

CHAPTER 20

A summary of the book...
“TRUE SPIRITUALITY”
by Francis A. Schaeffer
(1912–1984)

The question is this: What is the Christian life (true spirituality) really all about, and “how” is it lived out? Obviously, one must first be a Christian in order to live the Christian life. The reason for this is that all men are separated from God because of their *true moral guilt*... and only the finished, substitutionary work of Christ upon the cross is enough to remove it; hence, it is Christ *plus nothing* on our part. The only *instrument* for accepting the work of Christ is *faith* – not faith in faith, but simply believing the specific promises of God. Furthermore while the new birth is necessary as the beginning, that is only the beginning. The important thing after being born spiritually is *to live* – this is the area of *SANCTIFICATION*. True spirituality is not a matter of refraining from certain behaviors *or* actually performing certain behaviors in a mechanical sort-of-way, yet neither is it a rejection of such a list and living a looser life.

Likewise, the Christian life (true spirituality) is not to be seen as “outward” at all, but as “inward.” The climax of the Ten Commandments is the Tenth Commandment – “*Thou shalt not covet*” – this commandment is an entirely inward thing. Actually, we break this commandment before we break any of the others. Paul states very clearly in Romans that this was the commandment which gave him a “*sense of being sinful*” – “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘*You shall not covet.*’ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind” (Rom 7:7-8). What Paul is saying here is this: “I did not know I was a sinner; I thought I would come out all right, because I was keeping these outward things and was doing well in comparison with other people.” He had been measuring himself against the externalized form of the commandments which the Jews had in their tradition. But when he opened the Ten Commandments and read that the last commandment was not to covet, he saw he was a “*sinner.*”

The great commandment in the Bible is to “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” (Deut 6:5; Mt 22:37). We must see that “loving God” means “not coveting against God”... and that “loving our neighbor” means “not coveting against him.” When we do not love the Lord as we should, we are actually “*coveting against Him.*” The word “*covet*” in the Greek is *epithumeo* – which means “*to fix the desire upon; to long for; to lust after.*” Therefore, when we do not fix our desire upon God, we are longing for something or someone else; so when we do not love God as we should, we are coveting against Him. Jesus said, “You cannot covet both God and mammon – you will hate one and love the other” (Mt 6:24). “*Thou shalt not covet*” is the internal commandment which shows the man who thinks himself as being “moral,” as really needing a Savior. The average “moral man” who has lived comparing himself to other men can feel like Paul, that he is actually doing all right. But suddenly, when he is confronted with the “*inward command*” not to covet, he is brought to his knees.

Says Schaeffer: This is a very “central concept” if we are to have any understanding or any real practice of the true Christian life or true spirituality. We can take man-made lists and we can seem

to keep them, but when we come face to face with the “*Law of Love*,” we can no longer feel proud, and the reality of our sinful self becomes quite clear. In this life we can never say, “I have arrived! it is finished! look at me! I am holy!” When we talk of the Christian life or true spirituality... when we are talking about freedom from the bonds of sin... we must wrestle with the “*inward problems*” of not coveting (fixing our desires) against God and men, of loving God and men, and not merely some set of externals. This immediately raises the question of whether or not “all desire” is sin – the Bible clearly teaches that it is not. Schaeffer says, “*desire becomes sin when it fails to include love of God or men — we are to love God enough to be contented, and love men enough not to envy.*”

If we do not love God enough to be contented, our natural and proper desires will bring us into revolt against God – and revolt is the whole central problem of sin. When I lack proper contentment, either I have forgotten that God is God, or I have ceased to be submissive to Him. By the way, *a quiet disposition and a thankful heart at any given moment is the real test of the extent to which we love God at that moment.* God’s own standard for Christians is that “we not let immorality or any impurity, or greed, or filthiness, or silly talk be named among us, as is proper among saints; but rather giving thanks” (Eph 5:3-4). “*Giving thanks*” stands in contrast to the dark list of items. Paul goes on to say we are to “*always give thanks to God for all things*” (Eph 5:20). We are not to worry or be anxious for anything – rather we are to pray with *thanksgiving* about everything (Phil 4:6). To the Colossians he writes, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts and *be thankful*... and whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks to God*” (Col 3:15, 17). Elsewhere he states, “*In everything give thanks*, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Th 5:18). I think we can see all this in its proper perspective if we go back to what Paul wrote in the first chapter of Romans: “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, *or give thanks*; rather their foolish hearts became darkened” (Rom 1:21). Again, the central point is that they were “*not thankful*” – the beginning of man’s rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart. Do you genuinely “*desire and long for God*”? or something else?

The truth of the matter is, if we are not content and grateful, we are not loving God as we should; rather we are “*coveting against God.*” It is this *inward* area that is the first place we lose true spirituality; the *outward* is always just a result of it. Inward coveting – lack of love toward God and man – soon tends to spill over into the external world; it cannot be kept in the internal world completely. The apostle Paul tells us that *our longing in love* should be to seek the other man’s good – not just our own – “though all things are lawful for us, all things are not profitable for edification; therefore let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor” (1 Cor 10:23-24; Phil 2:4). “Love is long suffering... and does not seek its own” (1 Cor 13:4-5). Schaeffer writes, “If we can only get hold of this – that the *internal* is the basic, and the *external* is always merely the result – it will be a tremendous starting place.”

Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20). Note the *negative* and the *positive* – we have been *crucified* (death) that we might walk in *newness of life* (Paul shares the same force in his letter to the Romans (6:4). Paul also says: “Our old self was crucified with Christ, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom 6:6). Therefore as Christians, we *died* with Christ... but we also *rose* with Christ – hence, there is to be an external positive manifestation of the inward positive reality. We are not just dead to certain things... we are to love God... we are to be alive to Him... we are to be in communion with Him (in this present moment of history). Since we have been justified (made righteous) by Christ, we should desire a “*deeper life of true spirituality*,” one that springs forth from within – “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through

the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5); the fruit of the Spirit should be produced in us—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). (1-17)

At this point let’s return to the “negative considerations” – “We were *buried* with Christ through baptism into death” (Rom 6:4); “our old self was *crucified* with Him” (Rom 6:6). Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20); “God forbid that I should boast in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6:14). In these statements we find that as Christians “*we died with Christ*” (that is the reality) when we accepted Him as our Savior. But there is more – in practice “*we are to die daily!*” (Lk 9:23; 1 Cor 15:31) – and that cuts into the hard stuff of normal life. We already saw that God’s Word is definite when it tells us to be contented and thankful in “all things” – and that includes the hard things. In essence, that means we are to say “no” to the dominance of things and self. We are to be willing to say “no” to *ourselves*, in order that the command to love God and men may have real meaning. We are not to seek our own, but to seek another man’s good (Phil 2:4). Obviously, anyone who is thinking along honestly at this point, must say that this seems like an *extremely hard position* that Scripture is presenting to us. After all, we are surrounded by a world that says “no” to nothing! In the society in which we live, everything must give in to affluence and selfish personal peace. Furthermore, this environment of “*not saying no*” fits exactly into our individual natural disposition – ever since the fall of man, we do not want to deny ourselves. This was the very crux of the fall – when Satan told Eve she would “*be like God*” if she ate of the fruit, that is what she “*wanted*” (Gen 3:4ff); she wanted to run her own life; she did not want to say “no” to eating the fruit, even though God had told her to say “no.” If we stand in the normal perspective of fallen man, it is very hard indeed to say “no” to ourselves. But if we shift our perspective, the whole thing changes.

Consider Jesus’ words: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk 9:23). This is the same thing we read in Corinthians – not seeking our “own things” even if we have rights to them. This perspective is the antithesis of the world’s perspective – the perspectives of the Kingdom of God and that of the fallen world and of our own fallen nature are diametrically opposed to each other. When we step out of that very black perspective and into the perspective of the Kingdom of God, then these “negatives” which are laid upon us take on an entirely different aspect. The “*death of Christ*” is the central message of the Christian faith – not the life or the miracles of Christ. The first promise of the coming of the Messiah (Gen 3:15), tells us that He would be bruised – how else is “sinful man” to be clothed except with skins requiring the shedding of blood? (Gen 3:21). In the celebration of Passover, the Passover Lamb died – this looked forward to the coming of Jesus (Ex 12; Is 53:7; Jn 1:29; 19:14). The center of the Christian message is the redemptive death of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul writes, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:23-24).

Conversely, as believers, we are to take up our cross “daily” and follow Christ (Lk 9:23). “For whoever wishes to *save his life* shall lose it, but whoever *loses his life* for My sake, he is the one who will save it” (Lk 9:24). Here Jesus takes the *order* that was so necessary for our redemption, and applies it to the Christian life – Jesus was *slain* and then *raised*. That is precisely the order of true spirituality – there is no other. By the way, *Jesus is talking here about “our death” by choice in the present life*. Jesus carries this concept of *being slain* down into a very practical situation – saying “no” to self in an alien world. Just as Christ’s death preceded His resurrection in the order of redemption, so our death to things and self is the first step in the order of true and growing spirituality. Just as Christ’s death was *central* to our redemption, *so also is our continuing death by choice central to our spiritual growth in Christ*. We must not think that

we can rush into true spirituality without being slain. Carefully and prayerfully reflect upon the foregoing – these truths are absolutely essential for growing and maturing in Christ.

