

Negative Navigations

Correcting Our Immoral Compass

July 4, 2021

Today we're discussing *recalibrating our corrupted moral compass*.



Ever watch a movie and find yourself rooting for the bad guy? Hoping the *thief* gets away with the *money*, or the *fugitive* evades the *police*, or *whatever*. Well we *do* this because of the *manipulation* of what I call **our immoral compass**. Writers take advantage of our **“ability” to excuse sinful behavior** even when our *reason* clearly tells us it's *totally* unreasonable.



In *The Godfather*, the *Corleones* are grotesquely corrupt; *but ...* so are the other mafia families, *and* the police, *and* the judges. And the *others* stab each *other* in the *back*. But those *Corleones* are *loyal*. So we begin to see them as the *good* bad guys. And pretty soon we're thinking: if *I* was in a mafia family, I'd want 'em to be like those *Corleones*!



Arguably the most disturbingly monstrous character *ever* is Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs*; *but ...* he's *intelligent*, and *witty*, and *charming*, and *calm*. Whereas his *psychiatrist* is an egotistical *sadist*; his guards are *dimwits*; and the F.B.I. *lies*. And by the end, we find ourselves rationalizing: “So he *eats* people – there're *worse* things. *Offhand* I can't think *what*, but if *I* was a *murderous cannibalistic psychopath*, I'd want to be like Hannibal!” And don't get me started on *Dexter*. The reason we're so easily manipulated is because **it's in our nature to rationalize unrighteous behavior**. Because our moral compass has been corrupted.



So we're easily misdirected in a brief, make-believe world where righteousness is not only relative but based on a limited perspective of comparisons to intentionally superficial and non-dimensional characters. Sure glad that doesn't happen in the *real* world! Could you *imagine*?

The Book of Romans reveals God's plan to establish His righteousness throughout the *world* through Jesus Christ, in order to *recover* and *redeem* mankind, and to *restore* our righteousness through a process of “being transformed” or “made holy” “by the renewing of [our] mind” (Rom 12:2; Heb 10:14) by *His* Spirit and Word. And in the first three chapters, Paul lays out *everyone's* equivalent *depravity*. And then beginning **in 3:9 Paul sums up his position on sin thus far**.



What shall we conclude then? ... Jews and Gentiles alike are *all* under sin. [And Paul goes on to give what I'm gonna call the three negative navigations of our immoral compass] As it is written: [in Psalms (14:1-3; 53:1-3)] “There is *no* one righteous, [Jew or Gentile] not even one; there is *no* one who understands, [Jew or Gentile] *no* one who seeks God. *All* have turned away, [Jews and Gentiles alike] ...” – Romans 3:9-12 NIV



So our *first* and foremost *horribly* misdirected *heading* is when **we turn away from our Father-God**. Nobody *really* seeks God without the enormous *work* of His Spirit – like that tugboat – pushing us, driving us, turning us, maturing us, and otherwise making us holy. At *best* we usually begin by seeking His *byproducts*. We want **the relief from guilt, or grief, or pain, or adversity**. And we want **the reward of heaven, or health, or peace, or prosperity**.



Ever heard the expression: “I’ve *found* the Lord.” That saying must come from the parable of the lost *shepherd*! Jesus came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) **We’re the sheep**. Not the smartest animal on the farm. But **really good at getting lost**. Know why? **They don’t realize they’re lost**. The Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Pet 2:25) takes notice *long* before *we* ever do! In fact, *He* takes *all* the initial initiative! Giving us His Word, His Son, His Spirit, His people, and His majesty in creation.



Those in a relative world of their own creation, compare themselves to the superficial level of those around them and often conclude that they’re “good enough” to get into heaven. But not only is that a self-deceptive *lie*, it’s *beside* the point. The question isn’t: are you good enough; it’s: **What’re you seeking?** Where you heading? And what’s your setting? **Eternity is simply a continuation of the journey we begin down here**. And as such, it evenhandedly fulfills the desire of every heart with either **the glory of a journey set on my Savior, or the grief of a journey set on myself**. And that grief begins down here when we turn away from our true God-Father and silence the Lamb, because **self-worship always devolves into self-destruction**.



Notice that Paul doesn’t say we *commit* sin. This is quite insightful. He says we’re “under sin”. It’s the slave/master terminology of his day. He sees how **sin owns us when it rules over us**. And so 1) not only do we *turn away* from our Father, but 2) **we turn against our own conscience** – our *better self*, if you will. Why’s it *so hard* to eat *healthy*, and *so easy* to eat *poison*? Why’s it *such a battle* to quit *smoking*, stop *drinking*, or lose *weight*, even when it becomes one of our topmost desires? **We’re like our own malicious genie**, that has the *power* and the *mandate* to grant our wishes, but just *refuses*.

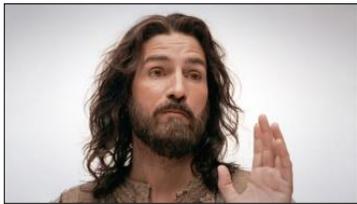


[As Paul observes about his *own self*] The law is *spiritual*; but I am *unspiritual*, sold as a *slave* to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I *want* to do I do *not* do, but what I *hate* I *do*. – Romans 7:14-15 NIV

You see, **slaves aren’t set free by a philosophy. They need a liberator!** And we’ve been purchased by the blood of the Lamb, and set free by our God and Father. **So why do we return to self-imposed slavery?** Because our heading, our setting *leads* us back – like a dog to its vomit (Prov 26:11) – because of our *internal, immoral* compass; because **salvation removes the condemnation but not the corruption**. That requires *sanctification*: the ongoing *process* of being *made* holy.

