

Spiritual Formation & Theology
"How to Save Your Life"
Dallas Willard
Westmont Chapel - 9.12.2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzzzH9z0SRE>

Scribe's Comments - *The session was typed from the Westmont video with good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The [brackets] & **bold** disclose the scribe's emphasis.*



[Starts @ 2:15]

Your chaplain set up topics for Chapel speakers. I came to the topic of "Spiritual Formation & Theology" and didn't look any further.

Spiritual formation is the standing human problem:

—> **How do you get good people?**

It's not just a Christian issue. The Christians have an answer to it but it's a human problem. If you look around you, you see so many people intent on blowing others up. Where does this come from? It comes from the human heart. We live in a world where malice and anger dominate relationships.

* Our congressmen can't even get along with each other. Our government oozes with contempt and anger at one another. The business of government doesn't get done. There's a real problem.

I want to talk to you today on the topic of - "**How to Save Your Life**"

You say, "I'd like to save my soul." How about the rest of you? Would you like to save your body? Would you like to save your mind?

You, the whole person, is what salvation is concerned about.. Often when we talk about salvation, we have a shrunken view of what we're talking about.

Being saved is big business for Christians. "*Are you saved?*"

What were you asking? In our circles, it almost always refers to one thing:

- *What is going to happen to you when you die?*
- *Are you going to Heaven or that other place?*

There is another question we need to ask ourselves - If you got into Heaven, do you think you'd like it? What's it going to be like? If you're life is not caught up in God now, Heaven may turn out to be unbearable. Unless you're really close to God now, you can't miss Him when you get to Heaven. If you don't like worship, you don't want to go to Heaven. If you do like worship, you're probably going to spend a lot of time in it here.

It is going to have a lot of affect on the person you're going to become.

That's spiritual formation!

Spiritual Formation - [Parenting] The process of shaping the individual so they love God with all their heart, soul, mind & strength and love their neighbor as themselves.

How do you love God with all your heart? Your mind? Your strength?
Can you love God with your athletic ability?
Can you love God in your assignments?
We need to talk about that.

Roman 5:8ff - It deals with salvation. [7:00]

"God demonstrates His own love towards us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"

There is a tendency to stop there. Christ died for us. He paid for our sins. We can get on with our business and we'll see Him in Heaven.

But keep reading, *"Justified by His blood we will be **saved** from wrath"* ["orges"] (not of God). Who's wrath? Maybe my wrath. Do you ever have a problem with wrath? So much of the mayhem of our grief in our families, sports is our wrath. This is talking about being saved from our wrath, from the wrath of others.

The blood of Jesus does not save us from our wrath. It does not save us from the wrath of others, but His life does. His life lived in us saved us from our wrath.

"While were yet enemies...we shall be saved by His life."

We hear so much about being saved by His death but how are we saved by His life? Christ is alive.

Salvation (def.) "Being caught up in the life that Jesus is now living on Earth." [9:50]

Where is he living His life? Right here.

What's His relationship of His life to your life? He lives in you.

"Christ in us the hope of glory."

We talk about becoming Christlike and living the life that Christ would live.

How do we do that?

By being caught up the life Jesus is now living on Earth.

Salvation is "Deliverance" ...

- not just from guilt but all kinds of things.

I Samuel 14 - Jonathan's victory in battle then eating honey before sundown.

King Saul was going to kill his own son because he violated his edict.

"You shall not do this as he brought such great salvation to his people."

Deliverance from the life of Christ that is in us. Salvation delivers us from all kind of things that could destroy us.

Ephesians 5

v. 8-9 - *"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and all righteousness and all truth)"*

That's the focus of salvation!

v. 15-16 - *"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."*

Better stated, **"Redeeming your time"**.

Be proactive and pull your time back. When grinding out life that time needs to be brought back into the life of God and redeemed or it will be lost. How much of your time really enters in to the renewal and development of your life? How much time do we spend doing things we have to do? You redeem the time when you bring everything you are living through back into the flow of God's purposes.

The challenge to you and me is to be active in bringing everything that fills our time back into God's time and make it count for Him. The great threat is we will think if we don't do that unless we are doing something religious. Religion can be a very good thing but it is never life. Redemption has to do with life. The way we bring that before God and expect his blessing upon it.

How do you redeem time?

Making sure your gentle but persistent focus is on "all goodness, righteous & truth."

~ Start by Being Thankful

In redeeming your life, You can't make much progress without being thankful. Being up front with God and being thankful. This is going to take some effort but God will help you. If you want to redeem your time and save your life, you start with being thankful for the next thing that's up front.

Redemption is a very concrete kind of thing. One of the problems with Religion is it becomes so abstract. We don't live in abstractions, we live in events in relationships with people. To be thankful for that is to acknowledge that God is there.

That has to be combined sometimes with, *"I don't know why but here I am and I know you are here so I am going to thank you for this, then I am going to look for your hand to bring to life the righteousness, goodness and truth."*

The rule is - if you don't look for it, you won't find it. Was it there? Probably was there, after all God is running the show. If you start out by thanking God for it, you'll probably find it.

Salvation is here...it's always here, it's never there. God is in our moment. That's where we meet Him, where we live with Him. We take our assignments and present those to God and it is there that we experience His deliverance.

We have real trouble bringing the wonderful words of Scripture and the Christian life down to where we are.

Paul - a "Jail Bird" writing to the Philippians [22:50]

You see Paul rejoicing and telling people how to live thankfully.