The very First Commandment set forth a call to say a “strong negative” towards wanting to be in the place of God. This is the key to the whole thing – wanting to be at the center of the universe. By choice “*we are to die to running our own lives and doing our own thing.*” The Last Commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” shows us that these negatives are not related just to outward behavior, but to *inward attitudes*. In reality, here is our death. We are to say “no” – by choice – to self at that point in living when we are confronted with things that are wrong, and that we might very well find enjoyable. Thus, here in the midst of life, where there is battle and strife, there is to be a “*strong negative*” – by choice, and by the grace of God. It is not, for example, a matter of waiting until we no longer have strong sexual desires, but rather than in the midst of the movement of life, surrounded by a world that grabs everything in rebellion first against God and then against its fellow man, we are to understand what Jesus means when He talks about denying ourselves and renouncing ourselves in regard to that which is not rightfully ours.

There will be some pain here – there are splinters in the Christian’s cross. Keep in mind the order of things for Jesus on the way to the cross: “The Son of man must *suffer many things*, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (Lk 9:22) – *suffering must precede any possibility of knowing anything about the risen life*. Christ called His followers to take up the cross *daily* – there is this daily moment-by-moment aspect that so many of us seem to ignore. Note carefully Jesus’ words: “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Lk 14:27). Jesus is not saying that a man cannot be saved without this, but that you are not a disciple of Christ – in the sense of following Him – if this is not your way of life; rejected and slain daily! This is not an abstract principle we are talking about – it is intensely practical (Lk 14:26); He sets it among the realities of daily life. This is where we must die – calculate the cost! (Lk 14:28-30). Believers must ever keep before them the fact that part of being a growing Christian is the element of “*bearing one’s cross daily.*”

Paul writes, “We have been buried with Christ through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was *raised* from the dead through the glory of the Father, so *we* to might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Schaeffer says, “we are in peril if we ignore the element of *dying* – the way to freedom is *through* death, not around it!” *The order is absolute – dying, then being raised.* Paul goes on to say: “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Christ (we must know this before we can get on to the second half of this verse), that our body of sin might be made powerless (*done away with*), that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Rom 6:6). As Schaeffer puts it, “One does not get on the other side of a door without going through it; likewise, we do not get to the joyous second part of this verse without passing through the first part.” If we want to know anything of true spirituality in the Christian life, “*we must take up our cross daily.*” After *death* to self, there continues to be a *resurrection* (Gal 2:20).

Paul says, in the present life we are in practice to “live by faith,” as though we are now dead (Rom 6:6) – “Consider yourselves to be *dead to sin*, but *alive to God* in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). We are called in faith to reckon ourselves *dead* (in practice) at this present moment of history – so by faith we are to live now as though we have *already died*. Conversely, we are to live by faith now, at this moment of history, as though we had *already been raised* – thus, we are to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). That is the message of the Christian life. How do we do this? **By faith** – “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). The word translated “consider” is *logizomai* – it signifies “to take account of” (2 Cor 10:7) – as believers we are exhorted to think and consider certain things as being

true – that is faith – we are trusting what God says as indeed being true. As believers we are called to “live by faith” (Rom 1:17; 4:3). When we believe God, we please God – “without believing Him, we cannot please Him!” (Heb 11:6). The basic consideration of the Christian life in a nutshell is this – we are to “count or reckon ourselves as indeed being *dead* to sin, and *alive* to God” (Rom 6:11) – these two truths are not only “facts,” they are to be practiced and lived out – that is the essence of faith! As believers we are to turn our faces toward God – away from ourselves and sin – and keep our eyes fixed upon Him (Heb 12:2). Writes Schaeffer, “This is the place in which, by faith, at the present moment of history, we are to be.”

A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST

(Supplementary Notes)

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only historical facts and significant doctrines, but they are the personal experiences of every believer through “*union with Christ.*” As believers, we have been “*baptized into Christ*” – spiritually speaking, that means “*we died with Christ*” and “*we were raised with Christ,*” that we might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-4). The essence of the mysterious union we have with Christ is this – God’s Spirit spiritually placed us “*in Christ*” 2000 years ago at the cross, so that when He died, *we died with Him...* and when He was raised, *we were raised with Him* (Rom 6:5; Gal 2:20; Col 2:20; 3:1). That is the *spirituality reality* of every believer; they are all “*in Christ;*” that is their “*position*” if you will (Rom 6:3-4, 11; 1 Cor 1:30; Gal 3:27; Eph 2:6; 2:10; Col 3:3). Christ “*died to sin*” in the sense that He bore sin’s penalty (Rom 6:23); as a result sin has no more claim or demand upon us... because we died with Him. As Christians we are no longer “*alive to sin*” and “*dead to God*” – we are now brand *new creations* in Christ (2 Cor 5:17); therefore we are “*dead to sin*” and “*alive to God.*” We were “*crucified with Christ*” that our old self might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – that means we are freed from sin (Rom 6:6-7); we now have the capacity to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4); we didn’t have that capacity as unbelievers. Because we died with Christ, we have been set free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).

It is important for the believer to understand that “his flesh” – his old nature – is not dead. The old corrupt nature is still alive and active in regenerate believers; so much so that we are exhorted over and over again not to obey its lusts (Rom 6:12-13; 13:14; Eph 4:22-24). God has given us the *Holy Spirit* for the precise purpose of subduing and controlling the flesh (Rom 6:4; 8:11, 13). Therefore, as believers, we have *died to sin* in the sense that in Christ we have borne its penalty – thus *our old life ended (died), and a new life has begun* (2 Cor 5:17). The apostle Paul exhorts believers to “*reckon*” these things as being true – you have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom 6:11). “*Reckoning*” is not pretending that your old nature has died when you know perfectly well that it has not. We are rather to realize that “*our old former self died with Christ,*” thus paying the penalty of its sins and putting an end to its career – we are now “*new creations in Christ!*” Therefore, reckon these things as true – you are indeed *dead to sin* and *alive to God* in Christ Jesus! This is the reality of “*what is*” for the believer.

Grasping this truth is paramount to experiencing the transformation, liberation and sanctification of your soul. You must know *who you are* as a believer in Christ; this is your *new identity* as a believer! Study this concept over and over again... let your mind play upon these truths... prayerfully meditate upon them until you grasp them firmly, and your soul is really at peace with them. Remember, all of the foregoing is true because God’s Spirit placed you *in Christ!* Without a firm understanding of the truths presented above, you will often struggle with a lack of assurance regarding the fact that you are really saved... you will frequently question the fact that God really loves you... you will try to please God by

trying to live up to His standards, and always feel that you fall short – which you do! That is the essence of performance-based living... and more often than not you will feel discouraged and defeated as a Christian. Unless you really know who you are “*in Christ*,” the Christian life can be an exhausting, miserable experience. Therefore, believe what God says about you, and walk with Him through life... and in doing so, you will experience His power, His peace, His presence, and His joy. Any other kind of living will simply leave you joyless, frustrated and disheartened.

When [through faith] we are dead to ourselves and this world, and we are face to face with God, then we are ready *by faith* to live in this present world, as though we have already been *raised* from the dead. Once we “consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God” (Rom 6:11), Paul then says, “we are not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies by obeying its lusts” (Rom 6:12); rather, “we are to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom 6:13) – that is faith. *Obviously the Christian life is not just a mystical life of “sheer passivity.”* Though there are passive aspects to the Christian life, God will not bring forth fruit in your life without the *activity of faith* – we are called to cooperate with God by believing and obeying Him (Jn 15:5,8; Phil 2:12-13). Perhaps the concept of “passivity” should be explained here – in the New Testament language of Greek, when the verb is *passive*, that means “we are *recipients* of the action;” when the verb is *active*, that means “we are the ones *initiating* the action.” Though much of what we experience in the Christian life is the “direct action of God upon our lives” – thus we are *recipients* of His action – there are aspects of the Christian life where we are called to “*initiate action*,” and therein is the essence of submitting to and obeying God. So... just as we yielded the members of our bodies as instruments of *unrighteousness* as unbelievers (by obeying the lusts of the flesh), we are now called to yield the members of our bodies as instruments of *righteousness* (by obeying God). This calling is a *choice* – we are called to live in such a way that God is glorified, and that means believing, trusting, and obeying Him. Though **Justification** is a once for all thing – it happens at a single moment in time – **Sanctification** is a moment-by-moment thing, where we die to ourselves and the world moment-by-moment, and live to God moment-by-moment; living as though we have been raised from the dead. (18-45)

Believers naturally ask the question, “How” is it practically possible to live this way? What do I begin to do? Do I begin to whip myself in order to get it accomplished? Do I begin to seek some sort of ecstatic experience? No. Neither of those. The answer is an intensely practical one. The apostle Paul writes, “While we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a pledge, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor 5:4-5). Paul draws two factors together here: 1) *we will be with Christ when we die*, and 2) *we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit*. To die is to be with the Lord – it is not just an idea, but a certain reality. At the same time, Christ lives in us at the present time (Jn 14:16-17; Gal 2:20; Col 1:27). Here is the essence of true **Christian mysticism** – it is not based merely on an experience without content, but on the reality of historic biblical truth. Whereas **Eastern mysticism** is grounded in the loss of the individual’s personality, it is not so with Christian mysticism. Christian mysticism is “*communion with Christ*” – it is Christ bringing forth fruit through us, with no loss of personality.

