

Why we sin when we know so much. Part 2

By John Coe

Or she might have said you know, "John, I haven't been watching the checkbook. We have no money. It's all gone or I ruined the car. We need to pray." And while she's praying, John's didn't have... Have you even had one of those prayer times? [Frustrated sound effect] And the prayers didn't really long [breath in] STOP IT GRETA. STOP IT. YOU PRAY, I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF THE PROBLEM. I'M GANNE GET A CHECK BOOK.

Well you know cause something is going on in John. John starting to leak. Something happened in the environment. Right, here's the stimulus. No money, Car problem. Well here John, John is, trust and obey. Trust and obey. God is Good [whistling], and then all of a sudden Greta just says one sentence, air. I'm leaking, the I'm the nuclear reactor is on the move. And whether I like it or not. It's out, there is worry. It might even move to a little bit of anger, frustration. Isn't it amazing in a moment I wasn't, I wasn't coming home saying you know I want to worry tonight. I want to get angry with Greta, I want to get bugged. I hope there's something at home just ready to stir the pot. I'm coming home and you know what I desire. I hope everything's fine. Now, you'll have to ponder that later we're going to ponder that. That, that's not the best prayer, because that's the desire to control all the stimuli in the environment and God is the one who controls that, but this stuff up. And you know what's going on and John I know, I know I'm just a little bit of this. I know some of the deep beliefs in John and I know some of the deep desires that are moving in John's heart. And here's one of them.

This is this is the part of me the way John Coe has become, character logically. Part of my deep belief structure and deep desires is this dog-gone-it, when things are really bad no one gives a rip but me and I've got to take life of my own hand and make it work. That's what's going

on. That's why while Greta is praying really long, STOP IT GRETA, I WANT TO GET TO THE PROBLEM.

Now, I have another friend that I know very well, about my age, he would be the very opposite. Similar problems with worry, but whole different deep belief structure and deep desire structure that make up this sin habit. If he found out these bad things happened you know he might do. He was front would be like this [dramatic sigh] oh babe, can you take care of it. And then he would go and watch TV. Because in his deep there was just another set of structures that says something like this. Someone's crapped on me one more time. Someone's crapping and I can't take it anymore. Someone has to rescue me. I'm going to go escape. I don't know all of the sin vices of your heart, but again if I could follow you around for three days I would discover probably about four to six of them. Four to six pockets, these are these places of the heart these places that in our heart we say don't go in. I don't want to go in, I don't like being in there. I don't like seeing what it is. Yuck. And so when it comes out, it's Bleh

And we confess it and you know it doesn't go away. It's big and so the second the second point was the degree to which you have a hidden heart of negative beliefs and feelings that you have not dealt with. You have not gone in there with the Spirit to really open, is the degree to which they are in control of you and me. One of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirits is self-control and one of the Spirits fruits is that that we are in control of the self. Well right now I'm not in control. The stuff just coming out and as long as the stimulus is good, we can keep the hatches buttoned up, but just put a negative stimulus anger, envy, jealous, worry. So I say in the third point and this is crucial and we'll we'll take a break after this.

Thus most Christians that I know, that I'm around do not intend to sin, rather they just leak. And I say that, that's that's a powerful word for me. Because I say that meaning not that

they're not responsible for it, but it's worse than that. These are now characterological structures in the heart that all you have to do is have the certain stimulus and environment and that stuff comes out. It has a tendency because see these these habits of sin now are what we call dispositions. You know what a disposition is? It's a tendency to act a certain way in certain conditions. For Paul this is the slavery of sin. This is the emphasis of how sins of the heart control us beyond our good intentions. I don't want to eat the cake, I don't need the cake, I don't want the cake.

There's a whole other habit there because there's a deep belief I know and some of them that know when I'm lonely and sad and depressed I need to feel fulfilled and so I'll stuff myself on cake. I know that's there because I've talked to literally thousands of women and men about this. Their deep beliefs about this cake, by the way Aristotle when he talked about gluttony which I struggle with now. It's not about taste. He says you know what it is? It's a pathology of the throat. He said what a glutton wants is not just taste excitation because no glutton chews food and spits it out usually, what the glutton wants is they want the satisfaction of being filled. And what the glutton doesn't like and I know this is when you get filled because while the fillings going on I feel alive. And so I talked to many individuals with eating problems and they want the feeling of being of a filling themselves, not feeling empty. This is going to be true of all of our sins. There's something going on in the deep that we're a slave to and what this is all about is and this is number four, it's about warring beliefs. It's about warring beliefs. There's something here on the surface. And you know something. These are usually good beliefs and these are usually good desires. But there's something else going on here. And at times when we sin something is so powerful going on in the environment that is stimulating this that it comes out.

