

This Blog is in chronological order and spans 2011:

Perfection Versus Maturity:

Well then Lord God I have come to the conclusion today (Monday, January 3, 2011) that I will until I die have venial sins in my life. Aiming for absolute perfection is not wise or possible. Aiming to be mature is important. But maturity is not always perfection... maturity is able to accept and admit that I am wrong when I am wrong... and to correct my mistakes when and where possible. Correcting them is not always easy or possible. Wanting to be perfect more than caring for others is not where things are at in the true spiritual life. Aiming to be holy is a good thing but doing it too much will suffocate the Holy Spirit's presence, and block the fruit of the Spirit. The truly humble will accept that there will always be minor sins in one's life when the majors ones have been done away with. Focusing on not sinning is not the same as focusing on those we are called to love. Focusing on sin is focusing on self. Self needs to be forgotten.

Dealing With Paranoia:

It is God's love that leads us to repentance: not a harsh whip, dark threats, paranoia, or unreasonable fears. I must not forget God's love: He is not a slave driver: He is not difficult to please. I need to stay away from right wing conservatism and left wing liberalism. I need to stay away from extremes. Getting to know Jesus by reading the Four Gospels regularly and absorbing its light and love is where it is at. I need to focus on mercy not sacrifice; and love not fear or paranoia. It is simple faith in God or Jesus that grants us God's promises; not keeping rules. I need to focus on Jesus' gentle love for me. When I am in touch with Jesus' love I will have joy, peace, and hope; and I will express that devotion in songs of praise and meaningful worship. I will celebrate His love; not being in dread of breaking rules. Yes there is a Hell. But Jesus did not go around threatening or have the mentality of focusing on: "if you don't keep this or that commandment then you are going to Hell." He did say that those who neglect to keep the lesser of the greater commandments and teach others to do likewise will be considered least in His Kingdom.¹ Jesus shows us love, meekness (i.e. He is slow to anger), shows us mercy, grace, love, and light because that is who He is and that is the best way to get frightened or confused sheep on the right path and into His Kingdom of joy, laughter, peace, and holiness. Real change is inspired not demanded. Jesus meets us where we are at and doesn't force us to follow Him. Yes fear can be a good thing... and sometimes the Holy Spirit screams in our conscience.

If someone has suffered a lot they will very well have difficulty in seeing God as love, especially if they see God as the one instigating that suffering to bring about discipline. If one has paranoid schizophrenia then that may be part of the battle to maintaining a wholesome image of God before them. Both of these cases have been my lot. Getting in touch with God as love is the only way to rid oneself of unreasonable fears, paranoia, or the lie that God is a cosmic GIANT or BULLY who will punish at the slightest deviation of good conduct.

Problems Are Opportunities:

¹ Cf. Matthew 5:19

In the past whenever I was encountering a problem or a challenge I would think to myself that when I solved the current problem then things would get easier. But it never worked out that way. The reward of having solved a problem is getting a new problem.

Unexpected Escalation Of Evil Thoughts Implanted In My Mind:

For a few weeks now since around the beginning of the 2011 I have been under repeated attacks from demons lying to me in my mind attempting to make me think their thoughts are mine. The activity I experienced just exploded into my life bringing confusion, and doubt that helped me to make bad decisions and hurt those I loved. Because of this activity I have decided to re-read one of the first books on spiritual warfare that I came across after my Dark Journey began. The book is called: "The Bondage Breaker" written by Neil T. Anderson. Like all of us his theology is not 100% correct, but I am humble enough to listen and learn from him when he speaks the meaningful truth. I am also using much of what I learned from Brad Jersak's book called: "Can You Hear Me?"

There have been times when the attacks were so overwhelming I became confused as to what voice belonged to Jesus. These dark periods lasted days and so I wrongly confessed out loud during those times that I could no longer hear God's voice. When I repented from confessing this I began to have confidence in discerning the voice of God again. I guess that what I confess with my mouth can limit my ability to live victoriously in the world I am apart of.

The voices that don't belong to God have been trying to deceive me into thinking that God does not care, that He is distant, that He isn't just, that He is withholding stuff I deserve, and that I know better how things ought to work than God does. These voices are very seductive and it takes real effort to see them for what they are: lies. Why do the demons do this? They want me to think that I can run my life all by myself, independent of others (especially God, His Word, and His Church) and that I can be good without God. They want to push me away from the foundation that I need to be forgiven by God for my evil deeds that Jesus died for. They want me to believe that I am a god (or will be one some day). When one thinks one is a god, one is a slave to the dark lord Satan himself because we are slaves to the one whose lies we believe. Seeing all of this puts power, peace, and fight into me. I feel like my worldview is being put on its right footing yet again. I feel like I have found part of the puzzle that was missing and that gives me courage to tackle what comes my way, and courage to stand up for what I believe. Thank you Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen!

Dealing With My Insecurity:

Fear of the unknown together with being an insecure person for such long a time has driven me with the help of demons into places that made me feel weak and battered to the point questioning God's love and will for those I love and also for myself. I now realize that when I recall the things God has done for me and what is recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessing them in the face of the lies that the demons throw at me (in my thought life), I get grounded in truth, feel less insecure, and experience less fear. When I believe God's teaching and message on who I am, His love for me, His plan for my life, and the truth about man's pride (including my own) I find that strength enters into me along with joy, courage, self-esteem, and confidence. My workload no longer

seems gigantic, and the pressures of day-to-day life I handle better with a clearer mind.

What Is My Confession?

I find myself lately being tempted to see God in a poor light when I see myself reverting back to sins I thought I'd overcome with God's help. The thoughts that enter my mind sound just and fair but are sinister and from the pit of Hell. Basically they say: "See, you have served God for more than twenty years now and you still suck when it comes to love. God has not come through for you. Give it up, God hasn't and won't fulfill His promises to you. You are like the proverbial donkey with the carrot ahead of it tied to a stick with a string. You won't find consolation in God." This sounds so plausible if it weren't that I'm committed to following Jesus... if He can't come through for me then no one else can. I know that there are BIG changes in my heart and my attitudes... and even though change is gradual, gradual, and gradual; I'll hold onto Jesus' promises. When I see sin in my life I can either go with the sinister voice mentioned above and stay angry or I can confess my sins to God. When I confess my sins to God then His life, peace, patience, and healing enter into me. Confession isn't just saying I'm wrong, it is saying, "God I sinned in such a way. I was wrong to do so, please forgive me and help me to turn over a new leaf; I repent with your help. Amen!"

Yes God Is A Passionate Lover:

I have finally put my faith wholly in God's unconditional love. I not only believe it with my mind now, but also with my heart. I realize that God wants us, wants to be with us, cares for us, and isn't anal when it comes to our wrong behaviors. He is for us. He wants to share His life with every person He has made. He cares for each of us and is willing to meet us where we are at, and not wait until we are willing to meet Him where He is at. In the past when I prayed for anyone to come into a relationship with Jesus... I focused totally on the possibility that they may not want to get to know the living God. That became the determining-factor for me, not God's un-surpassed love, beauty, compassion, desire to be with us, and His power to draw people to Himself in love. God is into changing hearts and minds, to bless us with life to the full. People do change; one moment they may be against God the next moment they may embrace Him.

In the past I saw God wanting to love us, but that He was waiting for us at a distance, longing for us to say yes to His love, and waiting for us to finally say yes to Him. I saw Him as a withdrawn, not willing to go full out, possibly letting people die without lifting a finger, and not helping those undergoing trials of temptations and adversity as only He could. I did this because deep down inside I believed in my heart for so long that God's love was conditional. I felt that God only loved those who loved Him. That He rejected or distanced Himself from anyone who stepped out of line, who was not behaving according to His standards.

This change that I now have come to I have experienced through reading Neil T. Anderson's book called, "The Bondage Breaker" and making the truth in the book a part of my beliefs. Believing the truth about how God sees me and fighting off the seductive lies from the devil that God is not good, that he is uncaring, distant, anal, angry, high-maintenance, capricious, fickle, and was only committed to those who could make it through the most enduring trials. The goal of these lies is to get me to think that I can live in freedom doing as I please... all by myself... but that is a false freedom... because in

rejecting God I'd be ruled by Satan and his minions. True freedom is the ability to love with God's help. God is not ashamed to chase after us, to show His love for us, to seek us out, to invite us into relationship with Him.²

We Have Not Because We Ask Not:

On Sunday January 23, 2011 I realized that I had believed another lie. I had believed that God was passive, and lazily stood back, and let people suffer from addictions, repetitive sins, spiritual hunger and thirst, poor self-images and demonic oppression because He was waiting for them to come to Him; accept His standards, and do things His way all by them selves. As if we could figure out this all by ourselves. In other words He was not meeting people where they are at personally. I felt that this was the truth because I believed so many people were going nowhere spiritually. I also felt this to be true because of my own struggles. Fact is that I waited so long for help because I failed to ask God for His help sooner. Truth is, God is closer to us than we are to our selves. We only have to speak to Him and He hears us; and He answers us when we are ready and most open to learn from Him. We have not because we ask not. God does speak to us because the Bible says that Jesus speaks to each of us (This is because He is the Light of the world and therefore shines His light into each of our consciences /hearts/ and minds).³ God does help the humble, and opposes the proud. We sometimes have trouble recognizing His voice from all the others we also hear. Sadly some of us tune God's voice out completely.

What people are also waiting for is for the Church to meet them where they are at, and to witness to the Light that shines into their hearts/minds/ and consciences telling and showing them the message of Jesus' grace. I am a part of God's Church and I want to do my part! Lord Jesus please help me to do your will in your time with your strength and with your love one step at a time, and one day at a time. Amen and Amen!

I Finally Get It:

I now think I understand how the concepts of grace and law relate to each other. I have often heard it said that God's love is free, or that God's love is unconditional (by this they mean we can't earn God's love by doing good works or keeping rules). But in the back of my head I always had the thoughts: "Yeah but if I choose to break God's commandments and refuse to repent then I'll go to Hell. So I need to Keep His commandments if I want to go to Heaven. But that seems to make going to Heaven conditional on works or keeping commandments. Do I somehow have to be good to get to Heaven? Do I earn my way to Heaven after all?"

This line of reasoning is compelling, but faulty. True: if I refuse to repent I'll go to Hell. Why? Because Heaven is a free gift that I need empty open hands to embrace. If my hands are full of lesser treasures (accumulated through mortal sin) how can I embrace God's free gift of Heaven? I can't unless I repent from embracing the lesser treasures. By embracing Jesus' grace we will embrace joy in doing so. If we don't repent we are walking in darkness. We keep Jesus' commandments because in doing so we love. If we

² Cf. Luke 15:11-32

³ Cf. John 1:9

think keeping Jesus' commandments (or just doing good works) earns us a place in Heaven then we are dead wrong.

We are under grace not law. Grace gets us to Heaven; not self-righteous rule keeping.

We do good works to love; not to appease an angry and distant God.

If I want to love I need to focus on Jesus, on His gifts, His love, and listen to Him. If I focus on Law then freedom escapes me; love escapes me; and joy escapes me. I need to focus on what Jesus has done for us; is doing and will do through us.

Going to the Torah or Moral Law every time we fail in keeping it and digging down inside our hearts self-righteously to keep the Torah or Moral Law more deeply afterwards is not wise. The Torah and Moral Law are intended to point out sin. They have no power by themselves to make us obey them. Guilt should drive us to God. Being transformed by God's Love (the Holy Spirit) through faith, and relationship with Him is the wisest path to take to grow in supernatural Love. It is the only path to supernatural Love. Doing good deeds (prescribed by the Law (Torah, or Moral) or some other system of principles) with the hope of getting Salvation, points of merit, earthly badges of righteousness, favor from God, or the favor of our peers goes against the Spirit of Love. When we love for love's sake then we truly love God. Whenever we aim to get something out of the good works we are doing other than just loving people with those good works then we are off course.