So “bearing fruit” is not simply done in our own strength – the glorified Christ does it through us through the agency of the Holy Spirit. As Paul writes, “the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom 5:5). It is this reality upon which we are to act. The Holy Spirit is not just an “*idea*,” but the “*living presence of God*” within us. Paul expresses it this way – “if by the Holy Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom 8:13). There is not enough strength in ourselves to bear fruit; it is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that

empowers us to do so. But we have a part – we are to abide in Christ and obey Him, and when we do God produces the fruit! (Jn 15:4-5; 1 Cor 3:6). The Holy Spirit is the **“Prime Mover”** in our lives (Phil 2:12-13). As we look in the book of Acts, we find in the early Church not just a group of strong men laboring together, but the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through them, bearing fruit to the praise and glory of the risen Christ – so it must be for us also. Obviously, this is not merely a *passive* role on the believer’s part – for example: when Mary was told she was going to give birth to a child, she could have rejected the idea and said, “No, I don’t want it”... or she could have said, “I will have a child in the same way other women have children (through Joseph)... or, she could have responded as she did: “Be it unto me according to your word” (Lk 1:38) – there was *“active passivity”* on Mary’s part. She took her own body, by choice, and put it into the hands of God to do the thing that He said He would do – and Jesus was born.

If we are to bring forth fruit in the Christian life, or rather, if Christ is to bring forth this fruit through us by the agency of the Holy Spirit, there must be a *constant act of faith*, of thinking: “Upon the basis of Your promises I am looking for You to fulfill them, Lord Jesus – bring forth Your fruit through me into this poor world to Your praise” (note carefully that it is the presence of God in your life that is making your actions efficacious and fruitful – you are called to obey believing, and God brings forth the fruit). That is what Schaeffer means by *“active passivity.”* Thus true spirituality is not achieved in your own energy. The *“how”* of the Christian life (true spirituality) is stated in Romans 6:11 – “Consider yourself to be *dead to sin*, but *alive to God* in Christ Jesus” (that is the faith perspective; the foundational consideration for your entire life). This is the *“how”* – there is no other. The Christian life is not just a matter of right actions (irrespective of faith), it is a matter of humble submission to will of God with a *proper heart perspective* (faith), knowing that His Spirit is doing a special work in and through your life in that particular moment – it is the power of the risen Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit... *by faith*. You must have *confident assurance in the moment* that “God is at work in you to will and do His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13; Heb 11:1) – the faith you exercise one moment doesn’t get credited to the actions you take the next moment; you must *consciously exercise faith* at all times. Again reflect upon the words of Paul to the Galatians – “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, *I live by faith* in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20). So, fruit-bearing Christians “live by faith,” that the “power of God might live in them” in the person of the Holy Spirit – when we live by faith, God is involved in the work. It is then that the believer can say with Paul, *“I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.”* (45-59)

One of the problems of our western world is that it is essentially “naturalistic” – that is, it believes everything works by “natural processes;” as such, it excludes *“supernatural causation”* as an explanation of reality. Naturalists believe scientific laws are adequate to account for all phenomena. If the believer is not careful, even though he claims he is a *“supernaturalist,”* naturalism can easily make inroads into his thinking without his recognizing it, primarily because it is the prevalent philosophical position here in the west. As soon as this happens, Christians begin to lose the reality of supernaturalism in their Christian lives. *While we say we believe one thing, we allow the spirit of the naturalism of our age to creep into our thinking, unrecognized.* Christian spirituality is related to the scriptural view of the universe – this means the universe is not the naturalistic universe the western world says it is. So instead of living in an *“impersonal universe,”* we live in a universe where the *“personal God of creation”* is its central figure. Since the Bible clearly teaches that we live in a supernatural universe, the central tenet of Christianity is the existence of a *“personal God.”* Due to the fact that the default mode for the believer is *“his flesh,”* this makes him high susceptible to the danger of thinking in a naturalistic fashion.

The true Bible-believing Christian is one who lives in practice in this “supernatural world.” That doesn’t mean, however, that a person is “unsaved” if he fails to live in practice in this supernatural world – happily this is not so, or none of us would go to heaven, because none of us live this way consistently. According to the biblical view, there are two parts to reality: the *natural world* that we see normally, and the *supernatural world* which we do not see (that is the reason we call it supernatural). So the biblical Judaistic-Christian view of the universe is that reality has two halves – one part is *seen*, and the other is *unseen* (Rom 8:24; Heb 11:1). Schaeffer states that it is perfectly possible for a Christian to be so infiltrated by twentieth-century thinking, that he lives most of his life as though the supernatural were not there – he says “all of us do this to some extent.” *But being a “biblical Christian” means living in the supernatural now.* Unhappily, the Christian all too often tends to vacillate between these two realities – at one moment he lives in the realm of *faith*, and at another moment he lives in the realm of *unfaith*. If I am trying to live the Christian life in the realm of unfaith, I am only “*playing at it*,” rather than “*living it*.” Since the real battle is not against flesh and blood, but is in the “*heavenlies*,” we cannot participate in that battle in the flesh (Eph 6:12). Furthermore, the Lord’s work done in human energy is not the Lord’s work any longer – it is something, but it is not the Lord’s work.

Is the supernatural world remote? The answer, very decidedly, is “No.” The supernatural world is not only not far off, but is very close indeed. Perhaps the classic passage on this subject is that found in 2 Kings – here Elisha is surrounded by an enemy, and the young man who is with him is terrified. So Elisha says to him: “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” At that moment, Elisha prayed saying, “*Lord open his eyes that he may see.*” And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he saw – “and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kg 6:16-17). The only difference was that the young man’s eyes had to be opened to see what Elisha already saw – the supernatural was not something far off, it was right there. God gives his faithful children “*eyes of faith*” to see and understand the unseen world (Jn 16:13; Acts 16:14; 1 Jn 2:27). Little by little, many Christians in this generation find this reality slipping away – the reality tends to get covered by the barnacles of naturalistic thought. ***Doctrine is important, but it is not an end in itself – there is to be an experiential reality, moment by moment.*** This is “how” to live a life of freedom from the bonds of sin – not perfection, for that is not promised to us in this life. This is the Christian life – true spirituality. In the light of the Scripture, the “*how*” is the power of the crucified and risen Christ... through the agency of the indwelling *Holy Spirit... by faith.* (60-70)

The apostle Peter writes, “You are a chosen race... a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). As Christians, we are a people set apart for a *purpose* – and that is to show forth the praises of God. The supreme purpose of man is that he love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind (Mt 22:37). Furthermore, it was always God’s intention that His children be the evidence and demonstration of Christ’s victory on the cross. Every Christian is to be a *demonstration* at his own point of history and to his own generation – not only of God’s character, which is a moral demonstration, but of God’s very existence. Though the Christian is called to *believe right doctrine*, Scripture also places an importance on *what he does* as well as *how he does it* – in Christian service, the *how* is as important as the *what*.

The Christian is to live a “conscious life of faith” moment-by-moment throughout his present life. Writes John, “This is the victory that overcomes the world – *our faith*” (1 Jn 5:4). On the basis of the finished work of Christ, a conscious moment-by-moment life of faith is “*the victory.*” But be absolutely clear about this: the basis is not “your faith” – it is what our faith is in: the “*finished work of Christ.*” Faith is simply the instrument to receive what Christ purchased for us on the cross – it is the channel through

which we receive what God has done for us. *The Christian life – sanctification – is a moment-by-moment experience that operates on the basis of “faith” in God’s promises* – if we try to live the Christian life in our own strength (*without faith*), we will have sorrow... on the other hand, if we serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit (*with faith*), we will have His joy and a song in our heart. That is the difference. The “*how*” of the Christian life is the power of the crucified and risen Lord... through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit... by faith (moment by moment) (Gal 2:20). Remember, we serve and worship a “personal God,” with whom we have a “personal relationship;” we don’t just focus on a bunch of ideas and principles. “May this [personal] God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing... by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13). This is our calling, through the agency of the Holy Spirit. (71-80)

Is it possible for a Christian to bring forth the same kind of “fruit” he bore as a non-Christian?

Absolutely. Why? Because he is yielding himself to that old master of his, the devil. If we are not living a life of faith toward Christ, we are being unfaithful toward Him – this is *spiritual adultery* – such living produces the fruit of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21), as opposed to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Living according to the flesh both grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30), and quenches the Holy Spirit (1 Th 5:19). As Schaeffer says: There are “*oceans of grace*” awaiting the believer – if they do not flow through the Christian’s life, it is only because the instrumentality of “*faith*” is not being used. Thus, the real sin of the Christian is not to possess his possessions, by faith. Paul tells us, “that which is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23); so anything that is not brought forth from faith is “sin.” When I am not allowing this fruit, which has been purchased at such a great price, to flow forth through me, *I am unfaithful*, in the deep sense of not believing God – remember, *not living by faith is not believing God*.

