacrifice. So, v7 is descriptive, not prescriptive. When we give ourselves to Jesus we're covered by his righteousness which means our old self-righteousness is crucified with Jesus. He has free reign & lordship of our lives, and part of his purpose in that is to destroy the works of Satan (v8) in us. Completely, those works are paid for in Christ already, and completely, will be changed over time.

And as we continue on to v9 we see that, as a result of that movement, it's a natural progression that those of us who are born again, will naturally move from a sinful life to a holy life. Because we've been born again - the seed of God is planted at the core of our being & grows outward to overtake all that we are. Some things change immediately, some things slowly over time. Some things are easily given up since they aren't so ingrained in us, that's the easy part - the surgeon cutting away the cancer so to speak.

It's like the Holy Spirit going through our spiritual house where we've lived as hoarders. The first thing he cleans up is all the paper trash, the easily moved things. Then he moves on to the bigger more involved items, old couches, broken toilets which need replacing, redoing floor boards, etc. He does this process slowly since it may be overwhelming to us to do it all at once.

Some things in us are difficult to see changed given they've been so deeply ingrained in our social context, muscle memory, bodily functions, thought patterns, feelings, choices, patterns & habits. God is patient, kind & thorough in his renovation of our hearts.

This is where spiritual formation comes into play, and our engagement with God in process. If we ignore it, and don't participate, we only prolong change & make life more difficult for ourselves & others. But if we willingly give Jesus the reign, participating with him in our own transformation - things go much more smoothly, and we find joy & freedom coming into life - and most importantly Christ is glorified in us! It may be helpful to imagine yourself going through your spiritual house with the Holy Spirit talking about what to throw out next, what needs repair, and what needs a coat of paint.

It's like investing wisely over the years. When you're young you work, work, work, doing all you can to make & save money. It seems so small & incremental along the way; \$25 here, \$50 there. But as time goes on you invest little by little, your money begins to make money through compounding interest, and you begin to find freedom. And at 50 years old, you don't have to worry so much about spending as you did when you were 30. Spiritual formation works in the same way, putting the work in, brings about a harvest of righteousness. Freedom & joy over time.

So, don't be led astray. Salvation in Christ, comes with the Lordship of Christ. It means obedient discipleship. You're 100% his - He will destroy the work of Satan in your life. As it says in Philippians 1:6...*he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*. He's like the Genesis Device in Star Trek (explain). He will work even when you do not, but he invites your participation. In Christ you're the good tree unable to produce bad fruit. Not because you're righteous in & of yourself, but due to Christ's work in you, since He has imputed his righteousness upon you. It's not about your perfection, but about his perfect record. Through God's seed growing within you, you'll be unable to continue to live in destructive ways forever - he is leading us into holiness!

I want to end this today with an imaginative prayer exercise... (imagine your spiritual life as a home - explain)