If we sin, then we don't do more or try harder to stay away from that sin. We confess it to God, and become dependent on Him in faith as He purifies us from the sins we commit. Often we commit sins because we have believed lies or half-truths. Often we commit sins because we aren't dependent on God's grace. If we are seeking perfection through keeping the Law we will soon find bondage to sin our lives. The Law can't save; only Jesus can. Often we commit sin because we aren't teachable. Pride is the root to committing sin.

When we love God and any other persons we don't want to harm, hurt, or offend them; we want to bless them. When we love we become sensitive towards those we love.

When we love we care for those we love.

When we break the least commandment, we are guilty of breaking the whole Law: which is to love; because the whole law can be summarized in: love God, neighbor, and self.

When we hold onto God's Love we will want to and actually love others. When we hold onto serious or mortal sin then we can't embrace God's love until we come to Him and throw ourselves at His mercy, grace, wisdom, and power to pry us loose from our mortal sin. We can't serve two masters: We will either hate one or love the other.

As Christians we are called to no longer sin. Not sinning means the Moral Law is binding on us. But aiming to not sin won't get us anywhere. A simple stone keeps all of the Ten Commandments perfectly. But that stone by itself can't dispense mercy. We are called to a higher goal: active love. If we focus on following and loving Jesus wherever we meet Him, then we will immediately uphold the Moral Law. But if we focus on not sinning then we will be Law focused and we will get nowhere fast.

Fulfilling Jesus commandments in His strength destroys our sinful actions. Hence our works done in His strength through faith in Him save us from our sins.

Believing in and trusting Jesus destroys our guilt; gives us joy; and inspires us to be like Him in love. To sum this up:

Jesus makes it possible for love to replace sin; and faith to defeat guilt. That is the full meaning of salvation.

Experiencing Consolation:

During most of my dark journey, I sought healthy consolation. But never really experienced it. There were times when I sinned gravely or mortally but the pleasures they brought lasted only until I felt the guilt of those sins. Today (January 30, 2011) for the first time in ever so many years I felt healthy consolation without sin, without doing good deeds; just because God loves me.

God Is My Anchor:

I now realize that when I begin to question my self-worth, feel threatened, or feel insecure only by getting in touch with the truth about what God says about me am I able to escape the lies behind those threats. When I fight off the lies with God's truths I feel strong and no longer feel weak or express myself as a needy person.

Saint Or No Saint?

When I first became ill with schizophrenia I began to read about Catholic Saints. One in particular was Saint Therese of Lisieux known as the "Little Flower". Because I was so screwed up, and still very judgmental in nature this Saint did not impress me. But at the same time I felt that all believers were Saints including me. Somehow I saw myself as a Saint at that time, but thought nothing much about the "Little Flower" in reading her life's story. Years later, on Sunday, January 30, 2011 I realized my inconsistency, my judgment and my hypocrisy even though I had not thought about the "Little Flower" till this day. I immediately repented in faith and felt my burden lighten. It must be said that I have not looked upon myself as a "Saint" for a long time now; but I do look at myself as "holy" because God's Holy Spirit lives in me, and because the Bible tells me so. Today I read a short commentary on the Little Flower's life and I do see beauty, holiness, wisdom, and spiritual hunger in her life; all of which I was blind to so many years ago.

Dealing With A Dispassionate Jesus:

One major problem area for me has been that I encountered a dispassionate Jesus regularly when I practiced Listening Prayer, and I thought that was okay some of the time because of my warped heart, mind, and conscience. When I didn't think it was right I attempted to take Brad Jersak's advice to deal with it:

- Renounce the religious spirit.
- Repent from any belief in a silent, uncaring Jesus.
- Ask for the true Jesus to come and act.

I would practice these steps regularly (although not with the required depth), and so the religious spirit would often re-assert itself in my life. It then dawned on me that repenting from believing lies means I have to figure out which lies I believed and replace them with Jesus' truth.

I realized that I did not view Jesus all the time as gentle, meek, patient and humble; instead I saw Him as anal and petty when it came to me doing anything wrong; I also

saw him as an abrasive and dark disciplinarian (I did not see this for what it was: wrong). Because I believed these lies about Jesus I wrongly treated other people in the same way. When I realized I had believed these lies and that Jesus was the opposite: meek, gentle, patient and humble; the religious spirit's re-appearances were dealt a deathblow because the devil's lies were uprooted and replaced with truth.

I also realized because I no longer expected Jesus to be dispassionate, I did not have to expect it from myself either towards others and myself. As a result Jesus took the abrasive negative energy out of me, and I became gentler, more patient, meeker, and a little more humble towards those people I wrongly treated. Without me knowing it at the time Jesus had worked repentance into my life. With Jesus changing how I saw Him; He also changed how I saw others. Thank you my Triune God!

Weighing Words: True Or False?

I now realize thanks to re-reading Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?" that there is a three-principle procedure to be used to determine whether a word was intended for us from God or not:

First: Can we discern the source (Jesus' sheep know His voice) such surety requires faith and the ability to recognize God's voice. Our doubts ought not shut down our conversations. Even if we have confidence in the source we don't rely on this confidence all by itself. We go to the next step:

Second: We ask whether it is true. Does it line up with Scripture, the Church, and the Holy Spirit?

Third: We ask ourselves: does it bear good fruit?

If we have doubts or confusion about who is the source of the message... then we can ask: Is it the truth? If we embrace it as truth yet see no eventual fruit then the message can't be from God.

I now realize that I have practiced different parts of the above steps off and on without realizing that the principles form a procedure. Having the above workable process to help me sort through messages that come to me gives me faith, and confidence in learning to discern the source and truth or falsehood of any message given to me directly. I therefore don't feel like a failure when I have confusion and doubt in my mind about the true source of any particular message I have received. I therefore don't have to fall for demonic lies that say: "See you don't know God's voice... This faith thing is too difficult... Others can do it maybe but not you... If you get it wrong others will get hurt... Or you'll land up acting like a fool if you carry on with this charade..."

Strangely a little while ago during my listening prayer devotions I saw a painting in my mind that I had painted sometime ago of the Lion of Judah, and the Lamb of God. Because I knew that these images were intended to represent Jesus I thought that what followed had to be from the Lord (although I had my doubts). Fact is... devils can use forms we hold dear to deceive us... If their messages don't line up with the truth: Scripture, Church, and Holy Spirit; and don't bear good fruit, then no matter how real the images are they are being used to deceive us. Satan can appear as an angel of light. In my Listening Prayer devotion mentioned above the lion had no teeth... a sure sign that it was Satan impersonating Jesus because the lion attempted to swallow me but failed in a dramatic way.

I did believe for a little while after that God let this interaction happen to confirm that my salvation from Him is secure despite Satan's attempts at deceptions. But this was not the case. God does not want me to be dependent on any demon's words or images for my security. God is good, He told me a long time ago that I am not one of those who fall back: case closed! I don't need to depend on demons for anything good. Satan's BIGGEST lie is that He knows the truth, and he will slimy his way in getting certain facts right to hook us and draw us away from God.

Punishment From God?

For a considerable time until now whenever I have judged somebody I have felt strange manifestations of discomfort, pain, itchiness, infections, or sickness immediately afterwards in certain parts of my body. These manifestations I took as signs that I needed to repent from certain judgments that my conscience failed to detect while committing those judgments. Each time I repented the strange manifestations would immediately disappear. This works fine (and I am grateful for it), but there is a temptation to wrongly think that God is being wrathful towards me for my sins with these strange manifestations in an attempt to get me to repent each time this happens. This is totally wrong! The Bible says it is God's goodness and kindness that leads us to repentance not His wrath. People who know and love God should not immediately think that all the hardships they experience to be a result of God's wrath... that is what people who don't know or hate God may do.

What we do in the spiritual has ramifications in the physical and vice-versa. God did not out of anger deliberately program us to hurt when we sin. When we sin we do damage to the natural order of how God intended things to be. Sin is incompatible with the way God designed things: hence the pain we feel when we hurt or judge others; and when we do selfish things. True, God did give us the ability to feel pain, but this is not meant as punishment because of His wrath. It is meant to guide us back to Him. Pain is a gift, not a curse.

Would Jesus Do That? Or Would I Do That?

A little while back I was reading a testimony about a woman who went through a difficult time. As she prayed, and revisited the memory surprisingly Jesus took her place and healed her from the wound associated with the memory. I couldn't imagine Jesus getting soiled and violated again thinking he had done His job 2000 years ago... He was free from suffering, and paid His dues in my mind forever. I then realized that this was my attitude... not His. When the early Church experienced persecution Jesus words to Saul was: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."⁴ I too have under gone suffering (not the magnitude of Jesus', but suffering none the less). I now realize that my suffering is not over because love requires that I suffer: If one can't carry pain one can't love. Love and pain go together.

Approaching God; Or God Approaching Us?

In Old Testament times there was an ornate hierarchy put into place by which God's people had to go through in order to approach God. Those with deformities, diseases, bleeding, open sores, or illnesses were not allowed to participate in Temple worship.

⁴ Cf. Acts 9

Why? For a long time I spiritualized this. I thought that those who were not healthy physically represented in the spiritual those who were deformed by sinful attitudes and hardened hearts. I further thought that they needed to deal with their sinfulness through repentance before they could gain access into God's presence. But that is misguided. Any time we clean ourselves up before we go into God's presence, we have become self-righteous. Only God can clean us up. So who then do the unhealthy in Old Testament times represent in the spiritual? They represent those who *don't want to repent*. How do we know this? We know it because Jesus (the God-Man) approached, loved and healed lepers, those with deformities, those with illnesses, and the demonized because He knew many of them wanted healing and peace with God. Hear this: "Jesus approaches" us; Jesus seeks out the lost sheep, and Jesus invites those with heavy burdens to learn a new way of life with Him and to remain in His presence forever. The lesson I have learned from this is: If I am dirtied up from sin... I shouldn't attempt to clean myself up all by myself... I just go to God and ask Him to clean me up and He will... if not immediately then eventually. Those who wait on the Lord are never disappointed.

Dealing With Images From The Dark Side:

As I continued to practice Listening Prayer things sped up and got more and more interesting.

Yes I have benefited in enormous ways from practicing Listening Prayer, but then for sometime I struggled to hear God's voice (feeling blocked much of the time) until God and I dealt with the dispassionate Jesus completely. From then on I slowly got more confident in Listening Prayer and I reaped many spiritual benefits. But then recently my imagination got over run with demon inspired imagery. Here is a taste of it:

On Tuesday, February 8, 2011 when I got home and put a few things in order and returned to practicing Listening Prayer... I had this image of a rough, abrasive, muscle-bound, harsh, shallow, cartoon shaped Conan Barbarian type of Jesus attempting to grab and invite me into carrying his HEAVY cross with him. I recoiled and intuitively knew this was not the real Jesus. I dismissed it... then a little later I went into prayer again only to see this sissy type of Jesus full of self-pity, tears, and weakness beckoning me to come and help him carry his too HEAVY a cross. I know that the real Jesus is no sissy.

I deduced that the demons were inviting me to carry HEAVY BURDENS intended to weigh me down and discourage me from practicing Listening Prayer with Jesus being the source and direction of my life. They know I am inheriting what Jesus died on the cross and rose again after to give me: a real, satisfying, interactive, and meaningful relationship with the King of kings: Almighty God.

As I continued to practice Listening Prayer I got more images from the pit of Hell. I eventually realized that this meant I must have more blocks to practicing authentic Listening Prayer with Jesus, because every time I attempted to meet Jesus in my imagination demons would appear trying to imitate the real Jesus. When I submitted my mind to the real Jesus the demonic imagery disappeared and my mind went blank (meaning that this was not a result from my schizophrenia). Realizing that I had a major block that allowed demons to over run my imagination I asked God what the block was,

and He said it was my, “intellectual pride.” I asked myself what does this look like? Brad Jersak’s book says it has to do with skepticism; when things don’t work like I think they ought to the spiritual seed that God sends my way I land up digging up and throwing away.