I want to talk a little more about this and then about what is God calling us to do about this, because this this is the stuff that will inhibit transformation. When I say leak I do not mean that we are not responsible for that. You know it turns out in the history of theology and the history of philosophy. They all are going to agree about this, it doesn't matter how the worry got there. It doesn't matter if it was stemmed from original sin, if it stemmed from the way you were parented, the way you reacted to your way you where parented. It doesn't matter. You're responsible because it's yours now. I mean this is a sad thing about the way responsibility works, it's not mine, it's not even your parents. Now they're responsible for what, you know, how they parented, but nevertheless, whatever vices you have they're yours and they're coming out of you. And so the idea of responsibility was, it depends on who has this stuff, they're responsible. But the real, the real rub about this leaking is this, it's not something that just by having good intentions you will will away. That's the key. Just by intending I am not going to be impatient. That will not make this vice, this sin habit of the heart where Paul will call the flesh, the old man, or the former manner of life, it's not going away. And so this leaking is all about warring beliefs. There's, there's some kind of warring going on there's something in the deep.

In the deep, there is still part of John Coe that says, "Doggone it! When things go bad, I've got to grab." And those will be times where I'll struggle with trust. Where there are other parts of my soul, definitely on the surface, I want to trust God. That's my intention. But there are other parts of my soul where God has taken me on a journey and, and there are actual dispositions of trust that are developing. And you know when I've seen that? I've seen that in certain trials that have happened in my life, where I've seen when something comes up that that could bring out worry. I've seen this other stuff come out too because there's been virtues that have begun to be developed as well. But now number five, most of our sins are not intentions of

the moment, but they're merely the tip of the iceberg, where beneath the surface is part of the heart is perhaps a glacier of sin and vice that has deep historical and relational roots in our life. That is, let's see, I'll get another diagram going here. So here's the heart. I'm a new creature in Christ, but it turns out, there are glaciers of vices below the surface. What I only see is the tip. Right? This is, this is what I see- the sin as an act or as an emotion or something coming out. The, the excess worry, I see that and go yeah, but below it, again whatever it is, worry, envy, these deep beliefs, the deep desires it may be oceanic.

Some of your vices are small, again, some of your vices are more huge. And number six, I want us to beware of praying, but one, one Christian psychologist that I'm around, Dr. Bruce Narramore, he said beware of praying what he calls "prayers of magic or prayers of avoidance" to have God take these things away. How many times in my life, I've been a Christian for 33 years, have I said, "God, take away my worry. God, take away my excess anger!" And you know something, that, that is an OK prayer for a young believer. That's OK. Maybe they're not quite ready for this journey of putting off, and so just in simplicity, "God take this stuff away." That's cool. But there's a time to grow up and to see, this has been there for a while. This thing continues to harangue your life. And now this prayer is really a prayer of magic; it's almost a prayer of avoidance. It's almost a prayer of this, "God, I don't want to see this stuff. God I don't want to deal with it, my anger. I don't even want to look at it. My goodness, envy stuff, this impatience, this worry. This fear, these anxieties. We all have some of these. Some of them are larger than others in our lives. And these prayers of magic are really ways to avoid. Here is really what you can begin to pray is, "God, take me on whatever journey you need to take me on for this transformation. God open my heart deeply to what is going on in my heart."

As Dr. Sosi at the seminary says, if you're going to put off these old sin habits of the heart. The first question you have to ask is just simply, "God why am I doing this? What's going on?" And so at some point in our life, we'll still keep praying these in frustration: "Oh God, take that away." But then when we collect ourself is, "Spirit I want to be open to whatever journey you have. I want you to take me on whatever journey you need to do to open up my heart to this material." Now here's a question that you can ask, "Where is the sin? Where is the sin in this? Is the sin here? Or is the scene here?" Well I think when I was a younger believer, I thought well the sin is here. Worry is coming out and, in fact, I was taught a theory that now I think is kind of crazy, but anyways, I was taught this at a Bible Institute. The theory was, if there is no known sin in my life, I'm filled with the Holy Spirit. And then when I become aware of sin the light bulb goes out, and if I confess the sin the light bulb comes on again. And the now, now I'm going to argue next week or we're going to spend most of time talking about the Ministry of the Spirit and what is the Spirit of God doing in the self. Now I think that's a crazy view and unbiblical view about the Ministry of the Spirit. But this is what it did teach me about sin, as a young believer I thought this was the sin. "OK God I'm worrying that's not good I confess it!" And then I had a little bit of a magical thought, "Well then the worry is gone, it's over." And now I'm a, I am a Calvinist and as a Calvinist, I believed in deep depravity or pervasive depravity. You are pervasively depraved, even though you are a new creature. This has got deep ramifications. You know where the sin really is? It's the sin as a habit of the heart. That's, that's where all the action is going. That's where it's all taking place. That's that's the pot of these deep beliefs that all they need is that stimulus in the environment and [falling noise] it comes out. And I will say this right now, no quick confession is going to put off the old man. That is magical thing.