One of the reasons we don’t bear the kind of spiritual fruit in life that we should is “ignorance.”

If that is the case, in all likelihood, we were never taught the meaning of the work of Christ for our present lives – as a result, we may have thought the Christian life was to be lived in our own strength; as such, we were never instructed that “*there is a reality of faith to consciously be acted upon*” after becoming a believer. *So what is needed is the knowledge of the meaning of the work of Christ in our present life, for our present life, and then for us to act upon it in faith.* We may agree with doctrinal positions mentally, without making them ours; in the final analysis, it is never doctrine *alone* that is important – it is always doctrine *appropriated* that counts. Just as in **Justification** we must see, acknowledge, and act upon the fact that *we cannot save ourselves...* so in **Sanctification** we must see, acknowledge, and act upon the fact that *we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength*, or in our own goodness. In justification the instrument by which we receive the free gift of God is *faith*... in sanctification the instrument by which we receive the free gift of God is *faith* – it is exactly the same thing. There are two differences, however, between the practice of justification and sanctification – justification deals with *our guilt*, and sanctification deals with the problem of the *power of sin in our lives*... justification is a *once for all* occurrence, and the Christian life is a *moment by moment* occurrence. Carefully reflect upon the dynamics of these two critically important doctrines.

Life is only a succession of moments – we live “one moment” at a time. No one lives his whole life in a single moment in time – we all live it one moment after another in time. So we must believe God’s promises at this one moment in which we now are. In believing God’s promises, we apply them for and in this one moment. Schaeffer says, “*If you grasp this, everything changes!*” As we believe God for this moment, the Holy Spirit is not quenched; and through His agency, the risen and glorified Christ (the vine) brings forth His fruit through us *at this moment* (Jn 15:5). By the way, this morning’s faith will never do for this afternoon. In every moment of time, our calling is to *believe God*... raise the empty hands of faith (we bring nothing to the table!)... and let fruit flow out through us. Furthermore, Christian faith is never

faith in faith, it is never without content, it is never a jump in the dark, *it is always believing what God has said*. And Christian faith rests upon Christ's finished work on the cross.

We were created for “moment-by-moment communication” with God Himself! Think about that. This moment-by-moment quality brings us back to the purpose for which God has created us. This being the case, it is obvious that there is “*no mechanical solution to true spirituality*” or the true Christian life. Anything that has the mark of the mechanical upon it is a mistake. It is not possible to say, read so many chapters of the Bible every day, and you will have this much sanctification... or pray so many hours... or do anything else! True spirituality can never have a mechanical solution. *The real solution is being in “moment-by-moment personal communion” with God Himself*, and letting Christ's truth flow through you through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The most basic teaching of the Bible is that God exists, that God is personal, and that we have been made in His image – thus, our relationship to God is to be personal, not mechanical. We are not machines; we are created in the image of God – therefore we are personal, rational, moral beings, who were *created for a purpose* – to be in a *personal relationship with God*, in loving communion with Him – by choice – the creature with His Creator. The only difference between our relationship with God now, and that which it would have been if man had not sinned, is that now it is under the *covenant of grace*, and not under the *covenant of works*; therefore it rests upon the basis of Christ's finished mediatorial work on the cross. That is the only difference. The *will*, the *mind*, and the *emotions* are all involved – the complete man – in this moment-by-moment, one moment at a time, believing God's promises about the significance of the work of Christ in our present lives. We are to believe God every moment, one moment at a time – this is the Christian life – true spirituality. (80-89)

Now we consider the question of “freedom in the present life” from the results of the bonds of sin. First, it is important that we keep things in the right order – don't get them reversed – *sin causes bondage and the results of sin*. Sin causes the bondage... not the other way around. The dilemma of the human race is “*moral*” – the basic problem of the human race is “*sin and guilt*.” We have sinned *against* a holy God (sin is not just a matter of violating an impersonal law – it is *against* God), so we are guilty before a holy God against whom we have sinned. Regarding the question of freedom from our conscience – *there are two attitudes which the Word of God and a study of Church history warn us against*:

1. Perfectionism – This is the teaching that a Christian can be “perfect” in this life; this teaching is the result of something known as a “second blessing” that follows conversion – once received the individual never sins again. The early John Wesley taught this; not the later Wesley, for he began to see that this could not be consistently held. Obviously, perfectionism does not align with the teaching of Scripture. Schaeffer reflects: “The more the Holy Spirit puts His finger on my life and goes down deep into my life, the more I understand that there are *deep wells* to my nature – in a sense we are like the “*iceberg*,” one-tenth above the surface and nine-tenths below it; as such, it is a very, very simple thing to fool ourselves.” (Jer 17:9; Jam 3:2; 1 Jn 3:10). Schaeffer continues, “As the Holy Spirit has wrestled with me down through the years, more and more I am aware of *the depths of my own sinful nature*, and the depths of the results of that awful fall in the Garden of Eden.” Man is actually separated from himself (*more on this later*).
2. We sin daily in thought, word, and deed – That is the emphasis of the Westminster Catechism. Though this is not wrong, it can be *distorted by our sinful hearts* into something which is exceedingly wrong. As we teach our children that we all sin daily in thought, word, and deed, we must be very careful to warn them of the danger of thinking that *they can look lightly or abstractly at sin* in their lives. Furthermore, if we count on Christ's victory at the cross for our entrance into heaven, dare we

deny Him the glory of what the victories would produce in the battles of the present life? And the battles before men and angels and the supernatural world? What an awful thought!

The Bible makes a clear distinction between “temptation” and “sin.” Christ was tempted in every point like as we are, yet He never sinned (Heb 4:15); therefore, there is a difference between temptation and sin. Scripture goes on to tell us that the victory that overcomes the world is “*our faith*” (1 Jn 5:4). It is not *we* who overcome the world in our own strength – we do not have a power plant inside ourselves that can overcome the world. The overcoming is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have already seen. There can be a victory, a practical victory, if we raise the “*empty hands of faith*” moment by moment and accept the gift. God has promised a way of escape that we might not succumb to temptation (1 Cor 10:13).

Schaeffer: “As a born-again child of God, I have been practicing the reality of true spirituality, as Christ has purchased it for us... and yet there are times when *sin re-enters*. For some reason my moment-by-moment belief in God falters; *a fondness for some specific sin* has caused me at that point not to draw in faith upon the fact of a restored relationship with the Trinity. The reality of the practice of true spirituality suddenly slips from me... *my quietness and my peace are gone*. It is not that I am lost again, because justification is once for all. But as far as man can see, or even I myself, at this point there is no exhibition of the victory of Christ upon the cross... because God still holds me fast I do not have the separation of *lostness*, but I do have the separation from my Father in the *parent-child relationship*... and I remember what I had.”

At this point the question arises: Is there a way back? Or is it like a piece of fine china that has been dropped on a tile floor and smashed beyond repair? Thank God, the gospel includes this. *The Bible is always realistic* – it is not romantic, but deals with realism – with what we are. There is a way back, and the basis of the way back is “*the blood of Christ*” – the finished work of the Lamb of God on the cross. And the first step of the way back is not new either – no man becomes a Christian until he *acknowledges he is a sinner*; likewise, the first step in the restoration of the Christian after he has sinned is to *admit to God that what he has done is sin* (1 Jn 1:4-9). He must not blame it on someone else (like Adam)... he must not call it less than sin (like Saul)... and he must be sorry for it (like David). Hence, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9). This is the gentle dealing of God with His children after they have fallen. This is the purpose of God’s chastisement of the Christian – it is to cause us to acknowledge that the specific sin is indeed “*sin*.”

If we have sin in our lives, and we continue in it, and God does not chastened us, then we can conclude that we are not children of God, because God chastens (disciplines) those He loves (Heb 12:6-8). It should be noted that “*discipline is not joyful, but sorrowful*; yet those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11). Thus, God disciplines (chastens) us for a “*purpose*” – that we might have peace in the midst of these things. That is God’s loving care for us. God the Father’s chastening is to cause us to acknowledge that a specific sin is sin; His hand can grow increasingly heavy until we come to acknowledge that it is sin and stop trying to get out from under it by blaming it on others or excusing it in some way (Ps 32:3-5). Do you want restored fellowship with God? You can have it as His child, but you will not receive it until you are willing to call specific sin “*sin*.” It is a matter of telling God that you want “*His will*” in this matter that you acknowledge it to be sin – “not my will, Lord, but Thine be done” (Mt 26:39; Jn 6:38).