The antidote to my intellectual pride is “child like trust”, “being teachable”, “practicing humility”, and becoming “more dependent” on God. This I am aiming to do.

Thank you Holy Trinity, and Rob Beck for giving me Brad Jersak’s book on Listening Prayer!

I am convinced that skepticism is rooted in not standing on or being rooted in God’s Love, and not being sure about who God says I am. When I don’t wear my spiritual armor... and remember and believe what God says about me in the Bible then the demons will sow lies, confusion, and skepticism in my heart and mind to drive me away from the real Jesus. They will use my mind to wrongly focus on others when I am really called to humble myself, not others!

I am a part of Christ’s body; He therefore cares deeply for me. I am a partaker of Christ – He therefore nourishes me and cares for my every need. I am firmly rooted in Christ Jesus and am now being built up in Him.

I am not *worthy* of God’s promises; but I do have *worth* (I am desired by God, I have purpose from God, I am useful in God’s purposes, and I am valuable in God’s eyes). God cares for me. One may believe all of this on the surface in the mind, but believe ideas contrary to them in one’s heart. I am finding Listening Prayer to be a valuable approach in dealing with shame, unworthiness, lies, skepticism, and my hard heart; and bringing repentance and healing into my life. Thank you Jesus!

Psalms & Gospels In The Dark Become Light:

When I first became ill with schizophrenia, I went directly to the Psalms and recited them over and over again especially a hand full of them to fight off the fear and apprehension I felt as my life fell apart. Reciting the Psalms gave some consolation in the darkness, reminded me of better times, and gave hope for my future. For some time I could not feel the reality of the Psalms. I rushed through them when I recited them after having recited them so many times in the past. Then on Friday, February 11, 2011 I decided to imagine and enter into those Psalms (this slowed things down): picturing Jesus as the Good Shepherd, resting in His presence, and absorbing the beauty of His creation reflected in my imagination, and partaking in communion with Him. These have now become my meeting places; whereas before I had a hit and miss reality in finding places for Jesus and I to meet in prayer. These Psalms have just as much power to comfort, and allow us to meet Jesus in the Light (good times) as they do in the Dark (bad times). God prefers to act and impart life in these encounters and meeting places. God will never leave me nor forsake me. Moreover, The same is true about the Gospels: they are coming alive for me in my heart and imagination. They are becoming meeting places between Jesus and I and those whose actions are recorded in them. Yes I do every now and then have blocks that I need to repent from... but Jesus often uses internal visions to bring that about with His help. I repent from sin in response to His voice; not the other way around: I don’t repent so I can hear His voice. He loves me more than I thought. It is His kindness, love, mercy, and patience that lead me to repentance. God

loves everyone... and gives each person the desires of her or his own heart. Blessed are those who wait on Him, for they will never ultimately be disappointed.

Kindness Of God:

After Mass on Sunday, February 20, 2011 I realized that I was short tempered, was policing people's movements, and had a demanding spirit. I knew I needed God's help to deal with this attitude (as this type of situation seems to repeat itself over and over in my life)... and I was tempted to search and analyze my memory for where I made the judgment earlier in the day that led to my unacceptable attitude just then. Then the thought entered my mind: "It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance." I therefore decided to trust in God's kindness in dealing with my problem... and sure enough He brought to my mind where I had made the judgment earlier in the day... I was then able to repent in faith from it... and sure enough this restored my ability to be kind and loving in my relationships.

This lesson reminds me that God wants me holy and pure more than I want it. That He is ever mindful, kind, merciful, and patient with the whole of creation. And those who approach Him in faith believing Him to be good will receive from Him many gifts. Thank you Jesus. Amen, and Amen!

More Inner Healing:

I found that until today (Sunday, February 20, 2011) that I have looked down on a lot of people under certain conditions; those who are far away from me, and surprisingly those who are close to me. I have tended to judge them, laugh at them, mock them, and not care for any of them, as I should when certain issues came up. What is beneath this (I asked the Lord Jesus)? What is the foundation for this? I received the impression that it has to do with rejection and reacting to it with pride, anger, and hatred (what I wrongly saw as my strength)... and not having fully renewed my mind/heart in this area. I heard God saying that there is plenty of cleansing to be done in this area of my heart/ mind/ and conscience.

I confessed to God that I am sorry for my sinful and judgmental attitudes towards others. Such as not looking with kindness on the poor, the strange, the disabled, those who stand out as unwanted, those who are undesirable; the weak, the hurting, those that society's cliques do not care for, and those who are outcasts. I did this because I thought I was better, stronger, smarter, or more attractive than them in certain categories. I wanted nothing to do with weakness, because I wanted to be seen as strong. I found my strength in my hatred.

Truth is that for a long time I felt like an outcast, showing weakness, and wanting desperately to belong at any cost. Lord God what a shallow life I have led! What a lie I have built my life on: the illusion of being stronger and better than those who are weak. I esteemed the riches of the world to be of more worth than loving all who passed my way after I was rejected so long ago. Indeed I am not able to love others with this attitude. I was not merciful. I was not gracious... I cared not where people came from, were at, or where they were going to if they were in the wrong crowd (in my opinion back then).

I guess that this all started when I was rejected by my peers at school as a young child. What did I do? I hated those who rejected me; I would show them I was strong and that I did not need them.

Looking at this now I decided to repent in faith (with the Lord Jesus' help) from this pride; and I repented in faith from deciding to hate so I could feel strong. I also forgave those who ostracized me, and rejected me so long ago. I commanded those demons that have led me astray to go to Jesus and do what He commands them to do.

I asked the Holy Spirit to please wash this shit out of my heart, mind, and life because I can do without it now and forevermore. I am not doing this now because I am so wise or because it was my own idea... but because my God is the Good Shepherd and has planted a desire within me to be holy, clean, joyous, and pure before Him. Thank you Jesus for the work you have been doing in my life so far and for all that you promised me you would eventually do in my life.

Good News:

Today went so well for me compared to so many days in the past thanks be to God! It got a little bumpy for a brief while but I recovered because of God's goodness. Then I had a talk with a beautiful Christian woman at work and she gave me my daily bread: "Jesus paid for it all!" What a joy! What a relief! What good news! It takes the pressure off of me!

Accusations Verses Encouraging:

I now realize: yes I have done some pretty dumb things in the past... and that regularly I have thought my condemning thoughts appropriate as I hit myself over my head with them even though I had confessed them to God and priests in the past. I saw God as disappointed in me; and so I saw Him agreeing with my condemning thoughts. Yes God does convict us at times... but when we repent... by letting God clean us up He won't bring to mind our former wrongs yet again. Truth is that Satan is the author of my condemning thoughts. I have been tuned into Satan's condemning messages for such a long time that I often think his words are God's. No more. God loves me.

Journeying From Abrasiveness To Roughness To Abruptness To Kindness; Journeying From Rigidity To Flexibility & Journeying From Closed-Mindedness To Being Teachable:

I am now seeing God more and more as gentle... yes there have been times when I saw it but they faded away because deep down inside of me there have been lies that negated this truth. Tonight I was listening to part of a Brad Jersak seminar from the Internet where he said something that struck me as true and worth meditating on now... but then I had confusion about it because of the way I have seen and wrongly believed my past to be. I then with the help of the Holy Spirit saw where my past reasoning went wrong. Brad re-iterated that Jesus is gentle, kind, and patient. He meets us where we are at and slowly guides us step by step in the right direction, and right path; and journeys with us. Brad said that Jesus uses His rod and staff on wolves and dogs to protect us. Jesus doesn't abuse us with His authority (rod and staff). Jesus is a gentleman. Jesus doesn't use His staff to keep me bent over cowering in fear and false humility. For me where I am at I often don't realize how wrong my judgments are, my accusatory speech can be, my preaching, and my roughness when I am doing so. I badly don't want to act or behave in such manners (within and outside), and I do repent when

the Holy Spirit convinces me of where I have gone wrong. Jesus wants me to walk upright, with dignity, in complete freedom, with wholesome pride in being His adopted son, face up-lifted, without shame, with confidence, as someone to be respected, honored, at peace, and an imitator of Jesus. Jesus does not bully us into submission. Jesus doesn't try to control us; instead He gives us self-control. Jesus does exercise our spiritual muscles but doesn't manhandle us. These insights have led to me having a more open mind, I am much more teachable, and everything doesn't need to be spelled out in exhaustive details for me like before. My memory, flexibility, and understanding are so much more improved. I latch onto ideas faster. I feel like I am standing on real earth, grounded in Christ and at peace. I don't feel stupid, limited, and fearful anymore. Thank you Jesus!

Looking For Dirty Laundry???

In the past when people would let me down I found that I was very good at coming up with possible motives behind their actions that were evil, sinister, insensitive, selfish, uncaring, and hostile that made me want to be preachy, angry, and judgmental towards them and that I would hold as true without evidence. It came so naturally to me. Thankfully the Holy Spirit had His hand on my mouth so often, but on Tuesday, March 22, 2011 I finally repented in faith as I recognized the evil of this dynamic at work within me. One gets kindness reciprocated more often than if one judges and becomes abrasive towards the people who let us down. To my surprise I now don't fall into judging others as frequently as before because I have repented from its roots. Thank you Jesus!

Revelation On Sinful nature:

God has shown to me that all my sins ultimately come from my will. If our wills are supported with God's grace, light, love, acceptance, life, anointing, and strength then sinning will become more undesirable or difficult to do. If we have emptiness, darkness, weakness, shame, and pride; and lack God's life: i.e.) are spiritually dead, then we will be slaves to sin. Yes sin also springs from our hearts and minds, but before it can do so the seeds must come from our wills deciding to believe or not believe certain lies or truths. Ultimately sin has its origin in our wills. For a more thorough treatment on this topic check out the essay: "Some Spiritual Insights" from this Website. The truth that we don't have a sin-nature has been liberating for me. Yes I do sin, but I don't have a sin-nature. All my sins are directly or indirectly a result of decisions made by my will. Sin comes from our wills when supported by our darkened minds, and darkened hearts. The mind when unsupported by truth, and God's light will lead us to make bad decisions... sometimes leading to sin. The heart is where desires grow when the will decides to believe or reject different ideas or pleas presented to it. If we consent to believe lies with our wills then those lies will be planted in our hearts giving birth to desires that are dark and sinful. The will when not submitted to God's will, shall be in bondage to the darkness of Satan's kingdom. The heart and mind nudge the will in certain directions; whereas the will nudges the mind and heart in directions too. Sometimes they are opposed to each other as if there is a war going on.

An un-submitted will to God's will, an un-submitted mind to God's mind, and a heart that desires things contrary to God's heart will ruin any person. All fallen humans will struggle in these areas (some greatly; others moderately).

Abiding In Jesus⁵:

When we depend on idols we are walking in the flesh. When we depend on Jesus we are walking in the Spirit and abiding in Him. If we are consciously depending on Jesus, then we can be certain that we are living out our faith in Him. This might sound kind of "fake" or "flimsy" but when we believe God answers our prayers for us to depend on Him then we are actually depending on Him and therefore abiding in Him. If we are very unsure whether we are abiding in Jesus, then it is likely we aren't fully abiding in Him. Trusting, and believing in Jesus for His help in whatever situation we find ourselves is key to abiding in Him. Checking in with God regularly throughout the day is key and also a wise way of growing in dependence on God. Paying close attention to our emotions/weakness/desires/or strengths in light of what the Bible says is a shrewd way to foster abiding in Jesus. It is through our faith that we will overcome the world. If we are glorying in earthly things then when they are damaged, removed, stolen, or soiled we will be humbled or lose our reputations. If we are glorying in our self-efforts, expected behaviors, rule keeping, or reputations, then we will either become self-righteous or defeated; eventually be tripped-up losing our reputations, and so be humbled willingly or unwillingly. If our focuses are on things that don't last then we will lose our good pride or humility. Glorying in idols is done in unhealthy pride. If we glory: "delight" in Jesus (or honor Him) He won't disappoint us. If we aim for this life only, then we may eventually lose it all. If we aim for the next, then we will have all we need in this life and bounty in the next life.