And so number seven. Now let me give you another number 7, I think what what's on your sheet will be eight. Let me just give you another one. Becoming a Christian can even exacerbate this problem of not knowing your heart. Becoming a Christian can exacerbate, that is make it worse, the problem of not knowing your heart. Now what I mean by this. Well, when I became a believer the Scriptures say in Romans 6 that I was crucified with Christ. That the old man was crucified and that I'm now in the Spirit. Here's what happened when I was a believer, I'm not going to spend too much time just ponder this, when you and I became a believer it doesn't mean that your sin was done away it doesn't mean these habits of the heart went away, it did mean this. It did mean that my connection to that habit, the power of sin, that's the Pauline idea, the power of sin was broken so it's not the only thing I desire now. In fact, I have a new affection for the Holy Spirit. This is what I experienced at 19. There was this power breakage. Something happened in my life and it was internal and I loved God. And you know what I did as a young believer, and it's the obvious thing to do, it's to focus on the good. When I became a young believer, I was like, "God, I want you! I want the good!" And my focus then became, I want to do the good. I memorized Scripture, I prayed, I went to church, I loved it! I loved hearing sermons, I couldn't go to enough sermons. I loved that.

But here's the point. Unless there is someone in your life who has the wisdom to move you to attend. "God, I need to look at that too." I generally by habit won't do that. Because this new disposition of becoming a believer makes me look at, "God, I love you. I want to do the good, I want to do the good. I want to do that God. I want to grow." And so that's why becoming a Christian can even exacerbate the problem because we don't necessarily find a vision for, why am I looking at my heart? What's going on in my heart? I didn't do that for years. And to be honest with you when I went to Bible Institute, Bible College and Seminary, I wasn't encouraged

to do that. I was encouraged mostly to what I would call do the "putting on" spiritual disciplines: put on Christ, look at the good, look at Christ, do the good, celebrate, worship, pray. And it was through a variety of things that began to open my heart. God, by the Spirit, kept bringing this stuff up and that took on a whole new journey.

The eighth point, and this would be I think you're number 7 in there that no amount of surface correction of beliefs or behavioral change is going to transform the heart. No amount of just taking in good beliefs or engaging in behavioral change, trying to be patient, will change the heart. That's what Aristotle thinks. That's what the pagans think: if I can just now get a good correct beliefs about the reality of things and if I can change my behavior I'll change my habits of the heart. That is it. That is what we would call a necessary condition. It's something that's going to have to happen, but it's not going to be sufficient. It's not going to be sufficient. That's, that's magical thinking. Now I will want someone to start there. When I came to the Lord, I was discipled by someone who was very interested in meditation on the Word and so, in the first two years of my Christian life, I memorized probably seven books of the Bible. I loved memorizing scripture. I loved taking that in. And yet, some of these habits of the heart continued to abide, they continued to grow and fester.

The ninth point, or whatever point this is now, it's getting kind of long. The ninth one is this: self-awareness is also a necessary ingredient to opening the heart, but by itself it will not transform. Self-awareness, opening the heart, seeing yourself, that's a necessary ingredient. Just like truth is a necessary ingredient. Behavioral change will be necessary. It won't be sufficient. It won't be sufficient.