In practice we may not comprehend all that is involved in the sin, and especially if a person is psychologically disturbed; he may not always be able to sort out what really is sin, and what is just

confusion on his part. Here is the concept of the “iceberg” again – nine-tenths below the surface, and only one-tenth above it, so that we cannot always sort out all that we are in the midst of our sin. Much of the sin may be *below the surface*, much may even be in the *subconscious* boiling up, just showing itself in spots. But whatever evil may be *above the surface* – the portion that we do comprehend as sin – that portion we must take with honesty before the One who knows our whole being, and say to Him, “*Father, I have sinned.*” There must be real sorrow for the sin that we know, that is above the surface. Just as the first step in justification is the acknowledgement that *we are a sinner*, so the first step in living the Christian life as God intended is the acknowledgement that *we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength or in our own goodness*. Again, we must bring the specific sin under the blood of Jesus Christ “*by faith*” (1 Jn 1:9). (93-103)

Martin Luther, in his commentary on Galatians, shows a great understanding of the fact that our salvation includes salvation from the “*bondage of our conscience.*” It is natural and right that as we become Christians our consciences become *ever more tender* – this is a work of the Holy Spirit. But we should not be downcast by our conscience year after year over sins which are past. When your conscience, by the Holy Spirit, makes you aware of a specific sin, you should at once call that sin “sin” and *bring it consciously under the blood of Christ* – when you do this it is then “*covered,*” so by continuing to “*worry about it,*” you not only dishonor the finished work of Christ, but you impair your relationship with God, either by thinking that you must “suffer sufficiently” to merit his forgiveness, or by “doubting” that God is that loving and merciful – hence, your fellowship with Him is short-circuited. Writes Schaeffer: “to worry about it is to do despite to the infinite value of the death of the Son of God.” As you consciously say, “*Thank you*” to God for a completed work, your conscience should come into rest. By applying the blood of Christ to your sin, your fellowship experience with God is restored.

Writes Schaeffer: “For myself, through the twenty years or so since I began to struggle with this in my own life, I picture *my conscience* as a ‘big black dog’ with enormous paws which leaps upon me, threatening to cover me with mud and devour me. But as this conscience of mine jumps upon me, after a specific sin has been dealt with on the basis of Christ’s finished work, then I turn to my conscience and say, in effect, ‘*Down! Be still!*’ I am to believe God and be quiet, in my practice and experience. My fellowship with God has been supernaturally restored. I am cleansed, ready again to resume the spiritual life, ready again to be used by the Spirit for warfare in the external world. I cannot be ready until I am cleansed, but when I am, then I am ready. And I come back for cleansing as many times as I need, on this basis.” For us as Christians, the point of reality is this: “My little children, these things I write to you that you not sin (*so naturally the call is not to sin*), but if any man does sin, we (*the apostle John includes himself in this category*) have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn 2:1).

Schaeffer continues: “This is the point of reality for me personally. If I lay hold upon the blood of Christ in faith, reality rests here – not in trying to live as though the Bible teaches perfectionism. That is no basis for reality; that is only a basis for despair. But there is reality here – the reality of sins forgiven; the reality of a certainty that when a specific sin is brought under the blood of Christ – it is forgiven. *This is the reality of restored relationship.* Reality is to be experienced, and experienced on the basis of a restored relationship with God through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.”

One more thing needs to be said on this subject – “If we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by God, we are chastened by Him that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor 11:31-32). *This teaches us that we do not need to wait to be chastened before our fellowship with God can be restored.* God’s chastening (discipline) is not a *punishment* – our punishment

was altogether dealt with on the cross. Instead, God's chastening is *corrective in nature*; its purpose is to bring us back to fellowship with Himself. The chastening of a child of God does not have a penal aspect – that was finished on the cross. There is no “double jeopardy” when the holy God is the Judge. Our guilt is gone – once and forever! Therefore if we judge ourselves, we are not chastened. Since God is not going to have us *condemned* with the world, he will *chasten* us. But if we judge ourselves, and call the sin *sin*, and bring it under the blood of Christ, then He will not have to chasten us. As such, it is overwhelmingly better not to sin! But is it not wonderful that when we do sin, we can hurry to the place of restoration?

So God means us to have, as one of His gifts in this life, freedom from a false tyranny of conscience. Most, if not all, Christians find that the first step in the “*substantial healing*” that they can have in the present life is the substantial healing of the “*separation from themselves*” that is a result of the fall and of sin. Man is first of all separated from God... then from himself... and finally from his fellow man and from nature. The blood of Christ will give an absolute and perfect restoration of all these things when Jesus comes. But in the present life there is to be a substantial healing, including the results of the separation between a man and himself. This is the first step towards “*freedom in the present life*” from the results of the bonds of sin.

Thoughts precede actions – the external is a product of the internal. All behavior begins in the mind. Paul tells us to “*present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice*, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1). Notice verse one cannot be separated from verse two – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be *transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). So in contrast to being conformed to this world, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, and that is internal. Paul exhorts us to not walk as other Gentiles walk, “in the futility of their mind” (Eph 4:17); rather, we are to be “renewed in the spirit of our mind” (4:23). You will notice this is not simply a “feeling” – it is a matter of “thoughts” with content (4:24). Paul goes on to say, “Walk not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil; so do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:15-17). Thus our “*thought-life*” is critical in the area of true spirituality. “*As a man thinks, so is he*” (Prv 23:7). Jesus also emphasized this: “the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Mt 12:34); “out of the heart come evil thoughts and all manner of evil” (Mt 15:19) – if the internal condition of the heart is not right, one cannot bring forth proper results. John writes, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 Jn 3:15) – hate in the heart (mind) does not just lead to murder; morally it *is* murder. In the story of Joseph, his brothers “hated him” – their internal hate was the root of the whole problem; his brothers “envied him” (Gen 37:4ff).

So this is where true spirituality in the Christian life rests – in the realm of our “thought-life.” As believers we must understand the reality of communion with God, and loving God, must take place in the “*inward self*” (Mt 22:37). Therefore the real battle of man is in the world of ideas, rather than in that which is outward. Ideas are the stock of the “*thought-world*,” and from the ideas burst forth all things external – painting, music, buildings, love and hate. Where a man will spend eternity depends on his reading or hearing the truth content of the gospel, and his believing it. Thus, the battle for man is centrally in the world of “thought” – the spiritual battle, the loss or victory, is always in the thought-world. (104-122)

Consider the following with regard to your “thought-life” – While we are awake, our minds are almost *continually reflecting upon something*. Sometimes it's mere trivia... at other times it's focused on work or some activity we are doing... yet at other times it's entertaining issues and circumstances that challenge or provoke us in some way. It is in this last category where we are most confronted with *potentially sinful thoughts* – how we respond to these thoughts determines whether or not we are sinning. Being as our

“default mode” is our fleshly nature (our sin disposition), it is only logical that we frequently entertain thoughts about *subject matters that potentially lead to sin* – these may include being critical or angry with others, thinking negatively about others, entertaining juicy gossip, envying and being jealous of others, dwelling on immoral and lustful thoughts, dwelling on relationship issues that perturb us, thinking vengeful thoughts, thinking derogatory thoughts about others, being angry because of negative circumstances, being angry due to world injustice, political anger, sports-world anger, traffic anger, impatience with life, frustration with circumstances, and even being angry with God because we lost our job, we

THE “THOUGHT LIFE” OF THE BELIEVER

Temptation generally starts as a subtle voice in the back of “our mind” – if it is allowed to germinate, it results in sin (Jam 1:14-15). At the earliest moment of recognition we must apply sudden death to it, or it will plant its deadly seed within us. **Dr. Caroline Leaf**, one of the world’s leading authorities on the “cognitive neuroscientific aspects of the brain,” has studied the brain and the “science of thought” for more than 30 years. She is a devout Christian with a PhD in “Communication Pathology” from the *University of Pretoria* in South Africa. Dr. Leaf says the average person thinks over 30,000 thoughts a day (our minds never rest while we are awake). Think about that number with the understanding that many of our thoughts have a fleshly orientation and are evil in nature – since evil thoughts have an “ally” in our flesh, they can be extremely stubborn and difficult to overcome once they are firmly implanted. Dr. Leaf goes on to say that 87-95% of all the illnesses we experience are a direct result of our “toxic thoughts” – our thoughts quickly influence our emotions, which in turn cause a physical reaction in our body; *positive emotions* cause our body to release helpful chemicals; *negative emotions* cause the release of harmful chemicals. By not controlling our thoughts, we create the conditions for illness – research shows that “fear alone” triggers more than 1400 known physical and chemical responses, and activates more than 30 different hormones in the body. Science believes that thoughts are basically *neurological responses to stimuli* that are shaped by past experiences – therefore it is important for us to exercise extreme care with regard to what stimuli we allow to enter into our thought processes. Toxic waste generated by “toxic thoughts” causes the following illnesses: diabetes, cancer, asthma, skin problems, and allergies just to name a few. Everything we see, hear, or read has the potential to shape our thinking, and what we think about affects us physically and emotionally. Dr. Leaf’s message to both Christian and secular audiences is that *they detox their brains by consciously controlling their thought lives* – this means engaging interactively with every single thought we have, and analyzing it before we decide to accept it or reject it. Her message parallels that of the apostle Paul: *“Bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor 10:5). Our mind will either be our best friend or our worst enemy – it all depends on how we choose to use it (Leaf, *Who Switched Off My Brain?*).