Because by *one* sacrifice He has *made perfect* forever [POOF!] those who are *being made holy* [bump-bump-bump]. – Hebrews 10:14 NIV

[Because] *Together* they [Jews and Gentiles] have become *corrupt*; there is no one [Jew or Gentile] who does good, there is not even one." [Jew or Gentile] – Romans 3:12 NAS



Everyone has become corrupt, **like when your computer crashes**. It hasn't lost its *value*, it just can't do you any good. Because its operating system has become corrupted. So what do we do? Restart it! **We gotta shut it down and fire it back up!** And rid the corruption by *rebooting* and **thus restoring its created functional capacity**. In the same way we're all corrupted and bent on self-destruction.

We don't lose our value, Jesus established that. We're just temporarily helpless to do anyone any good in regard to *our* created purpose, by representing and extending Dad's love and grace and mercy and kindness.

So we 1) turn *away from* our Father, and 2) turn *against* our *own* conscience, and then 3) **we turn on those around us**. First with wicked *words* that speak *death* instead of *life*.

"Their *throats* [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] are open graves; [every uncaring word exposing a decaying heart] their *tongues* [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] practice deceit." (Ps 5:9) "The poison of vipers is on their *lips*." (Ps 140:3) [Ready to strike with unloving words regardless of their toxic consequence] "Their *mouths* [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] are full of cursing and bitterness." (Ps 10:7) [And not only with wicked, deadly words, but then with wicked, deadly *ways*] "Their feet are swift to shed blood; [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] ruin and misery mark *their ways*, [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] and the *way of peace* they do not know." (Is 59:7-8) – Romans 3:13-17 NIV

Because **you know what we naturally want more than peace? Our own way!** Which is why peace is nearly impossible to *establish* and *maintain* down here. And both, our wicked *words* and wicked *ways*, come from a corrupted heart that simply needs to be restarted, rebooted, and restored to its created functional capacity. And Paul closes his conclusion with the cause of it all.

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Ps 36:1) – Romans 3:18 NIV

Jews and Gentiles *alike*. Proverbs (9:10) warns that the fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. But, **we often give other fears a higher priority**. And when we focus on less-significant fears, our compass turns our perspective and then our desire **from the eternal to the temporal**, and we turn *away from* our Father; and then **from glorifying God to gratifying self** – our *worst self*, if you will – as we turn *against* our *own* conscience; and finally **from the greatest good to the basest indulgence**, as we begin to turn on those who've been purposely placed around us to help us achieve and fulfill our created purpose in our journey down here. And lastly Paul adds:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those [Jews] who are under the law, so that *every mouth* [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] may be silenced and the *whole world* held *accountable* to God. [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] Therefore no one [Jew or Gentile] will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we [*all together*] become conscious of sin. [Jews and Gentiles *alike*] – Romans 3:19-20 NIV

We're called to walk in the **liberty OF Christ** along with **accountability TO Christ**. And that's a balance that must be continually maintained because we're so thoroughly corrupted. But, God's moral law is like a mirror. **It can only help us by showing us how filthy our face is**, so that we can do what it takes, by His Spirit and with His strength, to match the image of *His* face. *But ...*



Anyone [Jew or Gentile] who listens to the Word but does *not do* what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and ... goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks *intently* into the perfect law that gives freedom, [by revealing salvation by grace through faith in Jesus] and continues to do this, [to look intently into God's moral law in order to correct their compass] not *forgetting* what he has *heard*, [in God's Word] but *doing* it—he will be blessed in what he *does*. [Because that's *faithworks!*] – James 1:23-25 NIV

Now the Lord *is* the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. *But we all*, [Jew and Gentile *alike*] with unveiled face, [seeing just how soiled we really are, and] beholding *as* in a *mirror* the *glory* of the Lord, are *being transformed* into the same *image from [our own] glory to [our Father's] glory*, – 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 NAS

For man is *made* in God's *image* and *reflects* God's *glory*. – 2 Corinthians 11:7 NLT

For *now* we see in a mirror *dimly*, [obscured by our not yet *fully* being *made holy*] but *then* [“when *the perfect* comes” (vs. 10)] face to face; – 1 Corinthians 13:12 NAS

[For God] is the One who has shone in our *hearts* to give the *Light* of the *knowledge* of the *glory* of God in the *face* of *Christ*. – 2 Corinthians 4:6 NAS

He is the image of the invisible God, – Colossians 1:15 NAS



And *He* does what *no* mirror or moral law *alone* could ever *do*.

The *blood* of Jesus ... *cleanses* us from *all sin*. – 1 John 1:7 NKJ

But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and *immediately* blood *and* water came out. – John 19:34 NKJ

[Because] [Christ] loved the church and gave *Himself* for her, that He might sanctify *and* cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a *glorious* church, not having *spot* or *wrinkle* or *any* such thing, but that she [the body of Christ] should be holy *and* without *blemish*. – Ephesians 5:25-27 NKJ

Because by *one* sacrifice [of “the blood of Jesus”] He has *made* perfect *forever* those who [“by the washing of water by the Word”] are *being made* holy. – Hebrews 10:14 NIV

Jew and Genie *alike*.

And so, until that perfect face presents itself, just look in the mirror and head toward the light.