What is going to, what is going to have to take place for the transformation of the heart, this is number 10. This is the Christian view that the process of transformation is going to require

a power. It is going to require a power strong enough to penetrate into your heart. It's going to require a power strong enough to penetrate into the heart to resolve whatever need at the core is driving you. See, it's going to work out like this. You can bank on it. This is, this is an example of what we call spiritual theology and we'll, we'll talk about that in the next weeks. You can bank on it that behind all of this is some kind of perceived need. It's some kind of perceived need that, at the bottom all of our sin, at the very bottom, that's what I'm really attached to. I'm really attached to having life on my terms in some way. When I worry, what's really driving me is that moment when Greta is telling me about the problem, in the deep submerges and the perceived need, "Doggone it, I've got to have life on my terms. I do not want hassles. I do not want this stuff. And doggone it, I'm going to have to fix." And there's the war: "God, am I going to trust you? Yeah I'll trust you while I'm fixing it [inaudible grumbling]" And something is going to happen, something has got to happen, a power, and this is going to be, this is the power of the Holy Spirit in love and truth. That is the, that is the main power of transformation.

Remember we believe in a relational Christianity. Taking in the truth is not going to be sufficient. Truth itself will not unlodge and it will not resolve these deep things driving you. Somebody, the Spirit, is going to have to take the truth and penetrate into our hearts deep enough where it will resolve that need. And you know what it's going to be? It's going to be love and true because of only love and truth will finally resolve you and I to, to let go to open our hands, and say, "God, I don't need. I don't need that. I need you. I need you." It's going to have to be a power strong enough to do that.

And so now I want to move to A. I think that's on your outline. What is this process of change? And I'm, I'm going to do this rather quickly, just to present some things, because I want some questions at the end. So I'm going to try to finish by 20 after and then maybe in the later,

the next session, when I talk about spiritual disciplines, we'll talk about this a little bit more in depth, but I want to start this now. In general, the need is going to be this: someone or something is going to have to go into the heart. Something is going to have to go into the heart to begin to bring this stuff out into the open, and then to penetrate it so deeply with love and truth to resolve what really is driving you in life; to resolve what really is driving your anger, your envy, your jealousy. This is the Christian line. The power of transformative change is the Spirit's love and truth. That is the power. Aristotle would just say it's truth and behavioral change. That's the difference between us and Aristotle.

So what I want to look at just in the briefest of terms, is I'm going to just teach what I would call five spiritual disciplines of putting on. These would be five disciplines that you can engage in. This is up to you. This is something you can do. Now, you can't transform yourself, you've got to give up on that project. You cannot love yourself so powerfully to resolve the needs. In fact, it's your disordered self-love, and my disordered self-love, that gets into the problem here. So these are five kinds of spiritual disciplines, but they are unique disciplines. There are disciplines for putting off the old man. They are disciplines for opening the heart and these will have a familiarity to all of us that shouldn't even be something new, it's what God has been doing. But we will make it explicit. The first one is this, it's opening the heart in honesty to the Word of God in prayer. It's opening the heart in honesty to the Word of God in prayer. You all know this text, but let's just read it. Hebrews chapter 4, about the Word of God. Hebrews 4 verse 12, "For the word of God is living, active, sharper than any two-edged sword. It's piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of joint and marrow. And able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart." The Word of God can go in there and begin to bring up what's really there, but this is in the context, not just of the Word, this is in the context of God and prayer.

Notice Verse 13, this is the context of the Word, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." What is the Word of God to do? It's to slice open the heart by the Spirit of God, by the God who sees all, by the God who wants to penetrate and open this. But again this is in the also the context of prayer.

So here we have the Word, but it's not just the Word, it's God Himself who penetrates into our hearts, but this is in the context of prayer. Since then, I mean wow this is kind of heavy, the Word of God is supposed to slice and dice and open the heart with the person of God. And since then, we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. We have this High Priest, for we don't have a High Priest who can't sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who's been tempted in all things yet without sin, so let us therefore draw near with confidence to the Throne of Grace. Here's the first discipline. The discipline is to open your heart in prayer with the Word of God. This is allowing now the Lord to begin to do surgery with the Word. And so what I want to do is if I, if I become aware of worry, I want to take that and say, "God, use your word to take me on a journey." And so I might with worry I might just meditate on Philippians 4, "Be anxious for nothing." Right. "But in everything, with prayer, supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension let it guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." But I'm not going to say that we're, not going to say the Scriptures, thinking that just saying the Scriptures is going to transform this stuff.