Richard Rohr, a popular writer, Franciscan Friar, and Catholic Priest, citing psychological studies, says 90-96% of our thoughts are repetitive and generally negative, and that many Christians mistakenly believe that their “thought life” actually has a life of its own; that their thoughts are so strong that they dictate what goes on inside their heads, rather than they themselves. *The truth is we are the masters of our thoughts, and the controllers of our self talk*. Surprisingly, many Christians believe that Satan somehow controls their thoughts and that they are just too weak to resist him, but that is not what scripture teaches – “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4). Because our thoughts have much to do with the *“formation of our character,”* we must be extremely concerned about what goes on in our thought life. Those who would not fall prey to Satan’s devices must guard the avenues of the soul – they must avoid reading, seeing or listening to anything that causes impure thoughts; furthermore, the mind must not be left to wander at random upon every subject the adversary of our soul suggests (Phil 4:8; 1 Pet 1:13-15). This requires earnest prayer and unceasing watchfulness, aided by a diligent study of the Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit (Ps 119:9, 11; Prv 4:23; Mt 26:41; Jn 14:26; 16:13; Rom 8:6; 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5; Phil 4:6; 2 Tim 3:16-17). Guarding the gates of our minds against the invasion of sinful thoughts is a *continual responsibility* for the believer (Rohr, *Hope Against Darkness*).

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “A man is what he thinks about all day long.” Your thought life determines the life you live, who you are, and what you become (Prv 4:23; 23:7). *Either you master and rule your thoughts, or they will master and rule you* – our thoughts influence our feelings, choices and behaviors; therefore, we must monitor our thought life so that it is spiritually healthy. **Dr. Don Colbert** is the medical director of *Divine Health Wellness Center* in Orlando, Florida, and the

author of more than 40 books, including the New York Times Best Seller, *“The Seven Pillars of Health.”* Over the years, he has worked with thousands of people who have discovered that once they made a *sincere effort* to tackle their dysfunctional thought patterns, they experienced a significant reduction in depression, anxiety, anger, grief, shame, jealousy, and all other toxic emotions. Dr. Colbert maintains that replacing Satan’s lies with God’s truth is not really that difficult – *“it just takes intentional and consistent effort.”* He goes on to say that replacing toxic negative thoughts with spiritually healthy thoughts requires an ongoing intentional study of the Word (Colbert, *Deadly Emotions*). Remember the words of Jesus: “If you abide in My word... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32).

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Dr. James P. Porowski is the Director of *Family Life Resource*, a counseling center in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Professor of Child and Family Development at *Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary*. He says that unsuccessful attempts at changing one’s thought patterns results from an *unwillingness to change them*, because they simply enjoy their misery, woundedness, lustfulness or pride more than they desire godliness. He goes on to say that the Holy Spirit empowers the change process when we are truly repentant and want His control (Gal 5:17; Jam 4:8). Mind control is the responsibility of all growing Christians. Toxic negative thoughts are the enemies of a victorious life – if you give attention to toxic thoughts, they will intensify significantly and sin will result (Porowski, *With All My Mind*).

Controlling our “thoughts” is neither easy, nor is it a spontaneous action — it is a battle! And if you are not into fighting this battle you are going to be defeated (Eph 6:11-18; 1 Tim 4:7; 6:12). The devil’s attack is focused primarily on the thoughts of our minds. Together with the flesh, Satan interjects *“toxic thoughts”* into our minds – these thoughts need to be quickly removed with holy aggression and replaced with “spiritually healthy thoughts” (Rom 12:2; Col 3:1-2; Phil 4:8). God’s plan for you is to have an abundant and victorious life (Jn 10:10), and that means experiencing victory over sin, Satan, and the flesh. Why are people anxious, depressed, loveless, angry, worldly and immoral? The origin of all such problems lies in the thought life. Nearly every *“mental illness”* and psychological disorder is the result of a toxic thought life — depression, low self-esteem, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, paranoia, psychotic illness, personality disorders, psychosexual disorders, sleep disorders, reactive disorders, excessive grief. Remember, if you allow impure destructive thoughts to germinate in your mind – sin will conceive; be it in the heart or outward expression (Jam 1:14-15).

So what practical steps can a believer take to develop a spiritually healthy thought life? There are four things a believer can do, and each one of them is absolutely essential: 1) *You must have a daily quiet time with the Lord* – this is the number one priority; it is the Word of God in conjunction with the Spirit that lifts us out of ruts, gives us hope, and renews our minds (Rom 10:17; Gal 5:16; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Jam 4:8; 1 Pet 2:2). The spiritual impact of not having communion with God, can be likened to your body going without physical nourishment – without spiritual manna you will suffer spiritual paralysis. 2) *You must safeguard those areas of your life you can control* – your reading, conversations, radio, television, movies, internet, music; if you compromise on this level and you will fall (Prv 4:23; 5:8; 7:25; Rom 13:14). 3) *You must dwell upon the truths of God’s Word* – set your mind on the things of the Spirit and those things which are above; things that are good, right, pure (Ps 1:1-3; 19:14; 119:11; Rom 8:6; 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5; Phil 4:8; Col 3:1-2). God wants us to be healthy and mature in our thinking (1 Cor 14:20; Phil 4:8-9). And 4) *You must pray that you not enter into temptation* – by praying we humbly admit that we are ever in need of God’s mercy and grace; none of us have the capacity to stand in our own strength (Mt 6:13; 26:41; 2 Cor 12:9-10; Eph 6:18). Remember the encouraging words of the Lord to the prophet Isaiah: “God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Is 26:3; Rom 8:5-6; Phil 4:6-9).

To change our thoughts is to “change our life” – the process of sanctification starts with the “renewal of our thoughts” (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23). Obviously, we will never achieve sinless perfection in this life, but we are to “press on toward that goal” (Phil 3:12-14; 1 Pet 1:15; 2 Pet 3:18). The reality of the Christian life is that it includes a lot of joy, suffering, and sin (Jn 15:11; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29; 3:10; 2 Tim 2:3; 1 Pet 4:1, 13; 5:10; Mt 6:12; Phil 3:12; Jam 3:2; 1 Jn 1:10) – *we are all a work in progress* (2 Cor 3:18). To the degree that we press on toward the goal, and fight the good fight of faith, and cultivate an intimate relationship with Christ... to that degree we will experience the joy of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The more we sin and the less we strive with God, the more chastening we will experience, the darker our world will be, and the greater our pain will be (Ps 32:3-4, 9; Prv 18:14; Rom 5:3-5; Heb 12:4-11; 1 Pet 4:12).

The Christian life is a *"lifelong journey"* in which the believer is exhorted to press on to maturity and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order that he might become conformed to the "image of Christ" (Rom 8:28-29; 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 2:12-13; 3:13-14; 1 Jn 3:1-3); and central to this transforming work is the believer's *"thought life."* May your prayer be that of the psalmist David: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer" (Ps 19:14; 26:2). Remember, without cultivating an intimate relationship with Christ (Phil 3:10; Jam 4:8), setting your mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:6; Col 3:1-2), fighting the fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), and growing in grace (2 Pet 3:18), your progress in sanctification will be minimal (Jn 15:4-5; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Gal 6:7-8). This is your calling (1 Th 4:3a).

have been stricken with cancer, we have been hospitalized, our kids don't like us anymore, our teenage daughter has come home pregnant, our car broke down, our spouse is angry with us, or our business partner is suing us for everything we own. Obviously, the foregoing is a pretty short list of things – but it is sufficiently long enough to *make us mindful of how often we entertain "sinful thoughts."* The truth of the matter is – whether we admit it or not – each of us sins over and over and over again in our "thought life" throughout the course of a day... because of the *"sin disposition"* that dwells in us! What compounds the problem of our thought-life, are the *strong feelings and desires* that frequently accompany our thoughts – hence, the difficulty of refraining from dwelling on potentially sinful matters.

The apostle Paul tells us not to worry or be anxious about anything, but to dwell only on those things that are true *and honorable and right and pure and lovely and worthy of praise* (Phil 4:6-9). That's a tall order, but that is the imperative God gives us as Christians. Humbling, is it not? By the way, God would not tell us to do something that is not possible. The Bible teaches that we *can* control what we think, so we cannot offer as a defense that "we simply cannot help it when our minds are filled with unwelcome thoughts." The fact of the matter is we *can* help it. The secret lies in *"thinking godly thoughts"* rather than *"fleshly thoughts"* – the most enlightened psychologists and psychiatrists of the day have come to agree with the Apostle Paul on this matter – thus they stress the dangers of negative thinking. The essence of Paul's teaching here in Philippians is that God does not garrison (v. 7) the thought-life of a man who does not *want* it to be kept pure. Obviously, the believer who desires true spirituality must be diligent in guarding his mind. The "key" to being successful in the war of the mind is *becoming proficient at wielding the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God – against all sinful thoughts and forces of darkness* (Eph 6:10-17).

