

The "S" Cycle

Working the Paradigms in Spiritual Growth and Discipleship

A God-reliant (vs. self/human reliant) spiritual Leader relies and works the spiritual paradigms that are rooted and grounded in a Biblical-Theological vision of reality.

Col. 2:6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

1) The Gospel Paradigm of Freedom From Idolatry and the "S" Cycle

- **Starts with Assurance/Justification:** Framing ever circumstance/situation into the context of our relation with God—either "justified/safe/accepted and therefore ASSURED-- or "still condemned/fearful/rejected and therefore NOT ASSURED...

Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating the justifying work of Christ in their lives. Many have so light an apprehension of God's holiness and of the extent and guilt of their sin that consciously they see little need for justification, although below the surface of their lives they are deeply guilt-ridden and insecure. Many others have a theoretical commitment to this doctrine, but in their day-to-day existence they rely on their sanctification for their justification... drawing their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity, their past experience of conversion, their recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of their conscious, willful disobedience. Few know enough to start each day with a thoroughgoing stand upon Luther's platform: you are accepted, looking outward in faith and claiming the wholly alien righteousness of Christ as the only ground for acceptance, relaxing in that quality of trust which will produce increasing sanctification as faith is active in love and gratitude.... Richard Lovelace

Faith Righteousness vs. Works Righteousness Applied

- Both Justification and Sanctification by Grace
- From Fear to Freedom
- Circumstances/Suffering—Punishment or Tough Love?

- **Continues with the Problem of Idolatry and the "S" Cycle of Restoration/Renewal**
 - **Working the "S" Cycle**

I. Sin/Idolatry—Making an alliance with an idol

Judg. 2:11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. **12** And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them

- a. What we fear loosing the most
- b. What we work the hardest to satisfy

c. *What typically dominates our thoughts, even prayers, most That is not Christ!*

Lead question: What are you afraid of losing in xyz issue.

- 4 Marks of Idolatry
 1. In search of security/safety
 2. In search of worth/significance
 3. In search of freedom
 4. In search of love

- Nearby and Faraway (Covert and Overt)
 1. Nearby: The dynamic that we manipulate—a performance element (Eglon)
 - Idols promise we can accomplish what we can't
 2. Far away: The dynamic that justifies—the rational element (Baal/Aseroth)
 - Idols promise what they can't deliver

- Idolatry vs. Gospel
 1. Idolatry is works righteousness—at issue is how one finds wholeness, completedness—albeit either by my own performance/works (idolatry) or by the performance/works of Christ in order to be complete. In idolatry—I have something to do and prove, in Christ, I have nothing to do and prove in order to be complete, etc. (THIS IS HUGE)
 2. Idolatry never satisfies, the gospel does
 3. Idolatry destroys (us, relationships and especially, the thing/concept that is the idol itself—e.g. if we idolize money, we will always be in a love/hate relationship to money, etc)

- Signs of Idolatry
 1. Irrational and/or disproportional anger
 2. Insecurity and fear directed at losing/failing our NEARBY Idol
 3. Relational conflict around NEARBY IDOL
 4. Judgmentalness surrounding idol. E.g. Idol performance is measured by our narrow standards such as to judge others by them. (E.g The idol of materialism judges the poor or less fortunate..., the idol of image judges others by the image of their own making. Etc)

- Don't be duped! Never underestimate the sources and/or contexts for idolatry.
 1. Idolatry can be very *religious* (externalism)
 2. Idolatry can be very *orthodox* (e.g .right theology, wrong use or approach Example: Confessional idolatry—theology and especially “special interest” theology as an end rather than a means to the ends of the gospel and the glory of God) Works Righteousness via right doctrine
Example: Parenting idolatry—loving children as an ends rather than stewarding children as a means to an ends for the glory of God, etc.

c.f. Romans 2—Jewish Idolatry

II. Servitude/Oppression: God's gracious "anger" to reclaim us (discipline- Heb 12)

Judg. 2:11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. **12** And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them...21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died.....and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. **15** Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

3:2 It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.

"God puts us on our backs in order for us to look up"

Spiritual Task of discernment: Are they on their back yet?" Is it time to move to the 3 "S" or is it time to challenge them to live in the truth in order to reclaim them? E.g. How to strip the situation of spiritual enablement in order to move to empowerment. Is there a time to "let go" while keeping the door open for their return? Risk encouraging them to persevere in the means of grace but to be honest relative to actions/duties/performances... take the "works" out of righteousness! Example:

I want to challenge you to do nothing relative to service for God or others that is not done out of a cheerful heart"

Or

I want to challenge you to get out of that leadership position?

Or

I want to challenge you to stop praying until you want to pray

Or...

Key—Stand/live/Suffer the truth Albeit holding them within the communal presence of Christ by means of participation in worship/community

III. Supplication/"Cry Out" and Learning to "Mocking the Devil"/Eglon of our lives"

2:18 For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them....**3:9** But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD...

Spiritual Task: Expose the lies/impotency of idolatry—"mock the devil/Eglon"
"The best way to get rid of the Devil, if you cannot kill it with the words of Holy Scripture is to rail at and mock him. He cannot bear the scorn."
Martin Luther

Lead Question: What is the worse case scenario relative to your fear, and it is really worst and does it really mean, necessarily to a worst life even?

Phil. 1:12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me... that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death....21 For to me to live is Christ,

and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

IV. Salvation/Renewal

Judg. 2:16 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them

Salvation/Rnewal by means of Cross/Resurrection... mortification/new creation... confession/faith wherein:

2 Cor 12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. **9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Key: Salvation is NOT by enabling our idolatry, but by disabling it! There is a necessary "death" in order to "live new."

Luke 9:24 For whoever would save **his life** will lose it, but whoever loses **his life** for my sake will save it.