And you know what I'm not going to do especially? Is I'm not going to meditate on the Word as a mantra to try to convince myself that I'm not worrying anymore. I'm not going to use the Word to try to fix me. You know I'm going to use the Word to let it do? Whatever the Spirit wants to do. And so I'm going to come to the Lord and I'm in the middle of maybe worry, "God,

I want to open this text to you and I want to say this," so I say this text. And now here's, here's the meta virtue of all the spiritual disciplines, it's honesty. After I've read the Word, I say, "God show me what's in my soul. Show me what's in my soul. I want the. I want the Word now, by the Spirit, to take a journey into this heart to begin to expose." And you know what He might do? This is up to Him. He might, if He wishes, He might give consolation to this time I might be in a time of great worry. I come to the Lord and during that time the Spirit, because of what His plan is, He says, "You know John, I just want to minister to your heart here. I want to console you in love." Have you have you ever had those times maybe when you're worried and you come to the Lord and all of a sudden you're at peace? That's so cool. And when that takes place, this is the Beatles song: Let It Be. [Laughter] Let It Be. Let it be.

Now you might ask the question to the Lord, "This is so good God. This is good, but you know, Lord, I would like to know more. Why was I worrying?" But again if the Lord is giving you consolation, that's great. But you know what sometimes happens when you're in great worry? If the Lord wanted to console you, He could do it, but the Lord may have another plan for you because He may be saying, "You know, Jan you've grown up enough and now I want to take you on a journey. Thank you for reading that text. And now what I want to do, is I actually want you to become aware of all this or maybe just that." And so you find after you read the text you're still worrying. I tell you one thing you don't do, do not tell yourself "STOP WORRYING JOHN!" That's that Aristotle would do. "STOP WORRYING. Focus on something else!" You know that I say to that? Blah! No! Begin to think this: "Oh God this is good. [Slurping sound effect] Mmmmm, worry." How about that?

Worry. God this is so good, take me on a journey. Penetrate my heart so deep. God, I don't want to run from this. No condemnation, you except me. Okay cool Lord you've decided if

he wanted to console you he could. God can do all things logically possible. God can console you every moment of your life if he wanted to. And right now he's saying John I want you to enter into a journey. I want you with me. I want us to begin to explore this stuff. And the word now can do that with him. I want to begin God what really is going on in my soul? What really is driving this? Now I have a meaningful prayer opportunity. Don't use the word as a mantra to convince you you don't have a problem, let the word just open you honestly and go on any journey he wants.

A second thing. Again there's much to say about that, but a second thing. A second way that he uses to open the heart. This is all his ways is what I would say, trials and thorns in the flesh. Trials and thorns in the flesh. Remember Pau? Paul was bugged by something. We don't know what it was, You know some physical maladies some something going on externally, we don't know but he's bothered by it it doesn't like it and he asked God to take it away. You all know what God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." There was something going on in Paul or something in the environment and something's coming, I don't like that, I don't want it and God says, "I know you don't. I know you don't. That's fine. I want it, I want it."

So Paul let it be. Let it be, let it be, let it be. And now what is Paul going to discover? See Paul initially said. Why did he get this thorn in the flesh? Because of grandiosity, because it's passing revelations that he was having. He was tempted to exalt himself. Something was going on in Paul's heart. And Paul is, "I don't want this thing, I don't want this." Gods says "I want it" because you know what I want to do here? As you see this I want you to enter into this. I want you to enter into your weakness. Remember that text? My grace is sufficient for you. Because why? My power is perfected in your weakness. Now, now none of us really believe that at the core, we believe power is perfected in power. Power is perfected when I'm on top of things.

And Paul is discovering this secret. There's about three secrets that Paul tells us in the Bible, this is one of them. This is one of the secrets he's learned, that power is perfected in weakness. So, Paul says I'm going to gladly boast and all this stuff. I am going to gladly boast and all the all the stuff that's happening in my life because what I'm discovering is this, because when I'm weak I am strong.

You know what trials do? Trials are the most profound experiences in our life because you know what they do? They crack open the heart and they bring out all this stuff. When I get a trial, I hate. Anybody like trials here? No, I hate them. I want nice life. In fact I spend a lot of doggone energy fighting the Lord trying to control my life so I don't got trials. That really is not well spent energy, but I do. I don't want do these things because when they happen, when the negative things happen there's stuff in me that comes out. Expectations, needs, things that I want, things I don't want I don't want life this way. I think it all boils down to a very fundamental need and that is I want life on my terms. That's just a very fundamental thing. That's what one theologian calls God playing, I want life on my terms. And God wants to kind of turns that and say, John I want you on my terms. But nevertheless there is these deep deep issues and trials like nothing else, whether I can accept it or not. The stuff's out and now I've got to deal with it. And you know my first tendency and trials are? First to pray quickly, and then to move. And then when the moving not work I come back to prayer. Oh God help me move in. Oh God, it's not working. You know Greta is always there, I don't want to give up [questioning grunt]. No, no, I got to keep moving and trials do that. Oh God, oh God. Some trials are great. And I say that with fear and trembling, some trials are so overwhelming yet God knows exactly exactly what he's doing.