"In everything give thanks, pray, lift yourself up to God."

v. 8 - *"...true, noble, right, pure, lovely, pure, well regarded, any virtue, anything to praise, think about these things."*

Wait, what's this have to do with Salvation?

We have a problem because we have a version of Salvation that does not concern Spiritual Formation - the kind of person we are becoming.

"Well, I don't have to become that kind of person because I'm saved by grace that means I don't have to do anything."

Is that how that works? If you're just waiting to die, that's it. But if you have interested in this life, there's a lot more to it.

What is Paul telling us to do? (re-read v. 8) Keep your mind on these things.

"What about God? Aren't we supposed to keep our mind on God?"

That's where God is!

Sometimes we read Paul and we think he's talking about something that does not concern us now. If the Fruit of the Spirit are abstractions, they will not affect your life. You wind up hoping one day the Holy Spirit will pour it on you. It doesn't work that way. Fruit comes slowly. It just hangs on the branch and waits to grow. All of that is concrete process.

Would you like to be a person whose life is framed by love?
OK, find something around you and start loving it.

You fill your life with God by constantly submitting where you are to love, to joy, to peace, and so on. That's how you focus on all the things that are righteous, true and good. That's how you buy back your time. If you don't, time will go by and it will be lost. It will not profit you. It will not profit anyone else because you have not taken God into that moment.

The world around you is set up to waste your time. [27:40]

The main way it does that is to convince you that what you're engaged in is not of great value. So you wind up being distracted. Distraction is one of the main enemies of the human soul. The human being winds up investing what time they have in stuff that doesn't matter. When we begin to look around us and what we are doing, a place like this is one of the most wonderful places on Earth. You get to study wonderful stuff.

What could be better than that? I guess that's the question.

If you come to look at where you are, the world around you is to set to pull you away and waste your time. You have to redeem your time by coming to look at everything you're involved in as under the hand of God. When you do that you can go back and be thankful.

Are up to experiment with that? That's where life is lived by experimenting with God in the things you're going to have to live through anyway. You don't waste your time. You redeem your time by filling your world with God. The outcome is the "Fruit of the Spirit".

I hope you have memorized these. There are many passages you need to memorize so they will in the front of your mind, present in your heart and working in your body. If you want to the Word of God to work in your body, memorize it. Because it is actually a substance and a power. It works on its own if you take it in.

* Prescription - If you don't take it in, it doesn't do you any good. If you don't take the word of God in especially these wonderful statements - Fruit of the Spirit - He is not talking about an abstraction, *a wonderful feeling of looooooooooove*"

The "Fruit of the Spirit is **love.**' He can help you love that test.

Joy is not effervescent stuff. You have a lot of people who get addicted to **joy**. They want the feeling. Joy is a condition of life. It has some feeling with it but it can be there even if you don't have the feeling. If you go for the feeling you fall into addiction.

Many people don't love, they love "love".

* The song, "*Falling in love with love.*"

You don't fall in love with love, it will mess up your life. It does that to many people. They are in love with love. They get married on that basis. That's a short trip to disaster. Better love the person you marry not love.

The Fruit of the Spirit is concrete reality. Love, joy peace...

I am at **peace** with you, I don't just have peace. I am peace with those around me. Maybe they are my enemies but I am at peace with them even if they are not at peace with me. God gives me peace and I have peace with them.

If you've gone that far, you find a lot of other things very easy.

For example, **patience**. If you try to be patient with someone but you don't have love, joy, peace, lot's of luck. It won't work. If you have learned concretely to live in the Fruit of the Spirit by the presence of God in your life by taking the events of daily life and turning them over to God and living in them, you're going to find patience is a walk in the park.

What is the saved life?

[33:45]

A life devoted to BEAUTY, TRUTH & GOODNESS in the power of the risen and living Christ who is with you in all you do.

Beauty, truth and goodness are where God concretely dwells with us in our life.

~ "**Beauty**" is goodness made present to the senses.

~ "**Truth**" is a reflection of reality including beauty and goodness. These three go together. It enables us to seek and find what is good.

That's why Jesus said, "*If you are my disciples, you live in my word, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.*"

~ "**Goodness**" - all that nourishes and strengthens human life in a proper order.

* Strawberry milkshakes are good but you don't want to live for them.

You're looking for beauty, goodness & truth as a disciple of Christ. If your salvation does not include living with God in beauty, truth and goodness, your life is going to be a very dry haul. So much of the problem comes from having a Christ who has no association with beauty, maybe not even truth and not goodness.

A Christ without beauty, truth and goodness is a testimony against the goodness of God, the grandeur of God.

Your salvation includes these things. Jesus is the sponsor of them. He actually created them. You have to go the Cross but you don't live there. You live in Resurrection. The Cross is necessary but you do not live there, you live in the Resurrection life with Jesus.

The Cross is there to cut off the all of the things in our life that would keep us from the life of beauty, truth & goodness.

Beauty, truth and goodness without Christ is a wretched, failing, human substitute for the life we are meant to have. They always deflect, and go sour and become harmful. Watch a person who is trying to make beauty their religion and see how their life goes. It will not go well.

Beauty, truth and goodness, the substance of life in God, requires the presence of the Trinitarian God to hold it together and make it prosper.

I'm going to have to quit and I'm sorry but you have to go to class...and that's a good thing!

~ ~ ~ End of Teaching @ 38:10 ~ ~ ~