

Spiritual Man (5)

"Justification by Faith", Calvin writes, "is the main hinge on which religion turns." For unless we grasp this, he continues, we have no foundation on which to establish our salvation (Calvin's institutes 3.11.1). We are all sinners, and as such stand condemned before God. Our salvation depends only and completely on free forgiveness and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. "Nothing in my hands I bring, only to the cross I cling" is the cry of every true Christians. Calvin writes:

Awakened Consciences, when they have to do with God's judgment, recognize this as the only safe haven... For if the stars, which seem so very bright at night, lose their brilliance in the sight of the sun, what do we think will happen even to the rarest innocence of man when it is compared with God's purity? For it will be a very severe test, which will penetrate to the most hidden thoughts of the heart; and, as Paul says, "he will bring to light the things hidden in darkness, and will uncover the hidden purposes of the heart (1 Cor 4:5)". This will compel our conscience to confess all things, even those that have now been forgotten. Our accuser the devil ... will press us. Outward parade of good works, which we so esteem now, will be of no benefit then! (Institutes 3.12.4)

林前 4:5 所以時候未到，甚麼都不要論斷，只等主來，他要照出暗中的隱情，顯明人心的意念。那時各人要从神那裡得著稱讚。

The Scriptures teach us that God is "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him

belongs honor and eternal dominion. Amen (1 Tim 6:15-16)". At the same time Christians experience in themselves the truth of what our Lord tells us, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man. (Mark 7:20-23)". We cry out with Paul, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom 7:24-25)".

提前 6:15 到了日期，那可稱頌獨有權能的，萬王之王，萬主之主，6:16 就是那獨一不死，住在人不能靠近的光裡，是人未曾看見，也是不能看見的，要將他顯明出來。但願尊貴和永遠的權能，都歸給他。阿們。

可 7:20 又說，從人裡面出來的，那才能污穢人。7:21 因為從裡面，就是從人心裡，發出惡念，苟合，7:22 偷盜，兇殺，姦淫，貪婪，邪惡，詭詐，淫蕩，嫉妒，謗讟，驕傲，狂妄。7:23 這一切的惡，都是從裡面出來，且能污穢人。

羅 7:24 我真是苦阿，誰能救我脫離這取死的身體呢。7:25 感謝神，靠著我們的主耶穌基督(.就能脫離了.)這樣看來,我以內心順服神的律。我肉身卻順服罪的律了。

But at the same time, the Scriptures tell us again and again that we know a tree by its fruit -- a good tree brings forth good fruit. Protestants have always insisted that no one can separate justification and sanctification. We must distinguish free justification from the sanctification by which we make progress in our Christian life, but they can't be separated. In the words of Luther, we are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. "Now", you might ask, "to what degree are true Christian's sanctified by God's Spirit?". In the Religious Affections, Jonathan Edwards gives what may be the fullest answer to this question.

He distils from the Scriptures twelve signs of the Spirit's work in a Christian's life. Although the signs are present to different degrees in different Christians; nonetheless, they are present to some degree in all Christians. The last sign, Edwards calls, "Christian Practice". It is by far the most challenging. My purpose in this article is to explain what Edwards says, and then to say how it relates to the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

"Christian practice" means the Christian life as it is lived out in our lives. Christian practice is rooted in a Christian heart, in Christian affections, and in the fruits of the Spirit. But it does not stop there. Christian practice consists in actually keeping God's commandments. Let me give some examples to help make the point clear. The Christian heart is willing to forgive his enemies. Christian practice consists in actually forgiving people when they sin against us. The Christian heart is willing to help neighbors in need. Christian practice is actually helping neighbors when they are in need. The Christian heart is willing to obey Christ's commands. Christian practice is actually obeying those commandments, even in difficult circumstances. Edwards shows from the Bible that the most important sign of a true Christian is not professing your willingness to live for Christ, but actually living for him.