The third thing. The third thing that God uses. And so let me just say in trials, you know my task really is? Open to God, God, what are you doing. What are you doing? God, oh if only I had the heart. Oh God this is cool, what are you doing? God, what's going on? Take me on a journey, open my heart. Show me whatever is in my heart that you want to do here. Now the third one. This is opening to God's work in all circumstances. Opening to God's work in all circumstances. Turn for a moment to Romans Chapter 8 verse 26.

Romans 8:26, this is a chapter about the ministry of the Spirit, how we are now in the in this realm of the Spirit and there's power there, but it's also a recognition that there is still suffering and chaos in the fall. Right, creation is still groaning, it's waiting for the fullness of redemption. Paul tells us in verse 23 that we ourselves are groaning, we don't, we don't have the fullness yet. And so, even though we're in the Spirit we still have all this weakness within us. And then he says in verse 26, this is fascinating. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weaknesses. In the same way the Spirit helps our weaknesses for we do not know how to pray as we should. Why is it we don't know how to pray as we should? Because we don't know our weaknesses. The Spirit knows exactly our weaknesses, he knows exactly how to pray.

In the same way the Spirit helps these weaknesses, for we don't know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit does and he intercedes with us with groaning's too deep for words. And he searches the hearts knows with the mind to the Spirit is because he intercedes for the Saints according to the will of God. Now what's going on here? Here's the story. Back to our heart.

So here I'm against new creature, and I've got, I've got these glaciers within a vice's and I don't know how to pray for myself because I don't know myself. I don't know what I should pray for. Have you ever prayed for yourself, you just wondered god is that really what I should pray for? To the degree that we don't know the heart is the degree to which we won't know how to

pray. You know but, here's the great thing. The Spirit, the Spirit knows it all. The Spirit lives in it. He knows the core of all your vices and he still loves us. He still accepts us. There's no condemnation. This is the incredible thing for us. And here's the great thing that's happening. This is what we call the intercessory Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

All last night while you were sleeping and all today while you were working and even right now while you're listening or sleeping one of the two, the Spirit is praying for you. That has become a great soulus. The Spirit is constantly praying particularly for my vices, my weaknesses with groaning too deep for words. That is, I can't hear that ministry. That this is not the ministry of tongues, this is the ministry of the Spirit constantly praying for you in the deep.

And it says that how does the father know. Now the father lives in here too, but I'm just going to kind of draw it up here. Here's God the Father. How does God the father know what's going on? Well he knows what's going on because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. The Spirit is constantly praying to the father. Last night, the Spirit was constantly praying for my life. This is the context for Romans 8:28 and we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God and those who are called according to his purpose. For whom for knew he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. What's going on here?

The father and the Spirit have one goal for your life. Now you and I have many goals, right? I'm about to write a book. I hope that book will do well. I have no idea if that's the father's goal, but here is his goal. He wants to perfect me as he says here. He wants to conform me to the image of his son. That is the goal. That is what the prayer ministry between the Spirit and the father for your soul is. I want to conform this stuff to the image of the son and take a guess what God is doing to conform you. God is working all things, all things. These are all the

circumstances of your life. God is working together all things. All things work together for good to those who love God.

The context of Romans 28 is this prayer ministry of the Spirit. He knows your weaknesses he's praying for it, he wants to transform it and now God is laying out in his sovereignty a whole set of circumstances for that transformation, that's why everything's going on in your life. Now some of these things are positive. Good friends, children, my wife, things that are brought into my life that are good, that you know what these things do. Here's the here's the good ones here. These are ones that encourage and they encourage virtues. They encourage me to even begin to maybe look at myself, but you know the negative ones? Romans 8:28 is all things. It's the Greek Pantai, it's all things. All things work together for good, because you know what the negative things do? They bring out the stuff, they bring out the stuff. Do any of you have a person that your work where you know you don't find work and also that person walks by and ugh, anybody have someone who bugs them? You know something, that's a gift. That's a gift.