How do we know we are depending on idols? If we are trying to substitute joy with either happiness or pleasures, then we are depending on idols. Pleasure is meant for the body, happiness for the mind, and joy for the heart. The only true joy is experiencing God's light, life, love, fullness, and presence in our hearts and sharing it.

Convinced That Arguing Accomplishes Nothing:

In the past when I have disagreed with others I have attempted to argue with them in the hope of changing the way they think. Over the years I have slowly realized that arguing never bore any good fruit. When those who are close to me have thought differently especially on controversial or very important topics I have been learning that not judging and not condemning means that I ought not argue with or try to change their beliefs. Prayer and love is the only path to take. Yes I like a good debate done in a fresh non-judgmental manner yet those are rare. And if somebody asks me what I think about a topic then I am free to share my opinion. But today without arguing, God emphatically showed me that He does not approve of arguing, because it either comes from judging or moves to towards judging. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus for forgiving me all the times I have argued with others. Unfortunately there was still some darkness within me that wanted to argue or manipulate others... thankfully that too would be dealt with eventually.

⁵ These ideas come from Jeff VanVonderen, and Peter Herbeck.

Keeping Things Simple:

The long search for peace has finally ended! Yes, Jeff VanVonderen's book on shame had it right all along. The Christian life is not about the: Do more... try harder... give up... do more...etc. cycle. It is about resting in God through what Jesus has done on the cross for all. I don't have to have a complicated... or deep... theology or understanding on Salvation to live in freedom. Often deep theologies are confusing or misleading... I know mine has been. Many are going to be surprised on Judgment Day (me none the less) as to who will be given mercy and who will be condemned. Moreover I am no longer only looking for insights with Salvation in mind while reading Scripture. This means that God can speak with me through the Bible in a much broader sense than before. Judgment and mercy are in God's hands not mine. My trust is in God: the Father, the only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit. I have a Church that is much wiser than I am. I have sisters and brothers that love me, pray for me, and whom I love back. I am most blessed. Thank you Lord God for bringing me to this place of peace! Amen and Amen!

Light And Darkness: Goodness And Sin:

Sin is fulfilling legitimate desires with inappropriate goods. Just like darkness is a lack of visible light emptiness or hunger is a lack of God's goodness; Hunger is not bad... without it we would not know what a full stomach is and how good it feels to be satisfied with food after going without sustenance for a period of time. Being in a state of emptiness or darkness will lead to sin when God does not have His proper place. God is Light (Goodness). He seeks to fill us with His goodness. When we feed off Him we will no longer satisfy legitimate desires with inappropriate goods: we will sin less often. Things that replace God inappropriately are idols.

Our hearts have many rooms within them. Some rooms may only be visited when we are young... and we might forget about them as new attractions come along. God might be in some of those rooms, and demons might be in others, and in still others there may be darkness cluttered with rubbish.

This definition on what sin is enabled me with God's help to jettison part of my mask because I finally understood its purpose. More insight was needed to completely deal with it.

The Two Sides Of A Coin: Principles & Abiding:

The only principle one needs to live life was called the "Logos" (in the Greek language 2000 years ago) that in part means The Divine Principle and was given as a name for Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus is all we need. Focusing on learning new principles will never bring rest or the power to live a moral life all by them selves. Without Jesus I am dead, empty, sinful, and helpless. Jesus is sufficient, loving, compassionate, merciful, gracious, sustaining, patient, present, and humble. Principles that don't lead you to Jesus but away from Him lead away from life not to it. Therefore relationships with Jesus are key to following Him on the paths He has chosen for each of us. This is the first side of the coin.

The other side of the coin is to abide in Jesus. I for the longest time resisted the clear teaching found in the Bible that all we needed to do in order to abide in Jesus was to believe in or rest one's faith in Him. By putting one's faith in Jesus one will gain a healthy respect for the Bible, have an appetite for reading it. One will grow in love, joy, peace,

hope, patience, faithfulness, and self-control. The emptiness in one's heart will be filled... and one will have courage to live the life Jesus calls one to.

Saturday, April 23, 2011:

Within the past few days I began to feel anger towards those I saw rejecting certain truths revealed in the Bible and taught by the Church since the beginning because I saw the rejections as threats to God's Kingdom. As this attitude made its way into my conscious mind... I was gripped with the fear of a Hell that was so scary, frightful, dreadful, black, and hopeless yet did not match what the Bible teaches on the subject. I was eventually led to repent from my judgmental/angry attitude with the result that there was peace and stability within me along with a certainty that Hell was more 'just' than what my fears made it out to be. Then again I felt like I was in a battle:

(264) Wednesday, April 27, 2011:

I felt it very difficult to navigate through my mind, while at work, and at home. The littlest things would set me off in anger if not rage... although I kept myself from venting on others. I really did not know what was happening to me. I was very tempted (which the demons delighted in...) to get angry with God... But that road leads to emptiness, and negativity; with an: "I am in the right... so f--k you" attitude that kills charity. But today I felt a root pulled out of my heart. The root had to do with getting my way all of the time: you know; being selfish, and caring for nobody but myself. When this root was yanked out of my heart I found myself seeing things differently. My motivation to work was put on a more loving foundation; I began to see others differently (not as an inconvenience) or as people in my way. Thank you Lord Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit. I am grateful that you loved me and kept me from giving up. Amen, and Amen. I then spoke with my Mother and she said she had received a word from God for me along with following two passages: (2 Kings 5 (the whole chapter)) and:

and he sent a man before them—
Joseph, sold as a slave.
They bruised his feet with shackles,
his neck was put in irons,
till what he foretold came to pass,
till the word of the LORD proved him true.
The king sent and released him,
the ruler of peoples set him free.
He made him master of his household,
ruler over all he possessed,
to instruct his princes as he pleased
and teach his elders wisdom.⁶

She said the next time I encounter the urge to get negative and agree with those voices in my head that are attempting to turn me away from the Lord, I ought to just praise

⁶ Psalm 105:17-22

Jesus, and repeat, "By His stripes I have been healed" and I'll eventually be completely healed. I am really looking forward to this very much!

Fruit From A Retreat At A Place Named Rivendell:

In response to a block I had in prayer on May 6, 2011, God gave me the word: "Hermes". At first I was confused as to what it might mean. But eventually I was led to do a Web search and I found out that Hermes was a Greek and Roman god but also that, "hermes" is the Greek word from which we get our English word hermeneutics. The meaning of the word hermeneutics has to do with how one correctly interprets, weighs, and applies Scripture or how one knows an interpretation of Scripture is wrong.

Either way I realized through this that my take on a certain Bible verse was dead wrong and in major need of correction. Later on God would reveal to me that I had another issue where I was sitting over others in judgment with bad, warped, and dark hermeneutics. There was also an evil spirit that masqueraded as Hermes in my mind/imagination/ and spiritual space (as I attempted to meet with Jesus in my safe place). Hermes was trying to come between Jesus and I through seduction, confusion, and lies. Thankfully this got dealt with through perseverance, and repentance, with the authority and the love of the Holy Trinity. The first issue was dealt with at Rivendell. The second got dealt with on Tuesday, May 17, 2011.

I now know what the words: "by His wounds I have been healed" mean. It means that God has put His life and love within me... and has renewed parts of my mind with His light, and destroyed strongholds in my heart so that I'm free from many sins that I used to commit in the past. Yes: "In repentance and rest is my salvation... and in quietness and trust is my strength." I still fall into sins such as pride unbelief and judgmental-ism... but God will complete the work He began in me (Cf. Philippians 1:6). Yet until death I am not a completed work of God (Cf. Philippians 3:12). I am a work in progress! As a planting of the Lord I will grow in faith, love, and hope over time. I will grow in the virtues, in character, in courage, in wisdom, in healing, and in compassion. Thank you Jesus you are my total Righteousness!

In all truth I don't like much about my mental health at this time (Saturday, May 7, 2011) except that it is much, much, much better than what it used to be... and that is saying a lot. Never the less not my will be done but God's will be done now and forevermore, Amen and Amen!

Monday, May 16, 2011:

Over the past few weeks I have been learning to recognize more and more what the devil's voice looks, feels, and sounds like. He loves to discourage, lie, steal, and kill what God wants to plant, water, nurture, grow, and prosper in my life. Today I realized that when I begin to panic or focus and encourage my anxiety it is because I am entertaining the devil's lies as truth. When this happens I lose touch with reality and go into really bad places. I can do a lot more than my negative self-talk (inspired by the devil) has limited me to. I Rene Lafaut can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me. God's word is the only sound foundation... all other ground is sinking sand.

Embracing Opportunity:

For a long time I wanted to leap from what I perceived as my poor memory and my limited understanding to where I wanted to be at. I felt this tug-a-war within me: where

I was at and where I wanted to be. I then decided to embrace where I was at: my limitations whatever they might be. I embraced my limitations and began to see them as opportunities and not curses that lower my self-esteem (as much of my adult life was permeated with). With this my attitude changed again to: "Thank you Lord God for making me the way you have... I am grateful!"

But then I gradually began to remember how I had such a great memory when I was a youngster. Moreover I was reminded of Jesus' promise that: "nothing is impossible for her or him who has faith." And, Paul's New Testament assertion that: "I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me."

If you asked me a week ago: Do I believe the Bible? I'd say, "Yeah I really do" and if you further had to asked me: Did I believe these two sayings found in the Bible? I'd have to say err... not fully... but now on June 4, 2011, I am claiming these two promises as my own, and will build in part my (spiritual/intellectual/physical/artistic/emotional/work/ and social) life on them. But for such a long time the seeds of: lies, negativity, criticalness, jealousy, selfishness, resentments, hatreds, pride, anger, blindness, and darkness... that had a grip on my life planted by Satan's minions into my thinking, believing, emotions, attitudes, dispositions, and actions had the effect of destroying many of the opportunities abilities, and aptitudes that God had intended on giving me. I intend to reclaim what the locusts have stolen all with God's help, because they have stolen plenty. And I intend to with God's help to build on them day in and day out. I am reminded of the parables about the "Talents" as taught by Jesus. The wealth that God entrusts to His servants are opportunities for all sorts of things. God is into growth, multiplying, increase, character building, prosperity, plenty, and winning when it comes to (spiritual/intellectual/physical/artistic/emotional/work/ and social aspects of life) provided they serve God's purposes and our Spiritual growth. Things have got to be good for those around us and for us, for God to bless them.

Thank you Holy Trinity for your leadership, and care for my life in all these matters. Amen and Amen!

Friendship:

Quite a while ago I heard a co-worker tell somebody that it didn't matter to her whether or not everyone liked her. If somebody didn't want to be her friend she was gracious enough to comply with that person's wishes. She also knew and exercised the right to choose and decide whom she wanted to be friends with. Today I realized that I needed to embrace this wisdom... and in the process found more peace. Thank you Holy Trinity! Then on Sunday, May 29, 2011 I felt caught in a web within my soul (will, mind, and emotions) and unable to figure away out into freedom. I was then confronted about my attitude and I eventually realized that beneath the demand within me to have others be my friends was my selfishness. When I realized this I repented from it in faith and found more freedom... and I resolved to believe that God would complete the work He began within me. Thank you Holy Trinity!

Jesus Is The Key To Good Fruit: Not The Law:

Where is the power to love supernaturally going to come from? By embracing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith and jettisoning one's trust in the law to bring about good works, right behavior, and salvation. Jesus wants to lead us, he wants to

teach us, He wants us to bear much good fruit, and He wants to save us. The law makes nothing perfect⁷, it only points out sin⁸. Grace is not a license to sin. The power of sin is in the law.⁹ Either embrace Jesus or embrace the law. The former will lead to love, good works and good fruit, whereas the latter will lead to judging, bitterness, depression, legalism, condemnation, judging, anxiety, hatred, malice, and criticism. The New Testament is about bearing good fruit. The Old Testament is about rule keeping. There is power in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Being rule based leads to negativity and unhealthy relationships.