For Edwards, Christian practice implies three things

- (1) A Christian's practice is universally conformed to and directed by Christian rules.
- (2) A Christian makes this universal Christian practice the business of his life
- (3) A Christian persists in this Christian practice to the end of his life.

Let us look at each of these from the Bible.

First, a Christian's practice is universally conformed to Christian rules. Edwards means by this that a Christian seeks to keep all of God's commandments. There are no commandments which we give up on. No commandments which we willingly disobey. It is no sign of being converted if we tithe ten percent, but refuse to forgive those who have sinned against us. Or if we don't actually commit adultery, but are involved in other forms of sexual impurity. Herod willingly listened to John, but he would not leave Herodias. Saul slew all the Amalekites, except King Agag. Jesus calls us to part with our dearest iniquities. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell (Matt 5:29-30)." No matter how good a "Christian" you think you are, you are no Christian at all if you actually serve money and not God. You may profess to serve God, but the Bible tells us you can not serve God and mammon. The Holy Spirit who lives within us never allows any Christian to rest in sin.

太 5:29 若是你的右眼叫你跌倒，就挖出來丟掉。寧可失去百體中的一體，不叫全身丟在地獄裡。 5:30 若是右手叫你跌倒，就砍下來丟掉。寧可失去百體中的一體，不叫全身下地獄。

In the Bible, God gives us both positive and negative commands. He tells us not to steal, and to be gracious to those in need. Many people think they are good Christians because they keep the negative commands, they don't steal or kill, but they neglect the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy and faithfulness

(Mat 23:23). Edwards writes,

太 23:23 你們這假冒為善的文士和法利賽人有禍了。因為你們將薄荷，茴香，芹菜，獻上十分之一。那律法上更重的事，就是公義，憐憫，信實，反倒不行了。這(更重的)是你們當行的，那也是不可不行的。

A man, therefore, cannot be said to be universally obedient, and of a Christian conversation, only because he is no thief, nor oppressor, nor fraudulent person, nor drunkard, nor bar hopper, nor pimp, nor rioter, nor night walker, nor unclean, nor profane in language, nor slanderer, nor liar, nor given over to fits of rage, nor malicious, nor reviler. He is falsely said to be of a manner of live that becomes the gospel, who goes thus far and no father. In order to this, it is necessary that he should also be of a serious, religious, devout, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, respectful, condescending, benevolent, merciful, charitable, and beneficent walk. Without such things as these, he does not obey the laws of Christ, and laws that he and his apostles did abundantly insist on, as of the greatest importance and necessity (Religious affections, p.310).

This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He sanctifies the whole man.

Second, a Christian makes universal obedience the business of his life. Christians are not half committed to Christ and half committed to other things. Christians are zealous for good works (Tit 2:14). They are faithful servants who serve with their whole hearts (Mat 25:23). We are called to labor in God's vineyard, to serve as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:3), to fight the good fight (1 Tim 1:18-19). The lazy servant is

the wicked servant (Mat 25:26). We must "lay aside every weight, and be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb 6:12, 12:1)". Jesus Christ never did accept a follower who wanted to give him half his heart. "One thing I do", Paul tells us, "I press on." (Phil 3:13). Edwards is warning us not to think we can be "Sunday" Christians, or to think that we can live with one foot in the world and one foot in the Church. The only way to universal obedience is to make universal obedience the business or aim of our life. The Christian life is a tremendous battle against the world, the flesh and the devil, and we can never win it unless we devote ourselves to winning. The Holy Spirit in our hearts calls us to devote ourselves entirely to holiness.