Now gifts come in different sizes and shapes. I had an Aunt Ethel who gave me gifts when I was 10 and I didn't know what they were. I always had asked my mom, what is this? When I became 20 I came to really appreciate those gifts. They were weird. All a gift means is somebody is giving you something. See this positive thing, that's a gift. See the negative thing, that's a gift. And here's what God is doing, that there is no accident that person walks by you and at work and when you see them and your [frustrated noise], or it's not by accident that your kids are going through what they're going through right now or your wife says something to you. I don't know what's going on in your life. There's nothing accidental, there's nothing accidental. All of these are gifts, and you

know the negative ones do? They bring out the stuff. We start leaking, the crap begins to come out.

Here's your options. When you see this stuff coming out, you see that person walking by and [frustrated noise] or you see somebody that you're a little jealous of [frustrated noise] Well one thing is, you can either you can just repress it, just stuff it back in, hide from it. It's not going anywhere. God is giving you a gift and this stuff's coming out. Another thing you could do is you could confess it quickly. Confessing quickly doesn't do much. At some point in our Christian life there is a time to grow up about confession. I think of my wife. I remember one night I came home from work, It was a Friday just before we had children, this was years ago. I just wanted a night off just to take a break. And I remember I did; you know we were going watch a video and it was after dinner and I said something that bugged her and I was like, okay, I need to apologize. Greta, I'm sorry. That didn't go. Greta, I'm sorry will you forgive me? That didn't go. And then finally I said, "You know Greta, I asked you to forgive me, can't you just forgive me and we can get on with the night?" WOW. Let me just say guys, that is not the way to go, if you want to get on with the night. And then she said to me, "You know John, you, you're like a little boy who just wants to get off the hook of guilt. So you can go run and watch your video." And I said, Yah, k mom, can we do it?"

And then she said to me, "You know John, you don't want to enter my grieving heart, do you." Well you know, Ephesians 4:30 says that we grieve the Spirit of God, but there's no condemnation. We are totally accepted. Just these quick confessions now, for young believers they're fine. Go on, you're not ready to go plunge in. When you get older you've got to begin to see what's going on. You know what this is? Third, when when my stuff is out because there's no condemnation stuff is coming up my life, God is sovereign, he's doing all this work. You know

what it is for me now? Is an opportunity for fellowship? It's an opportunity for fellowship. It's an opportunity say, God open my heart.

I'm going to skip the next two. I'll come back to those at another time, but the last one has to do with what God is trying to do in the heart and it's with Psalm 139. I quoted there. This is what the Spirit of God wants to do now. Now there is number four, if we have time we talk about how others can be involved in this process. That's a real good, but we'll come back. But just what is God doing in Soul work. Here's what he's doing. This is Psalm 139. Remember David says, "God you know me, you know my sitting, you know my rising God you know absolutely everything about me." And then he ends it night saying God search me and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts. God, search my heart, try me, know my anxious thoughts, see if there is a hurtful way and lead in the everlasting way. God I want to invite you. You know you know the ancient spiritual writers did? They called this intentional soul work. They said this is soul work. They said, don't wait for the trials, don't wait for the trials to crack open the heart. Intentionally welcome God into the process.

Let me just, and I'm going to kind of close with this, just give you a suggestion. Next week, there are some prayer projects that I have in the back that you can do. But here's what you could start doing. Just try this for a week. Take whatever quiet time you have. It's five minutes twenty minutes. I don't know what you got, doesn't matter. Whatever you got, just God here I am. Split it in half this week. Do whatever you've been doing for the first half but the second half five minutes ten minutes half hour, I don't know what it is. Say this, God search my heart. I've got 15 minutes. Search my heart. Now obviously, you could do this for three weeks, and I did that, I did a retreat for three weeks for this was the general portion of the retreat. And during that retreat God took me into places of hell in my soul, places of seeing so much falseness what I

have done with my education, my teaching, my wife, using literally everything. And during that time my heart was so open to my falseness. I remember just weeping and weeping and just screaming at myself what an SOB I'd become. That's the Son of Beelzebub. [Laughter] And uh, and in that place I experience the love of the Spirit that I've never known in my life. I experienced the deep presence of a person loving me right in the crowd. And I discovered a little taste of Paul's truth. That powers perfected in weakness. God was, I discovered that God loves the actual John Coe and not the false John Coe. Not that John Cole of many machinations, and so even with twenty minutes you can just bump start the journey. This can become just a slow little habit of the heart. God I just want to be open to you and God God for the next twenty let's talk about worry, God just take me on a journey. What's going on in the word, and God through the rest of the day is you bring up circumstances, God I just want to be open to you.