Those that are caught between the law and grace will do well to stand on the Good News found in Paul's letters found in the New Testament. God's word is utterly trustworthy: Like Saint Augustine said: The New Testament is revealed in the Old, and the Old Testament is explained in the New. Embrace God's word and a rich harvest will come to you. Ignore it and your barns will be empty. Don't put your trust in rules, put it in the person of Jesus Christ. He will guide you into love, commitment, hope, and peace Thank you Jesus for showing me this.

Thank you June for encouraging me and steering me in this direction.

Sunday, June 26, 2011:

How does one love un-conditionally? (1) By not making my warmth and kindness towards people conditional on what I see them doing or believing. (2) By meeting people where they are at and listening to them. (3) By not being motivated by unreasonable fears or lies. This is the way God loves us.

God said He is watching over His word to perform it. God has promised that I will love... and I am counting on Him to fulfill His word and promises. Love is not motivated by putting all of one's hope, energy and trust into keeping or serving the Old Testament Law. The power of sin is in the Law not the grace of Jesus Christ¹⁰. Saint Paul wrote in the New Testament:

Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.¹¹

⁷ Hebrews 7:19

⁸ Romans 3:20

⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:56

¹⁰ Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56

¹¹ Romans 7:1-4, NRSV

We are not married to the law. We no longer aim to please the Law. We are married to Jesus. We are called to bear good fruit in the New Covenant... not focus on rule keeping as was expected in the Old Covenant. Love is not motivated by: "Do I have to?" or, "this sucks because it is required from me - thinking" or, "must I do it?" or, "I don't have a choice in the matter." Such attempts at motivation most of the time border on law-mentality or slave-mentality and won't amount to anything beautiful quickly. Love on the other hand springs from "hope" or the expectation of joy or the joy of knowing that it will benefit somebody. Love wants to love, to bless, and to give. Love does not see things from an obligation point of view or if I don't do it then I go to Hell mentality. Such love is fear (slave) based and is not "faith" based and won't accomplish much of anything. Love is not motivated by unhealthy fears. The Law when focused on incorrectly engenders fear. Fear is a magnet to sin and negativity. Jesus is the better way (as talked about in the book of Hebrews) into the presence of God who is Love. We inherit by faith (as the book of Galatians says) the gifts of the Spirit, not by attempting to uphold the Law. The gifts of the Spirit include us bearing supernatural unconditional love towards others through the Spirit through faith in Jesus. Love is a gift; it is not earned; it is not owed to me. Once these thoughts were put into place my fear of going to Hell went away. Thank you June, Dan, and Saint Paul for this breathe of fresh air.

Being Led by the Spirit:

How do we by the Spirit put to death the miss deeds of the flesh? When we sense a lack of love or good fruit towards others in our lives, we ought eventually to go to God in prayer asking Him where we went wrong (what led up to the kaka)... and the Holy Spirit will show us (sometimes immediately; other times we need to practice patience until He shows us the block)... then in response to the Spirit's discernment we will either repent in faith from sin with the Spirit's help (also asking for forgiveness where necessary) and find life, or we will be asked to replace lies with truth in our beliefs. We might also be called to jettison unreasonable fears either that we have immediate control over and can dismiss, or otherwise the Holy Spirit will point out what lies are motivating those fears. Once the lies are brought into the light we move into the light where there is freedom. The word of God doesn't yield barren fields. We are called to bear much good fruit.

I have talked to the Holy Spirit and He has given me a mental image of a war ship made of metal painted gray with many guns meant for war. He further said that it represents my fears. Those fears are BIG (because the boat is humungous) so they must be unreasonable. Fear produces cowardice-ness. Perfect Love casts out all fear. Fear is removed by renewing the mind with the word of God.

Today, on Monday, June 27, 2011 I was reading the book of Romans and felt chains of fear fall off of me. The armored gray ship is gone. I am free to love. Thank you Holy Trinity! Thank you Saint Paul!

A Dose Of More Humility:

Today, Saturday, July 2, 2011, I was thinking how some people can be so defective to the point where I would get all torn up inside about them. Then the thought came to me: "Yeah... you have just as many things wrong with you as anybody else." That was

humbling. I have known for some time that the Holy Spirit is in charge of convicting others not me. But every now and then I would be very tempted to “humble” other people, when I knew quiet well that God asked me to humble myself not my neighbor. This thought: “Yeah you have just as many things wrong with you as anybody else” has helped me see others with more humility. Thank you Holy Spirit for your gifts of love!

Happiness:

Some say that we all want the same thing. Yes: we all want happiness. But we are all divided on how to get that happiness. Some seek happiness by getting things; and some seek happiness by giving things. The former is not always wrong. We all like to get things... but only a few people like to really give. I know that I am at the crossroads in my life. Do I seek for more things to make me happy, or do I look for things that will make others happy? I know that if I seek to get stuff it never ultimately satisfies. But when I give I am so happy. However I find that there is still a lot of fear within me. Often I give in response to fear. I guess I need to pray about it and deal with it when it comes up. Perfect love casts out all fear. Amen, and Amen! Thank you Jesus for bringing me here. It is much better than ever before.

Dealing With Self Pity:

Whenever I felt that others might reject me because of my selfishness or my many other moral failings, I would fall into a dramatic battering of myself over the head and wallowing in sad self-pity. These feelings of sadness were so deep and intense (along with my self-loathing) that I became dependent on others to nudge me out of such moods. I would want somebody who was sympathetic, gentle and non-judgmental to build up my faith and happiness. But that is not what I needed. What I needed was somebody who would say, “No!” to my selfish, self-pity focused, and insecure maneuvers. Thankfully God gave me a wife who would not put up with this shit of mine. She calls me to be strong, not wallowing in my weakness rooted in pride and selfishness. Thank you Sophie for your people smarts!

Realizing this I had some major renouncing to do of believing the many lies from evil spirits who loved to nurse my self-pity rooted in my selfishness; and also I had to repent in faith from my selfishness. This brought more joy to me... along with granting me a better attitude of love. After I renounced the lies I invited the Holy Spirit into those places where I moped or sulked about life’s unfairness and He came with joy.

(Tuesday, July 6, 2011): Another Step From Judgment To Grace:

It seems that every time I discover a root within me that has led to me being judgmental I find freedom for brief periods after the root is dealt with, only for more roots to surface with more chaos and brokenness to come along.

At the heart of this dilemma for me has been my view of God’s image. Is God a ruthless, punitive, angry, anal, hateful, and demanding Judge that withholds His love from those who sin?

I surely struggled to view others graciously, and found it hard to see others without bringing Hell, sin and judgment into the equation. When I saw others sinning in grave or mortal ways I felt judgment rise within me instead of love and grace. Because I saw them as threats to life or passage to heaven... and I wanted to remain loyal to a false image of God who seemed to reject sinners. Anyone who has read the Gospels knows

that Jesus loves sinners. Boy was my theology out of whack.

I now realize more firmly that when people reject God they cut themselves off from God because God respects their boundaries and choices. God does not cut Himself off from them. God is LOVE, not hatred. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that the world might not perish but have Eternal life through Him. God gives Himself for all, and to all... and ultimately gives to each what they desire. Therefore we need to watch what we desire.

God loves us independently of what we do: this is called unconditional love. God loves because He is LOVE. Hell is cutting our selves off from His love. We are called to love others unconditionally; not hold back our love when they do stuff that displeases God or us. That has been nearly impossible for me to do for such a long time with only brief interruptions here and there. Because I saw sin as punishable, and because I wrongly saw God removing His love from those who sinned; I naturally did the same to others even though I did not want to. I wanted to know for a very long time why I fell into such dire straights and asked God to heal me... but it took a very long time to get to this point in my journey.

Getting the "law" versus "grace" relationship right in my mind has taken a great weight off my shoulders. Getting the Heaven/Hell/Judgment/Grace relationships right have taken more weight off my shoulders. Thank you Mom, June, Jeff VanVonderen, and Saint Paul for getting me to where I am now walking not to mention all those countless others who have played a role in me getting through to love. I still have schizophrenia... and I still need to learn plenty in this life... so I haven't arrived... but I am persuaded that God will complete the work that He began in me so very long ago. Praise you Jesus!!!

Priorities:

For such a long time I have strived to love by always aiming for the ability to love. I now realize that much of what I did to get where I am is good... but I now need to not think of love as some future destination, but something I can practice day to day where I am planted. Instead of striving to love I need to relax and let God do His work in and through faith in Him. I find it interesting that after a discussion on what the greatest commandment is, Jesus tells the story about the Good Samaritan. He was a normal man who went about his every day business but when there was a call for help nearby he knew his priorities. He cared for those in need. Jesus could have spoken about going to foreign lands and preaching the Gospel to millions if not billions of people and dying a heroic death in such causes. But He seems to indicate that God is just as happy with the little things we do. He cares for everyone.

Before Jesus started His earthly ministry. His disciples heard God the Father say: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."¹² Since we are sisters and brothers of Jesus, God must look at us in the same way because we too are His children. I therefore don't have to put out with all sorts of good deeds to please God. My acceptance comes because Jesus died on the cross for me. He loves me because He is love. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to me through faith. I abide in Jesus by believing in Him. When I abide in Jesus the fruits of the Spirit become a reality in my life; not by

¹² Matthew 3:17, NRSV

striving or putting forth great efforts to keep or conform to a written law or code. Jesus is the way to love. Not some hidden principles, maxims, or truths. Relationship with God is key to loving others: by walking in His light through faith, having conversations with Him, listening to Him, asking Him questions, weighing what I hear, trusting Him with my issues and His promises, making my desires and anxieties known to Him, making requests, resting in Him and letting Him dwell in me: such is relationship with God. Walking by faith in Jesus will lead to plenty of good fruit. That fruit will bring God much glory. Amen and Amen! Thank you Holy Trinity. I am in your debt forever... and gladly so! Where there is fruit there is joy. And the joy from the Lord is our strength.

Genuine Thankfulness Versus A Fabrication:

Contrived thankfulness isn't thankfulness at all. If we conjure up feelings and call them thankfulness when they actually come from fear of punishment or a belief that thankfulness is expected to make us righteous or save us then the labels of thankfulness for those feelings are a complete bunk, a fabrication, a bondage to darkness, and a lie. God does not demand our thankfulness. Thankfulness flows naturally when we see good things come our way through the thoughtfulness, care, and love of God or others. People who are fabricating a feeling of thankfulness as a condition to fulfill righteousness have sour religion. They are robbing themselves of true joy. And since there is strength in joy, they miss out in the strength department too because the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Demanding thankfulness from a person for deeds done for the person is doomed to create strife, anger, rejection, judgments and a hard heart. True love keeps no record of wrongs, cares for those who have no manners, or have a sense of entitlement. We can't give what we have never been given.

So should we only be thankful when things are great?

Being grateful to God even when things aren't easy, when they are difficult or are dark is requested by Him because He knows there is strength in this joy-focused attitude. What is the root or source of joy for us when things aren't going our way? Learning new truths, seeing others with clearer eyes, and seeing myself more and more as being in need of God's Spirit. God does not waste suffering... so gratefulness towards God for future benefits that come from our sufferings is the most powerful motivator of joy. Such joy destroys self-pity!