Next let's consider the Christian life in relation to "psychological problems." This is the problem of man's separation from himself, and his relationship to himself in the world of thought. Just as God is a person – he thinks, acts, and feels – so, we are persons who think, act, and feel. Therefore as humans we are *personal, rational, and moral* beings. God created us in His image. As a result of the fall, however, we are separated from God and trying to exist outside the realm in which God made us to exist – as such, we are trying to be what we are not. As Schaeffer puts it, "our rationality damns us – by not bowing to God, with a loud shout of rationality, we simply end up jumping in the dark, and are torn within ourselves." It is not enough for man to rationally begin with himself and work outward – his very existence demands purpose... being the sinful man that he is, he is not able to bring resolution to such demands; he is not only confounded by his limitations, and naturally "separated from himself," but knows nothing of a tranquil heart that is at peace.

In the area of "morality" we find exactly the same thing. Man cannot escape the fact of the notions of a true right and wrong in himself – not just a sociological or hedonistic morality, but true morality, true right and true wrong. Yet beginning with himself he can neither bring forth *"absolute standards"* nor keep the *"poor relative ones"* he has set up. Thus in the area of morality, as in the area of rationality, trying to be what he is not, he is crushed and damned by what he is. *Man is thus divided against and from*

himself in every part of his nature – he is divided from himself because of his rebellion – in rationality, in morality, in his thinking, in his acting, in his feeling... by rebellion he is *divided from God* by true moral guilt, and he is damned by what he is – wanting to be God, which obviously he is not, because he is not infinite. At some level of consciousness man cannot forget the fact that he is “*finite man*” – surely at some point there will be a cry within him, that there must be a real answer in this life to the “separation from himself.” And the answer is an emphatic, “Yes, thank God, there is!”

How is it that the psychologists who act as if God is there (*but merely pragmatically*), like Carl Gustaf Jung, are able to help their patients to some degree? Schaeffer writes, “I think it is because that which really helps is always in the direction of *the reality of what is.*” At least a man like Jung has the word “*God*” – behind which there may be at least a sense of some *universal purpose* accepted blindly and irrationally, as Viktor Frankl does. And this is the proper direction. To these men these things are a piece of theater; but without their really knowing it, it *is* in the direction of what is. The fact is – *He really is there*, a personal God, who is holy in a moral sense. Not bowing to Him, however, they do not acknowledge Him for who He really is – yet pragmatically they find they must *act* as if He is there.

To say there is “no real guilt” is futile, for man as he is knows that there is “real moral guilt.” But when I know the real guilt is really met by Christ, so that I do not need to fear to look at the basic questions deep inside myself, then I can see that the *feeling of guilt* that is left is really just “*psychological guilt,*” and only that. This does not mean to say that psychological guilt is still not cruel – but now I can be open with it and see it for what it is. *This also does not mean that we will be perfect in this life psychologically any more than we are physically.* But thanks be to God, now I can move forward, not expecting to be perfect. We will wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the body, to be perfect morally, physically, and psychologically – but there *now* can be a *substantial overcoming* of this psychological division in the present life on the basis of Christ’s finish work. It will not be perfect, but it can be real and substantial. Let’s be very clear about this – all men since the fall have had some psychological problems. It is utter nonsense to say that a Christian never has a psychological problem. *All men have psychological problems.* They differ in degree and they differ in kind, but since the fall all men have more or less a problem psychologically – that is the essence of “fallen man.” None of us are even close to perfection.

A very practical thing for ourselves and for those whom we would help is that it is not always possible to sort out *true guilt* from *psychological guilt* – at this point the “*iceberg concept*” is helpful once again. Man is more than is on the surface. All too often the evangelical Christian acts as though there is nothing to man except that which is above the surface on the water. Since the fall *man is divided from himself*, and so since the fall *there is that which I am which is below the surface* – in psychological terms, there is the unconscious, subconscious aspect of our humanity. It should not be a surprise to any of us that there is something which we are which is deeper than that which is on the surface – hence, as we said earlier, it is not even possible to say at this given moment that we are perfect, free from all known sin. This is true even at our best moments (1 Cor 4:3-4). We all have our problems... we all have our storms... and some of us can have exceedingly deep storms. In the midst of these storms that break over us, it is wonderful to know that we ourselves do not need, in every case, to sort out true guilt from psychological guilt. God knows the line between our true guilt and our guilt feelings (Heb 4:12). Our part is to function in that which is *above the surface*, and to ask God to help us be honest. Our part is to cry to God for the part of the iceberg that is above the surface and confess whatever we know is true guilt there, bringing it under the infinite, finished work of Jesus Christ... *and God graciously applies this to the whole*, and gradually the Holy Spirit helps us see deeper into ourselves. Once we have applied the blood of Christ to all our known

sin, we can be confident that the *guilty feelings* that remain are not true guilt, but a part of *the awful miseries of fallen man*. The comprehension, moment by moment, of these things is a vital step in *freedom from the results of the bonds of sin*, and in the substantial healing of the separation of man from himself. (123-133)

“REPENTANCE of the BELIEVER”

It is generally supposed by many Christians that repentance is only the gateway of faith; that it is necessary only at the *beginning of the Christian life* (Mt 3:2; Mk 1:15; Lk 24:47; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Cor 7:10; 2 Pet 3:9). But there is a very distinct repentance that is *necessary for “believers” as well* – if they are to grow in grace. God tells the churches of Ephesus and Laodicea in Revelation 2-3 to “*repent*.” The **Ephesians** were reminded of the height from which they had fallen; as such, they were told to repent and return to their first love (Rev 2:5; Mt 22:37). The **Laodiceans** had become spiritually lukewarm and spiritually indifferent; God reminded them that He rebukes and chastens those whom He loves; thus they needed to be zealous and repent (Rev 3:19; Heb 12:6). The promise to those who repent is that “Jesus will dine with them” (Rev 3:20); the picture is one of intimacy and enjoying one another’s company. The apostle **Peter**, after his threefold denial of the Lord Jesus, was said to have “wept bitterly” (Mt 26:75); experiencing the emotional component of repentance. **David** frequently expressed his repentant grief over his sin (2 Sam 12:7-13; Ps 32:3-4; 40:12; 119:176). Godly sorrow will lead to the open acknowledgment, confession, and repudiation of sin – read David’s two penitential psalms (Ps 32:5 and 51:3-4). **Job**, likewise, repented or turned from his sin (Job 42:1-6). When **Martin Luther** nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church on October 31, 1517, his very first thesis was on “repentance.” It read – “*When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent,” He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.*”

The Greek word translated “repent” is “*metanoeo*” – it is a compound word made up of two words: The first word “*meta*” indicates a change or transformation, and appears in many English words, such as “metamorphosis,” which means a change in condition. The second word is from the root word “*nous*,” which we translate “mind.” So *metanoeo* literally means to “*change your mind*” – by extension it means to turn about, to express regret or adopt another view. Whenever the Bible says you should repent or turn away from unrighteousness, its main emphasis is on your will, changing your mind or purpose – thus turning to God from unrighteousness is a function of the mind. The fact that God *demand*s repentance shows that it involves the mind – it is something we must *choose* to do. A Christian’s mind plays a vital role in his relationship with God as he learns what God expects of him and chooses to please Him (Rom 12:2; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet 2:2). So biblical repentance has an *intellectual* component (change in thinking)... an *emotional* component (remorse and godly sorrow)... and a *volitional* component (an inward turning from sin to God), which is evidenced by fruit (Mt 3:8; Lk 13:5-9; Acts 26:20).

In what sense do we “repent as believers”? John Wesley asked the question: “Are we *fully purified* from a carnal mind... and *wholly transformed* into the image of Him that created us? Far from it!” he says. “We still retain a depth of sin... there still remains a whole body of sin in our hearts, weakened indeed, but clearly not destroyed... and it is the consciousness of this indwelling sin which constrains us to groan for a full deliverance... and cry out in our souls” —

*I sin in every breath I draw,
Nor do Thy will, nor keep Thy Law
On earth, as angels do above:*

*But still the fountain open stands,
Washes my feet, my heart, my hands,
Till I am perfected in love.*

Writes Wesley: "It is not seldom long before he who imagined all sin was gone, that he sees an overwhelming evidence of it in his life." Let's recount the ways – *we think more highly of ourselves than others* (sin of pride)... *we feel self-will in the heart*; a will that is contrary to the will of God... *we feel the desire of the flesh*, the *desire of the eye*, and the *pride of life*... without continually watching and praying, we feel the assaults of inordinate affection and become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God... we find within ourselves *attitudes that are contrary to the love of our neighbors* – jealousy, envy, evil surmisings, criticisms, malice, hatred, anger, and outright bitterness... we find *resentment and revenge* in our hearts when we are injured or affronted, especially against those whom we had labored to help or oblige

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in some way... we see how *covetous* we are when we discover how tight a grip we have on our money, and how much we desire more of it... we see how "*caral*" we are, and how prone we are to "*wander*" and depart from the God we love... and how sin cleaves to *our words* – many are mixed with sin, but some are altogether sinful (backbiting, tale-bearing, gossip, and outright lies); as Wesley says, "much sin cleaves to even the best conversation of believers." And then there is the matter of our "*sins of omission*" – writes Paul, "To the one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (Jam 4:17). Are there not a thousand instances where we might have done good – be it to our enemies, to strangers, to friends, to our brothers, and did not do it? How many opportunities to share the faith have we neglected? So aware was that holy man, **Archbishop Usher**, of his sinfulness, that he cried out with almost his dying breath – "*Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!*" Yet even besides these outward omissions, do we not also find within ourselves *inward defects without number*? It is good for us to remember the confessions of Job, Isaiah, Peter, and Paul –

- **Job** – "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).
- **Isaiah** – "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips" (Is 6:5).
- **Peter** – "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8).
- **Paul** – "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom 7:18).