All your moments can be moments and having a meaningful conversation. I didn't have many of these conversations with my dad until I became a believer and then something began in our life. But I've a father in heaven who just say oh God John, come on down, go on down. I want to take you down. I've got so much to teach you, have so much to teach you.

You know what the result is and this is enough, I'm sorry about the time. God delights not in sacrifice, but a broken and contrary heart. In Joel, he says, "Returned to me with all your heart. Rend your heart and not your garments rend the heart." You know what a beautiful thing it is to have a community of broken hearts, to have a community of wounded healers, to have a community of people who minister out of weakness. I don't think there is anything more inviting to the world than a broken heart. Remember David? God said in first Kings 11 David had a whole heart for God. Isn't an incredible, and adulterer and a murderer. You know what it is to

have a whole heart for God? It's to have a heart that can be broken, not a heart that's perfect.

What a beautiful thing a community can be.

I want to pray and then I want to just have five minutes for questions. I'm really sorry about that. But we'll come back. Our Lord we just come to you. As we are we we want to experience the truth of ourself with you. Your love and your truth is the only power that can ever dislodge the sins of the heart. But God I thank you that you pray for me, everyone here, all the time. You know us, you love us. We bless you. So here we are. God bless you. The name of our Lord. Amen

You know, I have four to five minutes. So, anything that you would like to ask, comment I think, anything that's rumbling around. Anything at all? Truly everything I said is not like total clear and obvious. But I know it these.

[Inaudible Question]

The pain, of past things in life. Yeah, oh absolutely. You know because in the text in Psalm 139 it says see if there be a painful way. Well, in the Hebrew, I mean it's literally painful way and commentators say it's either a way that was caused by someone caused pain in our life, but usually wherever we've been caused pain we're also causing pain for others, so it's probably some combo. So what I want is, I want to go into those places with the Lord. And so certain issues between my father and I the Lord were so gracious to begin to penetrate and open my heart, to experience what was just the truth about my relationship to him. I and so I have a now old lover who was willing to go because he abides in all that, and so he wants to take you on a journey. Now I will say this was number four. If the pain is really great or the stuff is just really

great and tense. It's probably good to have another person doing this with you. That's as a sage, that's a wise man or a wise woman who can, now incarnationally help take one into that place. To begin to experience it so that new muscles will begin to develop, so that I can open this more deeply in pray. For some, the things are so acute that just opening in prayer one would get lost. And so that's the point of having wise counselor around who can take one on that journey. But ultimately it will be the love of God that, that really can open and help us find release from those things.

Another question? Yes.

[Inaudible question]

Well you know, next week will be all about that. I'm going to tell you all about that, it's going to be all about dryness, because im the king of dryness. [Laughter]. Yeah yeah. Because it is that's crucial and and I want us to see dryness in a certain context as, oh God this is so good. Because you're, see, if it's these positive things where God often consoles us and sometimes even negative things we get great consolation and that is so wonderful we all love it. And then when God and His kindness said you know something Doug, you don't need the bottle of consolation right now, I'm going to show you a mirror. I'm going to take a little journey. You ready Doug? Now, for many years I've resisted that mirror. No God, that's bad. That's wrong, that's sin. I've got to get it. I had no idea that God was like "Oh John, John stop trying to fix yourself. Just I want to take you in to a journey. I want to take you down." You know like the cops. You know, were taken him down. Because, and so during those times of dryness, those can be marvelous times of now beginning this journey into weakness, into your neediness. You will never, you'll

never be the same. In that journey. You'll be like Jacob though, you will limp maybe the rest of your life, but better to limp with the Spirit than to run with Aristotle. Yeah thanks, that was good. Okay let me close because it is time. Thank you so much. Father, we bless you. We need you. We love you and there are parts of my soul that don't love you. And I just think you pray for those, that there is a part in me that does it does hunger. And so Lord, just continue to open my heart. I'm going to spend the rest of my evening with my wife and my girls. And I know you're going to be peeling my heart. I know you're going to be showing things there. You'll be encouraging, be showing the mirror, will be doing that with my wife. You've got a plan for everyone here. Lord, we just want to open to you with its ongoing constant and we just thank you for Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, the ground of all. And that's why we can come to. Great high priest. We bless Jesus Christ, We bless you Spirit, we bless you Father. Bless these leaders people here, be so gracious to them Lord in opening their heart. Putting off the old man with the Spirit. We say this in the name of our Lord. Amen.

Have a good night.