Not Keeping A Record Of Wrongs:

In my life I have done some pretty horrible things. I have mentioned many of them in this narrative, but there are some private sins that I just don't want to share with anyone. God knows about them very well. But since Jesus said, "For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light."¹³ I was very scared and dreaded what other people would think of me if they found out all that I did in the past. I thought what Jesus said had to do with my hidden sins but this is thankfully not in the context of this sentence. If it did have to do with our sins then it would contradict the New Testament Scripture which says: "love keeps no record of wrongs" found in the chapter of First Corinthians 13. I now realize the context

¹³ Luke 8:17 NRSV

of the above quote. Here is the context:

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.¹⁴

Thanks to a footnote found in my NIV Bible I now realize that the context has to do with the Light of the Gospel being revealed: the Good News; and that it will be revealed to all eventually and won't remain hidden forever. And because it has been revealed to me I need to consider how I listen to it in commitment, thought, and deed.

I know that in my Church: when a Priest hears a confession he is not allowed to reveal the identity of the confessor or share anything he has learned to others from the confessor, so that the confessor may remain anonymous. There are very good reason for this; one being that the policy curtails gossip which hurts people. God is not into hurting others.

Moreover in the New Testament we are encouraged to focus on whatever is good:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.¹⁵

How can one rejoice when one is dreading judgments, embarrassments, and shame? When God forgives us we have nothing to fear: He has removed our sins as far away as the East is from the West. Replacing the word “love” in the First Corinthians 13:4-7 with “God” because God is Love is most reassuring:

God is patient, God is kind. God does not envy, God does not boast, God is not proud. *God does not dishonor others*, God is not self-seeking, God is not easily angered, *God keeps no record of wrongs*. God does not delight

¹⁴ Luke 8:16-18

¹⁵ Philippians 4:4-9, NRSV

in evil but rejoices with the truth. *God always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*¹⁶

The words that really speak to me are: “[God] does not dishonor”, “[God] keeps no record of wrongs” and “[God] protects.”

At the bottom of this was that I want to avoid being shamed now, on judgment day, or thereafter. A quick computer search of the word “shame” just in the Psalms will reveal that God does not shame His children.¹⁷

In my life I have done some pretty horrible things. I have mentioned many of them in this narrative, but there are some private sins that I just don’t want to share with anyone. And through this struggle I realized that no one wants to be shamed. Because I struggled so much to fight off the idea that God might tell others my private sins... I realized that a part of me believed that under the right conditions it maybe OK for me to tell others private sins of those I know. When I realized that this was wrong... The thought came to me: “Do to others as you want them to do to you.” If I don’t want to be shamed then I can’t go around shaming others. A much needed difficult lesson for me to learn. Satan is the accuser of the brethren not God.

My friend Dan commented:

Love does not desire fear nor shame; it always desires to look you in the eye and give you a great big hug and then help you move on with a smile on your face and (hopefully) a renewed spring in your step.

I feel a change of attitude taking place within me in how I approach others. Thank you sisters and brothers in Christ! Thank you Holy Trinity!

I now have peace. How long will this last? I don’t know...

Thank you Jesus for relieving my fears and continuing to do your work within me, because you love me.

Flotsam & Jetsam:

After awhile I felt more and more confused, more in the power of the evil one. My wife who is quite wise told me to leave my self-help books alone because I already have what it takes to get healthy within me. Thankfully I listened to my wife and began to slowly feel more and more normal as the days progressed. The above quote from my friend Dan drew me... and slowly I moved out of the darkness. I began to think differently. For the first time I wanted people to be happy... a BIG change from wanting them to make me happy by doing what I wanted. To my surprise there is joy in this frame of mind. Thank you Jesus for my wonderful wife; thank you Sophie!

Un-Grace Doesn’t Produce Grace:

Holding onto sin prevents God from giving us His empowering presence. By that I mean His grace. Sure He tolerates our bad behaviors, and treats us with His love despite our many sins and so is graceful towards us even when we don’t deserve it (we never do).

¹⁶ NIV

¹⁷ Cf. Psalms 22:5; 34:5; 37:19; 53:5 & 119:46 NRSV

There are areas in my life where I feel great shame. So much so that I am desperate enough to sin: i.e. lie, deceive, protect, and use any magic to cover up what I perceive to be my shame. Lord God what do I need to do to conquer this problem area? It is such a thorn, such a weight to carry.

I spoke to God about it... and I sense Him saying that part of the problem is that I threaten un-forgiveness towards myself from myself as an attempt to kill shame-based behaviors. I think that this is a key to overcoming shameful actions. God can't forgive those who refuse to forgive. God can't forgive the proud. God gives grace to the humble; but opposes the proud. But when we are open to grace through faith... then God's grace flows powerfully through us. I can't use un-grace on myself to motivate acceptable behavior in my eyes and expect God's grace to flow to me in that area. Thank you Lord Jesus for this insight! I am grateful for all your many benefits!

Authority & Leadership:

I now realize that every disagreement with others in no way means my humanity, dignity, respect, authority, or leadership is being brought into question. Just because somebody refuses to do what I want does not mean that they disrespect me or are evil... they might only disagree with what I want or don't want done on practical, moral or philosophical grounds. They have that right. A leader respects each person that they lead. A leader is one who deals in resolving disputes for the greater good. Often there can be very many disputes and that does not necessarily bring into dispute good leadership. Good leaders are intended to be servants for the greater good. They might not be the best at everything, but they often know how to get the best out of everyone they lead. That does not mean they control their followers. Control or manipulation is not the same as obedience.

Those who are motivated by the lie that unity is achieved through hatred of others will always suspect (wonder about their loyalty; and feel uneasy about) those they are attempting to lead. Those who follow or lead according to hatred never achieve love. They never feel truly close to each other, they are never united, and never become one with each other. They wander around aimlessly achieving nothing but hurt. They are never truly happy.

If they are attempting to lead others with bad energy they will very well expect their followers to have undying loyalty... but they never believe it... even after many tests... always more is required. Leading for the sake of leading is selfish and is bad energy. Leading because you want the best for your followers is the best reason to lead. If you attempt to manipulate your followers to follow you then that is bad energy. If you attempt to lead and create unity by focusing or basing your unity on the hatred of a person or group of persons then that leadership is based on bad energy.

Realizing these truths or dynamics and rejecting evil and living by love brings freedom not bondage.

Near the beginning of my journey, I recalled the time in my teens when I wanted to be a leader in the Scout Movement. I now know I wanted power back then. A true leader seeks the health, happiness, and wholeness of her or his followers. People who seek power care very little for the wellbeing of their followers. They prefer position. They want to be first. They love to order around those under them. They don't love those in

their care. Everything is done out of dominance, manipulation, or hatred. Some people spot very quickly this negative energy in others if they have it and immediately stand up to it. While others look pass it and see the goodness there too. I guess we are all different. I am grateful for those who spotted my controlling tendencies and stood up to me and also for those who looked by it and saw some good within me too and loved me anyways. Those who spotted it in me let me know something was wrong, something I needed to be told. Whereas those people who accepted me anyways gave me hope and reminded me that my true identity is as a child of God. Anyone can see that good people often do bad things while bad people often do good things. No one is wholly evil in the absolute sense. Do you want to know what evil is? Acts are the only things that can truly be evil; not persons. Why because we are all stamped with the image of God. God does not create evil, only good. God does not create junk. Every person created by God was intended by God to bear God's image and to eventually be in fellowship with God. That is the destiny God predestined for us, but many reject Him.

For most of my life I was compulsively drawn to see my enemies as worthy of my hared. I usually hardened my heart towards those I did not like. I saw them as evil because I deemed them not loyal to me; my god, or my causes. If they rejected me I would hate them. Because I saw them as evil it reinforced my hatred for them. For a long time I did not know that this was in me. But later on I knew that my attitudes were wrong but perplexed as how to deal with them... this mess was so well rooted and ingrained in my mind that I did not know why I did what I did and how it worked; but I knew that Jesus could free me from this evil growth within me. The road to achieving the goal of freedom was long and progress along it was slow. If I never persevered I would never have understood it and have a fighting chance to conquered it with God's help through my faith in Jesus.

Because of my schizophrenia, and also because I thought this bad way in my mind and heart for such a long time... I have a tendency to revert back to this unwholesome energy. Being mindful and open to God's Spirit warning and directing me to repent from this evil is my goal to follow. I realize that I can't go through life trying to not do stuff... I need to go through life focused on bearing good fruit. Fruit that Jesus commissioned me to bear. Scripture clearly states that I need to renew my mind. This is a process that will never be finished in this life. Thank you Jesus for bringing me this far! Thank you for loving me Father God! And thanks Holy Spirit for never abandoning me!

Today on Tuesday, August 2, 2011 I had a different opinion than another person on a practical matter, but I was able to dialogue without feeling fear, without being harsh in speech, and actually getting to an agreement where we both were happy. Gee, life is getting good! Thank you Lord God for enriching my life and helping me to enrich those I am meeting in my journey in ways not possible until now!

What did I learn today August 10, 2011?

People who attempt to lead through dark energy take everyone's good advice as a threat to their leadership and self-esteem. Being able to take good advice is a sign of humility. Proud people can't take good advice.

Denying or underplaying another person's discomfort, compassion, caring, worrying, gentleness, concerns, opinions, wants, or desires is a sign of having hardened one's heart. Making the decision to care for all people's sufferings or to tolerate all people's stances one issue at a time is key. I can do this with Jesus' help who is the only way (for those who have either accepted Him or rejected Him) to becoming an authentic compassionate, caring, humble and helpful person.

Wanting others: Any person or any pets to fit into one's boxes is rooted in being selfish and results in attempts to control, and manipulate subjects of interests. Slowly conquering the controlling spirit by saying no to it with Jesus help and leading is key to being set free and setting others free.

How does one achieve such high ideals? Faith in Jesus, and not focusing on rules.

Faith & knowing

Looking for details that one believes are there and aren't actually there will actually keep one from seeing the obvious when attempting to learn or understand something new. When this obsession is all that happens then it is a learning disability or at the very least a bad strategy. Looking for that invisible knowledge on which to base and understand new concepts is doomed to failure if the new concepts are simple and stare one right in the face. I need to abandon this pattern of thinking. I know that this began when I began my transfer from the Faculty of Education to the Faculty of Science at the U of A. I now know I was missing a solid foundation in real mathematic theory back then because of where I began my studies and I struggled much to find that foundation. I was attempting to re-invent the mathematical wheel. This strategy found it's way into other areas in my life. Why did this happen? Because I thought I could get to the unknown by arguing from known facts I only needed to uncover that still eluded me. This can be a valid strategy, but when taken to extremes spells defeat. This sort of extreme-strategy lends it self to conspiracy theories and can blind one to what is obvious to others. This bad strategy steals one's common sense... it is best to jettison this strategy ASAP.

Looking too close to things keeps us from gaining proper perspective... perspective that allows understanding to grow between the details. Being too detail-focused instead of perspective-focused can rob one from understanding concepts learning new ideas and accomplishing tasks both simple and complex. Knowing when to be detailed focused and big picture focused is key to success. This is what I am now aiming to learn.

Sometimes:

When somebody does a wrong against us the prudent thing to do is say we don't like it and would like it if it is no longer done. Instead of telling them "it was a moral wrong; that it is a sin; that it is evil; that needs to be repented from, and that they are going to Hell if it is not repented from." The latter quotation borders on judgment and condemnation not grace. The former strategy is grace orientated... And is done from kindness in a warm way. Jesus told us to not judge or condemn. The first way keeps us from judging or condemning others.

Territory Vs. Meekness:

People who don't want to look weak in their own eyes or seen so by others carry dark energy with them and so are territorial. They will have to humble themselves in order to practice meekness. This is done by being able to take good and bad advice for what it is

worth, to be teachable by all: the small; the young; beginners; lay people; amateurs, and non-professionals. People who crave authority or try to hold onto it can't practice meekness. Meek people want what is best for those they meet... they aren't focused on power struggles or poor self-esteem issues. Instead they give because they are unselfish. They aren't lazy and are willing to roll up their sleeves and help out in good causes. They aren't worried about position for they know they have worth even when other people act or say otherwise.

