

“...the most spiritually dangerous things in me are the little habits of thought, feeling, and action that I regard as ‘normal’”

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 344

7th week of Easter - “The second primary objective of ...Christlikeness is to remove our automatic responses against the kingdom of God...” -Dallas Willard

Scripture:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Philippians 2: 1-8

Voice of wisdom:

“This is the true situation: nothing has power to tempt me or move me to wrong action that I have not *given* power by what I permit to be in me. And the most spiritually dangerous things in me are the little habits of thought, feeling, and action that I regard as ‘normal’ because ‘everyone is like that’ and it is ‘only human.’

“Our training and experience must bring us to peace with the fact that if we do not follow our habitual desires, do not do what ‘normal’ people would do, it is no major thing. We won’t die, even though at the beginning our outraged habits will ‘tell us’ we are sure to. The sun will come up and life will go on: better than we ever dreamed.

“Rightly understood, the ‘death to self’ of which scripture and tradition speak is simply the acceptance of this fact. It is the ‘cross’ applied to daily existence. And it a major part of what disciples must learn in order to break the grip of (sin) that drive(s) them.

“Still, we cannot ‘put off the old person and put on the new’ on our own. The transition and transformation are the result of several factors at work along with our inward or outward efforts. This is made clear in the magnificent passage in Philippians 2, where Paul is explaining the ‘mind’ or inmost character of Jesus and calling us to have the same ‘mind.’

“The mind or attitude in question is that of the loving servant to the good of others. This is the kingdom life. Jesus abandoned himself to the status of a voluntary slave, to the point of even dying for others. In so doing he achieved the highest possible unification of the life of God and the life of man....Now, Paul continues, we have received the life of the kingdom through the word of the gospel and the person of Jesus. That life we have as a gift. But once we have it, there is something for us to do, for...the person we become cannot be the effect of what someone else does. Therefore we are to ‘work out’ the salvation we have...bringing it to the fullness of what in its nature it is meant to be. But we do not do this as if the new life were simply *our* project. It isn’t. God also is at work in us....” Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy*, pgs. 344-346.

Study 24

Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at yourself as someone who has “automatic responses against the kingdom of God”?

Having the mind of Christ on a daily, even hourly, basis is a life-long journey, but as the saying goes, it starts with one step. What step can you take to progress toward more fully having the mind of Christ with regard to each thing you do?

What are some responses or actions that you regard as “normal” or “just human” that maybe wouldn’t be something Christ would do? Do you believe he can actually help you change them?

Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Continue with last week’s practice of being aware of an attitude or habit that is not Christlike and handing it over to God. Remember to thank God each time he takes it!

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place (dwellingplaceindy.org), and as a student of The Renovare Institute (renovare.org). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke (recess.racke@gmail.com)