多 2:14 他為我們捨了自己，要贖我們脫離一切罪惡，又潔淨我們，特作自己的子民，熱心為善。

太 25:23 主人說，好，你這又良善又忠心的僕人。你在不多的事上有忠心，我把許多事派你管理。可以進來享受你主人的快樂。

提後 2:3 你要和(.我.)同受苦難，好像基督耶穌的精兵。

提前 1:18 我兒提摩太阿，我照從前指著你的豫言，將這命令交託你，叫你因此可以打那美好的仗。1:19 常存信心，和無虧的良心。有人丟棄良心，就在真道上如同船破壞了一般。

太 25:26 主人回答說，你這又惡又懶的僕人，你既知道我沒有種的地方要收割，沒有散的地方要聚斂。

來 6:12 並且不懈怠。總要效法那些憑信心和忍耐承受應許的人。

來 12:1 我們既有這許多的見證人，如同雲彩圍著我們，就當放下各樣的重擔，脫去容易纏累我們的罪，存心忍耐，奔那擺在我們前頭的路程，

腓 3:13 弟兄們，我不是以為自己已經得著了。我只有的一件事，就是忘記背後努力前面的，

Thirdly, every true Christian preserves in this way of universal obedience and diligent service of God through all the various kinds of trials that he meets to the end of his life. Edwards comments that this is so clearly taught in the bible -- i.e. that only those who preserve to the end will be saved -- that to quote all the verses would be "endless". Instead, he gives fifty bible references in a footnote (some of the New Testament verses are Mat 10:22, Mat 13:4-8, Mat 25:8, Luke 9:62, John 8:31-32, John 15:6-16, Col 1:22-23, 2 Tim 4:4-7, Heb 3:6,12,14, 6:11-12, 10:35, James 1:25, Rev 2:7). This has always been the teaching of the Reformed faith. We believe that justification and sanctification -- including perseverance in the Christian life -- can't be separated. They are the work of one and the same Spirit. By "once saved always saved" the Reformed faith has always meant that a true Christian preserves in the pursuit holiness from the day of conversion to the end of his life.

There are many things that make continuing in the Christian life difficult. This is the experience of every Christian. There are a thousand things that tempt us to sin, and a million which tempt us to give up. There are also trials of the soundness of our doctrine. Satan tells us that only the ignorant believe in justification by faith, that the Bible is not trustworthy, or that it is narrow minded to think that only Christians will be saved. But true Christians persevere in both holiness of life and holiness of doctrine. True Christians sometimes backslide temporarily. But a true Christian will never give up. He will never abandon the gospel of grace. He will never be completely deaf to the sound of his master's voice. And in the end, by the grace of God, he will conquer in every trial. This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

It has been said that reading Jonathan Edwards brings us before the judgment seat of God. And indeed it does, because he preaches to us the full gospel of God. He tells us not to trust in our own righteousness, because our own righteousness deeds like filthy rags (Isa 64:6). We must trust only in the forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to us. But at the same time, this doctrine has no tendency to encourage us to laziness or sin. Because we learn in it that the true Christian is one who is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and we deceive ourselves if we think we can be justified but not sanctified. To put the matter as simply as I can, we say this. Meditate on God's holiness and what kind of a Christian you really are. This will instill in you an absolute certainty that you have nothing to rely on before God's judgment throne except free forgiveness and the righteousness of Christ. But don't let this be an excuse for sinning. Lay off every sin which so easily entangles us and run with perseverance the race set for you (Heb 12:1). Fight the good fight, finish your race, keep the faith, take hold of that which is life indeed (2 Tim 4:7).

賽 64:6 我們都像不潔淨的人，所有的義都像污穢的衣服。我們都像葉子漸漸枯乾。我們的罪孽好像風把我們吹去。

來 12:1 我們既有這許多的見證人，如同雲彩圍著我們，就當放下各樣的重擔，脫去容易纏累我們的罪，存心忍耐，奔那擺在我們前頭的路程，

提後 4:7 那美好的仗我已經打過了。當跑的路我已經跑盡了。所信的道我已經守住了。

(This is the fifth and final article in a series on Jonathan Edwards "Religious Affections". Quotes are from the Banner of Truth edition of this book.)