On Being First:

Yes... I wanted to be first in many ways early in my life. Who doesn't want to be first at something? It isn't necessarily a crime. Why do we hold competitions: in the ranks of professionals and amateurs: in academics, arts, and sports? Why do we compete with each other? Some do so from bad motives while others do so from good motives. A good motive can be: to improve, to grow, to achieve, and to become the best "myself" I can become.

I loved the number: "one" as a child and I remember seeing a rugby match on TV in South Africa shortly before we immigrated to Canada where I wanted the player with the number "1" jersey to be the best and really rooted for him.

Do I still want to be number one? In many ways: yes. Do I give others the nod to be number one? Sometimes: "yes" and some times: "no". Often in the past and for some time now I have noticed that those I have recognized to be first in something I often did become envious, critical, and judgmental towards them because of their achievements. In other words I have not loved them, and wanted their positions or ranks.

I now know that being number one is not always a bad thing. If we seek it more than anything else: including love then it has become an idol. I have no right to judge a person's motives one way or another. I don't know anyone's motives. I have no right to sniff out sin in other people's lives.

Those we compete with make us better than what we were unless we land up envying them.

I have also judged many people who have taken up leadership roles on their own initiatives. Being a leader is also a way in which we are somehow number one. I know that it is wrong for me to have judged any person who seeks leadership. Seeking leadership can be both good and bad; and motives can often be mixed.

Prayer: Dread Or Relief?

During my Dark Journey I would oscillate back and forth between intense burdened petitions and no prayer at all for others trying to avoid the burdens I felt. I did so because I felt it such a battle, such a negative weight, such an obligation to petition God on behalf of others. Moreover, my prayers took more of the form of tattletales. I would tell God what other people's sins were and ask Him to save them from them. I did not enjoy petitioning God for others in this way. God gradually showed me that it was up to Him to convict people of their sins; not me. God also began showing me that I need not focus on other people's sins in prayer or out of prayer. He knew all about them already. He wanted me to be "love" and "fruit" focused. He wanted me to see the good in others instead of sniffing out their dirty laundry. The former is grace focused whereas the latter is law focused. God showed me that I did not have to view prayer as a heavy burden to

carry and dread. I am His child after all, and He doesn't want me to carry heavy burdens by myself or at all. Prayer is speaking to God, and telling Him what is on my heart or mind. It is about giving Him my burdens... and the burdens of others. When petitionary prayers are done the burdens should land up in God's hands not mine. I should feel free! He is all powerful... not I! Prayer is giving up our burdens for others to God so that He can carry them and bring good out of them. Now when I feel a burden I carry it to God in prayer who relieves me from it. Prayer ought to be a relief... not a dread. What a relief for me. Now I can pray again... and it will be a joy instead of a gigantic weight! Thank you Sophie! Thank you Jesus! Thank you Brad! Thank you Mom and Dad!

To Care Or Not To Care?

A little while back God showed me that I ought not vow "un-forgiveness" towards myself if I were to shame myself in front of people. And I found freedom in that one area, only to lapse into bondage again not because of my vow, but because I decided to not care about that particular issue anymore. Why? Because: to stay "caring" was so difficult: it became a heavy burden. When I "cared" it was so easy to want to threaten un-forgiveness on myself... but if I "didn't care" then the burden seemed to disappear, but the unwanted behavior came back and that seemed like less of a burden to me. Now that I know how to pray more properly I can carry this burden of "caring for this issue" to the Lord in prayer. Thank you Lord Jesus! Amen!

Dealing With An Ugly Attitude:

Today (Saturday, September 10, 2011) I remembered going to a weekday Mass many years ago that I expected to last no more than a half hour. But when the Priest launched into a Liturgy that promised to last much too long for my liking my heart grew hard, black and angry. I never dealt with that dark attitude/anger back then. But today's homily at Mass had the theme: "resentments and forgiveness." And I realized after the homily that the same dark energy/or bad attitude was still within me. I also remember having the same attitude towards a Priest on a doctrinal/Church related practice that was resolved a long time ago. Fighting this dark energy of having to have others fall in line with my every whim or petty or anal likes or dislikes had been most uncomfortable for me for a very long time. But today I began my battle in earnest to deal with this dark energy. Yes I have been a very selfish person for as long as I can remember and God is slowly leading me to repent from it one thing or step at a time. Selfishness is a demonic stronghold in my life and bears the fruit of judgmental-ism, intolerance, abrasiveness and blackness. Today I was reminded again that if Jesus only had me to die for He would do so gladly. God deeply and compassionately loves me. Amen, and Amen!

Deserved Or Forgiven?

Many yeas ago I was visiting my brother in Alberta and we walked down to the local convenient store to buy something. On our way back home two intoxicated young men approached us. They had a bone to pick with my brother and they tried to intimidate and threaten us. Things got out of hand and a fight broke out between one of them and myself. I landed up breaking my thumb. Later on after I renewed my walk with Jesus I felt guilty for my part in the confrontation. I thought I deserved the injury and that it was God's way of teaching me a lesson. But now I know God has forgiven my part in the fight... and that God does not hold grudges; moreover He is forgiving, compassionate,

kind, not petty, and He wants to bless us. He wants to bring healing to all of us even if we think we deserve our injuries. As long as we think we deserve our injuries there is a BIG chance we won't have faith for healing. Thank you Jesus for leading me through the storms of life to this increase in peace. Amen, and Amen!

Supernatural Love Starts With Accepting The Truth Of God:

With each spiritual breakthrough (uncovering sin and repenting with Jesus' help) I would think that I'd finally won through to love. But then eventually each breakthrough would dry up. There is a place for repenting with God's help and I fully support this and will do so when it is required. But I know that so long as I see myself other than the way God sees me I will live out the dark image I perceive myself to be and not bear the good fruit that comes from Jesus. I have come to the conclusion that I have to believe what God says about me in the Bible and act out of that instead of the negativity rooted in and lies spoken to me by Satan's kingdom. For some time now whenever I saw myself falling short somehow, I'd say, "I guess I'm not abiding in Jesus". Or I'd only say: "I'm abiding in Jesus" when I saw good behavior. I was always looking for good fruit or more to the point whether I was obeying the rules. But the Bible says that so long as I believe in Jesus I am abiding in Him provided I am not in a state of mortal sin. I can't go by only what I see. I go by faith. Jesus said I am both salt and light in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said in John 15 that I am abiding in Him and I do so because I believe in Him. Saint Paul said that Jesus became sin (think mutilated) so that I could become the righteousness (think health and healed) of God. Point is: I can't let my position be determined by my actions: I need to let my actions be determined by my position that is a result of God's grace won by Jesus' life, death and resurrection. I am in the Kingdom of Light. I am seated up in Heaven with Jesus. I am a child of God. Jesus died for me. Jesus rose for me. Jesus loves me. I don't do good deeds or bear good fruit so I'll abide in the True Vine: Jesus. I abide in Jesus by believing in Him and so bear good fruit. I abide by faith in Jesus. I don't perform well or righteously so that I can earn a place in the True Vine or earn God's approval. Abiding is a gift through faith not earned by good works from the Law.

This approach is identity focused, not action focused. Actions do come from this approach: good actions plus plenty of peace, joy, confidence and self-esteem.

Friday, September 30, 2011: Moving Along:

As we gradually move from one stage of spiritual enlightenment to another, different battles will present themselves in each stage. Such battles strengthen us and so we grow in dependence on God if we fight and conquer them in His strength. There is only one-way to the Father: Jesus. Openness to Jesus, asking Him what He thinks about our problems... and listening to Him... not expecting instantaneous answers or solutions all the time but waiting for God to talk when we are in the right frame of mind. Right now I know I carry way too much stress within me at this time while at work and while at home. Should I do yoga? I like my dog walks Lord Jesus. I have learned a lot about control, freedom, leadership, learning, following and obedience through Mandela our dog. I just don't know how to slow down at work at this time. I am so stressed out and my body is feeling it: yes I am feeling it. Lord God I know that before I went off on that wild tangent a short time ago you were teaching me about being more selfless or less

selfish. I think that is where the battle lies within me. No matter how weak I feel right now in this area I think I need to re-focus my energies in this area. Yeah like seeking to make others happy.

Wisdom & PRIDE

Because of recent back problems I felt that perhaps God was trying to communicate with me through my pain. I then remembered a passage from Proverbs that seemed to promise health to my flesh and refreshment to my bones under certain conditions. And that is what I wanted, so I looked it up and found:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.
This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.¹⁸

I was surprised to see that God linked my pride with my poor and painful back (I am not incriminating anyone else just myself). With the Holy Spirit's help I realized that I still saw myself as wise and that I needed to deal a deathblow to it through repentance. Such repentance is not a one-time event. Fighting pride is a daily battle. I also realized that when I'm wise in my own eyes I become a pompous expert when it comes to everyone else's observable behavior too. When I see myself as wise I become critical and judgmental and hateful towards others on small stuff and big stuff too and I become petty, abusive, resentful, and devoid of peace within. This would describe me to a 'T' for a long time even though I repressed it not wanting to hurt others. I wanted to be gentle and meek... and felt very guilty about my hate filled attitudes but was at a loss on how to deal with it until I spoke to God about it today on Saturday October 1, 2011, and He gave me the above passage and insight. God is distant from the proud and near the humble. If I say I am humble I am proud, and when I say I am proud I am being humble: it is a paradox.

Focus:

Whatever you focus on can eat up your world... Focus on your blessings and you will have joy... Focus on your difficulties and you will have depression, darkness, worry, anxiety, stress, and all you will be thinking about is poor you: you will be full of self pity. You will give less and less of yourself to others... and be a poor witness for God's Kingdom. Thank you June for your encouragement! Amen, and Amen!

A Prayer Request:

I know that when it comes to having faith with other people's faith in God along with their commitment I flounder in weakness or plenty of doubt. Faith comes from you my God. Please grant me such faith so I can be fearless and assertive and encourage those

¹⁸ Proverbs 3:5-8

you want me to feed like sheep. I ask for this in Jesus' name, amen. I know that I have questioned the sincerity and truth and character of most people I met as I grew up starting after I was rejected by others. I was a scoffer who criticized others behind their backs accusing them of evil and vain imaginings, motives, goals and activity. Lord God I am sorry for my pompous attitudes, my jaded, and cynical out looks towards those I meet. Please restore your image within me in Jesus' name I pray oh God... Amen & Amen! Thank you oh beloved God. I now realize that I did what I did out of rejection, hurt, and pride... Thinking I was better than those who excluded me. Forgive me Lord God, and I now forgive in Jesus name all those people who deliberately or fictionally rejected me as I grew up. And I embrace that pain and offer it up to you to heal. Indeed, I landed up doing what I accused others of doing... I was a hypocrite.

Thank you Lord Jesus for loving me and not giving up on me like I did so many times. A true leader can believe in the goodness, ability, and completion of tasks of those under their authority. Therefore they can encourage, hearten, spur, develop, and nurture others who they are meant to lead. Such leaders project the right kind of energy and those under their care feel it and follow it.

A big part of repairing this attitude is to be able to trust others again or for the first time. I remember being at the pool next to our house in South Africa and not trusting my Dad when he threw me up in the air while in the water. I have not been a very trusting person most of my life... I was a person of very little faith. Not trusting others destroys intimacy. It weakens relationships. It steals from what they can be, and it takes away from the building up that healthy community brings to its members.

Vowing not to trust needs to be replaced by trust. Lord God I renounce my distrust of others in Jesus' name. But who does one trust? The ones whom my mind and gut informed by the Holy Spirit say I should trust.

This trust also has to do with me trusting Jesus, the Church, and the Bible. If I whole heartedly trust these, then I won't be afraid of sharing what I believe about them with others, and when disagreements on doctrine occur I won't be afraid of pulling out all the reasons I believe what I believe. But love ought to be my goal; not being right. I am committed to what I believe, and I don't need others to believe what I do in order for me to love them.