Writes Wesley: "By all the grace which is given at justification we cannot extirpate [our sinful dispositions]. . . . therefore, if there be no *instantaneous deliverance after justification* [of all sinful behavior in this life]. . . if there be none but a *gradual work of God*, then we must be content, as much as we can be, to remain [in this condition] till death." Because of the presence of sin in our lives as believers, *we are to live lives of repentance* – unless we do so, we will not grow... and unless we understand our disease, we will live despairing lives. We must believe the glad tidings of the great salvation of the gospel of Christ that God has prepared for us – we must believe the He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him... that He is able to save us from all the sin that still remains in our hearts... that He is able to save us from all the sin that cleaves to all our words and actions... that He is able to save us from sins of omission, and supply all that is lacking within us. It is true, this is impossible with man; but with God all things are possible (Mt 19:26).

Therefore, as believers, we must continue to believe in Him that loved us and gave Himself for us – and when we go from faith to faith, and have faith to be cleansed from indwelling sin, and faith to be saved from all our uncleanness, then we may say with full assurance, "*Every moment, Lord, I have the merit of Your death!*" For by faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and His continual intercession for us, we are being renewed moment by moment, and being fully cleansed. Furthermore, there is neither condemnation for us now, nor punishment awaiting us in the future as was the case before. The Lord is continually at work within us, cleansing both our hearts and our lives. By *repentance* we feel the sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to our words and actions; and by *faith* we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts, and cleansing our hands. By *repentance* we have an abiding conviction that there is no help in us; by *faith* we receive not only mercy, but grace to help at every point of need.

*Repentance says, "Without Him I can do nothing."
Faith says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

Therefore, through Christ we can love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and walk in holiness and righteousness before Him. Will we do so perfectly? Absolutely not. We inhabit sinful flesh. Richard Owen Roberts in his book,

“Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel,” gives us some practical advice – *“practice immediate repentance!”* Since intimacy is broken by sin, “seek to walk with God in such a way that there is no accumulation of sin or even any time lag in dealing with sin.” And in spite of your efforts, know this – the operative grace of God is continually producing in you that which is pleasing in His sight. As difficult as that is to believe, that is the miracle of “grace!” Without which “none of us” would see the Lord. Read Jn 6:39; 17:12; 18:9; Rom 8:28-33; 2 Cor 4:17; Eph 1:5; Phil 1:6; 2:13; 1 Th 5:23-24; Heb 13:21.

(Much of the foregoing material was extracted from a sermon John Wesley preached at Londonderry – April 24, 1767)

Though there is the possibility of “substantial healing,” that does not mean “perfect healing.” The Bible makes the possibility of miracles very clear, but both Scripture and experience show that while sometimes God does heal, sometimes He does not. Furthermore, this is not always a matter of faith, or of the lack of faith – God is personal, and He has His own purposes. It is exactly the same with psychological healing – a person may be healed psychologically but that does not mean he will become psychologically perfect the rest of his life. Lazarus was raised from the dead, but no doubt suffered physical infirmity at various times the rest of his life – he may even have had psychological depression; we must remember that eventually he died again. *The results of the fall will continue until the second coming of Christ.* We deny the doctrine of the fall, and we build a new romanticism if we fail to accept the reality of our limitations, including our psychological struggles. Thus we lose “substantially” in beating ourselves to bits, trying to be what we cannot be. This is not only true in the psychological area, but is also true in all the *relationships of life* – some married couples believe they must have the “*ideal love affair*” of the century just because they are who they are. Such couples refuse to have less than what they have set as a romantic ideal, forgetting that the fall is the fall. Another may want “*sexual experience*” beyond what one can have in the midst of the results of the fall – thus you see marriages destroyed simply because they have set such proud standards and refuse to have the good marriage they can have.

The basic psychological problem is “trying to be what we are not.” The basic problem for us as believers is “*not being willing to be the creatures we are before the Creator.*” We need to “*be real.*” Since the fall, we all have points of weakness – with some of us it tends to be physical, with others it tends to be psychological. Fear can be small, or it can be the horror of great despair – many modern men who have come to a philosophy of despair have gone through the horror of a great darkness. Many psychologists, for example Carl Gustav Jung, will meet this fear simply by telling the patient to “*act as if God were there!*” Alcoholics Anonymous attendees refer to it as “*their higher power!*” The wonderful truth for the Christian is the fact that “*God really is there!*” And He really loves and cares for us! So whenever we find these points of tension and conflict within us, we are not at a dead end, because the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from all true guilt, not just once – but as many times as we need it! There is *always* the possibility of a *truly new start* within a totally rational framework – because of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

In this modern age we have become very much aware of psychology and “psychological problems” as never before. Though modern psychology often provides valuable insights, this is not enough because it is an *insufficient base*. If men act and live according to the teaching of the Word of God, however, they have in practice a *sufficient psychological base*. There is no real answer to man’s psychological need and crushing load apart from the Creator-creature framework, the comprehension of the fall, and the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. God is good to His people. Therefore, to the extent that a man lives in the light of the command of Scripture, he has a solid psychological foundation. If, as believers, we refuse our place as the *creature* before the Creator and do not commit ourselves to Him for His use, this is “*sin*” – and anything else is also “*misery.*” To live moment by moment through faith on

the basis of the blood of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is the only really integrated way to live. Furthermore, this is the only way to be at rest with yourself – to do otherwise is to throw away your own place of peace and rest. As Christians, we are not just acting “*as if*,” like the secular psychologists recommend, we are actually following the invitation of the infinite-personal Creator – “*Cast all your care upon Me, because I care for you!*” (1 Pet 5:7). God says, “*Come to Me and I will give you rest*” (Mt 11:28) – this is not only an invitation to the non-Christian, but to the Christian as well. God invites us to roll our cares upon Him, and not someone else.

As believers we stand in a “living relationship” with a living God who loves us, to the extent that Jesus died on the cross for us. *Fear diminishes* when we see we are not giving ourselves to impersonal situations, or a world of men devoid of eternal wisdom – but we are offering ourselves to God who loves us, and He is not a monster, but our heavenly Father. Furthermore, He will not use us as a weapon without showing tremendous care for the weapon itself. To the extent that we bow our will in practice to God in this present life, we will experience communion with God, and not be divided against ourselves. This is the meaning of *true spirituality* in our relationship to ourselves. (134-147)

Regarding substantial healing in “personal relationships,” the key is the fact that God is a *personal* God; the emphasis on His “*personality*.” Throughout Scripture God deals with us on the basis of who He is, and what He has made us – as such, He always deals with us on a basis of *personal relationship*. It is always a person-to-person relationship – His dealing with us is *never mechanical*. Of course there is the distinction that He is the Creator and we are creatures – therefore in all our thoughts and acts toward God we must keep the creature-Creator relationship in mind. This, however, does not alter the “person-to-person nature” of our relationship. The command for man is to “*love God with all his heart, soul, and mind*” (Mt 22:37) – as such, God is satisfied with nothing less than our loving Him. *We were created to be in “personal fellowship with God and to love him.”* Prayer is to be seen as a person-to-person communication with God, not merely some kind of devotional exercise. Conversely, our thinking must not be just *things about God*, but a *relationship with God* – loving, embracing, praising and worshipping Him.

Man, having put “himself” rather than God at the center of the universe, constantly tends to turn *inward* instead of outward. He has made himself the last integration point of the universe. This is the essence of his rebellion against God. When we turn “*inward*,” there is no one to communicate with – this is the tragedy of man. This not only leads to *psychological problems*, but it also *destroys our relationships with others*. We must recognize that no human relationships are going to be supremely sufficient – *the only ultimate sufficient relationship can be with God Himself*. When our relationship with God is that preeminent relationship in life, *our human relationships* can be valid without being the ultimate sufficient thing. As sinners, acknowledging that we are “not perfect” in this life, we do not need to cast away every human relationship, including the relationship of marriage, or the relationships of fellow-Christians inside the church, just because they prove not to be perfect. On the basis of the finished work of Christ, it is possible, once we have seen this, to begin to understand that our relationships can be *substantially healed* in the present life. By the way, since we are finite, do not expect to find *final sufficiency* in any human relationship, including marriage – final sufficiency can only be found in our relationship with God. In this matter of “human relationships,” always keep in mind that all men are God’s image-bearers. (148-180)