Not wanting to trust other people's opinions or faiths or beliefs will hamper my trust in my own beliefs... because I am ultimately dependent on other people's input for much of what I believe.

Moreover, if I doubt so much so strongly (lacking trust) I will start to doubt my senses, my thinking, my memory, my identity, my goals, and my direction? And when I can't trust what's coming at me then I may land up not being able to latch onto much stuff, ideas, messages, memories, and commitments that well. And there is more:

More Good Fruit:

I now realize that when I gave up my trust in others I also lost my compassion for them. I became unable to sympathize or empathize with them cause I didn't trust anyone anymore. I treated them more like enemies than friends.

When one vows to not trust... one gets suspicious about others and has difficulty seeing the best in others.

In giving up my vow to not trust I gained back my ability to feel compassion, empathize, and sympathize with others. I also find that I relate on a deeper level with others now, and that ought not be surprising, and I am very grateful for this. Thank you Lord my God.

However:

Yes... however I find that when I do make a judgment (harden my heart towards somebody such a celebrity, a representative of a visible minority, etc....) without realizing the gravity of what I have done, I get really insecure around others thinking that they are judging me... when in reality I am the one who can't stop judging, I am hard on myself, and I am just a general mess. When this happens the light within me recedes, my eyes grow evil, I am unable to love, and I feel like a marvelous wreck or a gutted robot.

Monday, November 7, 2011:

I wish I had of wanted somebody to confide in when I was rejected at such a young age by my peers. I know my reaction to being rejected did get fueled in part by selfishness, pride, insecurity, lack of trust, and shallowness that got nursed into a grudge, and a cynical and judgmental attitude towards others. I had lost faith in others, and became a pouter who was a coward when it came to making requests from others for fear of further rejection. I could have gone to my Dad, Mom, or even my God... but my pride prevented me. I now know that being rejected by others does hurt, and that there are healthy ways of dealing with it. I just did not follow those healthy ways back then.

But I now know that I can turn to those healthy ways:

Lord God please come and live in my heart (wherever there is emptiness) in new ways: Please live in me, saturate my dryness, make yourself felt, be felt as a presence, be the source of goodness in me, the Light by which I live, move, work, play, and rest in. Direct my path, and keep me devoted to your plans for good, meaning, hope, and prosperity. Thank you Lord Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit. Amen, and amen!

Saturday, November 12, 2011:

Today is the start to a new era in my spiritual discernment. I am realizing just how selfish I was and have been all this time without realizing or aware of much of it. I know now that when I am difficult, high maintenance, irritable, (on the edge of) pouting, and disappointed to the point of sulking, then I am definitely seeking my own happiness above all else, and I am being selfish. Thing is I just wasn't aware of the roots... but now thanks to God I see the roots and they are being yanked out of my heart/mind... cause I have the power to say no to them for the first time in a long time. Thank you Father God, Lord Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit! How does one put an end to self-seeking? Desire to make others happy before making one-self happy. Freedom from self is freedom from sin.

A New Approach:

No more focusing on rigid systematic theology by me (such is the case for theologians, and academics...). No more aiming for the perfect answers, just shooting from the hip into the heart with clumsy language. Nothing meant to impress, but only to bless.

Still Struggling With Schizophrenia:

There are often times where for even for a few hours I experience some peace. But there are often times when I am under dire dark demonic attacks through my

schizophrenia. People without schizophrenia may think I'm whacked out of my mind in reading stuff from this Website. But at this stage... truths enshrined in the Scriptures and Sacred Tradition and taught by the Church are under violent and sinister attacks in my mind. The force of their attack is to say: "See you hold this and that to be true... but look you don't have love for those who are different (just examine your feelings). Therefore you need to jettison those supposed truths because they don't lead to love." But I have come this far... I have seen the Father's heart... and no demon through my schizophrenia can make me renounce what God has taught me.

Thursday, November 17, 2011

Yes I have made progress thus far in my spiritual walk. Thank you Father God. Not everything is squandered. Yesterday I realized that not all the emotions, feelings, and thoughts that go through my head belong to my true self (as compared to a healthy person who has no schizophrenia). For me many of the emotions, thoughts and feelings in my head belong to demons and they only have power because there are strongholds in my mind/heart that resonate with them. These thoughts and emotions or feelings are strongest (most threatening) when I think they have and an acceptable basis in reality. How do I get to this place of intensified deception and danger? I get there when I attempt to live out of my emotions/feelings in a certain way, not by being truth led by the Holy Spirit. This way is motivated by me seeking to feel good (to feel pleasure, and happiness) above all else. For a healthy person living out of emotions at one time or another may be acceptable... but for me it is a BIG mistake, a BAD strategy, and a path to becoming a slave to lie after lie that leads away from Jesus. Living out of feelings to feel good leads to psychosis because of my schizophrenia.

This dynamic, this situation, this place where I find myself is not an easy cross to carry. But I accept it now believing that Jesus will use it to make me strong and more loving instead of being weak at acts of love.

The Peace Of God:

Early on during my Dark Journey I experience the Holy Spirit's presence as He attempted to calm my fears. Later on there were times when God revealed Himself to me in some un-mistakably awesome ways. But as I continued to get healthier I wondered if I'd recognize God's presence when it came... and I also wondered when that would be. Then on Wednesday, November 23, 2011 I heard Brad Jersak talk a bit about experiencing God. I now realize that the peace I do feel is from God... and when God manifests Himself in other ways... that is His business. Either way I am not getting the short end of the stick. Thank you Lord God for the peace I do feel. Amen, and Amen!

Emotions & Their Roots (Sunday, November 27, 11):

In the past little while with God's help I have been putting names to certain roots or foundations behind the huge (sad, melancholy, negative, or sorrowful) emotions I felt, that for a long time overwhelmed and ruled over me. I can now see my pouting rooted in my selfishness, jealousy, fear of rejection, and pride. I also tend to feel disrespected when I'm in conflict with others even when I shouldn't be. I am conquering (with Jesus' help) the impact these roots and emotions have on the decisions and commitments I am now making. I know that when I feel insecure or unwanted and am wallowing in it... others distances them selves from me. Whereas when I go by faith, ignore and refrain

from the wallowing and pouting (and therefore say no to those weak and evil roots) others are drawn to me. Many of the negative emotions I feel these days are overwhelming (because I focused on them so much in the past and so they grew and grew with their roots and negativity and so I eventually tried to stuff or repress them). I also begin to see that because I was repressing so many negative emotions within myself I did not want to feel other people's sad or negative emotions. But as I begin to explore my feelings' nuances (and seeing what is behind them) I am growing in strength, discernment, and power over them because the truth sets us free just like Jesus said it does. I sure have a long ways to go! Amen and Amen!

There was a lot of sad music I loved to listen to for so many years. But as time wore on I could no longer relate to or enjoy that particular music as before. I now believe that God wants me to celebrate that music on a different foundation or level. Not one based on self-pity, jealousy, anger, selfishness, or fear and pride. Also when I listened to music in the past it was always about ME. Now I know it can be about anyone. Thank you Lord God for these insights... I love you very much because you first loved me!

Emotions Continued (Monday, November 28, 2011):

There is not just one generic kind of sadness. There are sadness-es that are based in pouting the loss of selfish desires when it comes to certain opportunities, goals or accomplishments. Then there are sadness-es that are legitimate... ones based in justices being denied. The former will lead to addictions when not dealt with correctly because we weren't made to experience sadness day in and day out. That sadness requires relief. Either the relief comes from repenting from our selfishness (having our own ways) or we nurse them with addictions. As for legitimate sadness, if we get angry without resolving it, then that will turn into an addiction too unless we forgive the perpetrators for their injustices.

If this reasoning is correct then my remaining addictions are on their way to being dead. I don't know but perhaps I need to go back and repent in faith from all my current to past selfish actions, selfish decisions, selfish desires and selfish commitments. At least I hope that will be the case! Perhaps working the Twelve Steps in this light will help? Thank you Lord God for sticking by me through my trials. Amen, and Amen!

Repenting From Evil In The Heart:

Genetically we aren't evil. Yet evil is in us in the form of darkness in our hearts. We can do good because God has put goodness in our hearts and we do evil because there is evil stored in our hearts too. What does this evil look like? It is darkness, a lack of light, or it is a selfish vacuum... and although it promises happiness (through getting things) its promises are empty. It is a constant sustainer of anger or sadness that leads to depression and addictions. Selfish commitments made in the past need to be repented from with faith in Jesus. Recognizing our selfishness for what it is is very important and repenting from it in faith one obstacle at a time will bring freedom to love and generosity to all. This repenting from anger and selfishness will bring joy and freedom from sadness/depression and addictions. I am finding this to be true in my life.

Judging:

I am finding that as I deal with my selfishness I am less judgmental. Thank God. But I still have a long ways to go. I still fall into judging others from what I call aggressive Religions

(as if mine isn't). The only strength I find is the story about the woman caught in adultery that Jesus tells her accusers: If you are without sin you may throw the first stone. Boy does this convict me. Jesus said for us to not judge or condemn. We are to treat aliens the way we want to be treated.

Rejection:

Today (Tuesday, December 6, 2011) I realized that I am not being rejected just because my message is being rejected. There is a BIG difference. When I interpret another's anger as rejection of me I am less likely to confront them... I will feel weak... and I will never be assertive... and I will walk around as a lame animal. Therefore the energy I give off will make people think they can run over me. I will be insecure, and I'll get trampled over, and never have as deep relationships as I could. I'll do things out of fear of being rejected instead of wanting to only bless others. I have gone through all of this over and over again. Thank God it has come to an end!

Super-Natural VS. Natural Sight:

I need to accept the following words spoken by Jesus:

'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.¹⁹

I need to because they are so counter-intuitive. My mind has embraced an eye of an eye and a tooth for a tooth mentality for such a long time... that it needs to be re-programmed. I can't do this by myself, but I know I can do so with Jesus' help. Amen! If I don't embrace this attitude I become territorial, judgmental, petty, and legalistic. I don't understand this saying from Jesus in my natural self. It only makes sense when I embrace it with faith, because if I don't then I am not able to love others at all.

Attitude:

Focusing on negative stuff dries up joy. Drying up joy means drying up strength and hope. Drying up strength and hope dries up love. Hence negativity dries up love. Negativity comes from the devil and his demons. Putting on the Helmet of Salvation does not only have to do with going to Heaven eventually, but it has to also do with Jesus not abandoning us in the here and now, in the past, and in the future because He did not abandon us during His Passion. Therefore putting off negativity is key to living the abundant life.

I am realizing that I did decide a really long time ago that I would only be happy when I am able to and actually loving people like God promised me so many years ago. That means I disregarded for some time all that God has done for me and will do for me. It also means that I have minimized the things others have done for me with the motive to make me happy. I guess I need to get this straightened out. Jesus is the Good News. I used to celebrate Him... and I will celebrate Him from now on. I am certain that there is

¹⁹ Matthew 5: 38-42, NRSV

not one lonesome maxim that will bring happiness all by itself. I guess I need to be open to listening to God and making requests as are wanted and needed. Negative stuff has its origin in the dark side. God's wish is for me to be happy; whereas Satan wants me to feel horrible to the point of self-loathing.

Rejection & Love

Fears of being abandoned can nudge us to making the decision to not love, not desire, or get attached to the person(s) we are in relationship with in the hope of not getting hurt. The only way to dissolve the insecurity is to go into danger. That means to abandon vows to not trust and to put up walls, and instead to love more deeply... In loving deeper we will feel pain when we are ever rejected... But those who reject us will know there wasn't anything lacking in our love. Surprisingly... Fear of rejection spawns rejection; whereas commitment to love creates security. Perfect love casts out all fear.

Learning A Hard Lesson:

Going through the above cleansing there were millions of times that things seemed to be going backwards. But I persevered anyways in faith with Jesus' help. So even when things seemed to be going backwards I now know God was doing His work within me.