

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*



*St. Paul's Mission in NE Washington*

## Onward

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When you purchase an onion in the market there are at least a couple of layers of old dry skin that surrounds the good, or the usable part of the onion. This dead skin serves only the purpose of protecting the good part underneath, from the stresses of the natural world. In that same way when I discussed last week about Solomon's, "*life under the sun,*" in the book of Ecclesiastes, or Thoreau's, "*most men live lives of quite desperation,*" I was referring to those dead layers.

Protection from the elements, may be a good thing for an onion, but such is not the case in the development of the eternal personality of the child of God. As God's children, this death must be stripped off so that God's new life can become manifest.

So for some home work, your answers between you and God. When you think of "life under the sun" and most people "living lives of quiet desperation," how do you view your life on a scale of one through ten. One being no effect, ten being terrified of trusting God for all your present and eternal security. Do this now without thinking about it. Then pray about it for the next few days, until you believe you have an answer on how God views your present state. Of course just do it for both dead layers.

One of the more heavy books I wanted to read during my time of recovery, was Michael Horton's, "*A Better Way, Rediscovering the Drama of God - Centered Worship.*" That theme of the eternal drama, we will use as we work to finish this long series that we started on the redevelopment of community within the church. The book contains many useful insights from one whose evangelical persuasion is somewhat different than my own, in form but not that much in substance.

Just as with country music however, it plays better from back to front. Let me explain. Over my life I have read many books about change, environmental, social, religious. Usually they run about 200 pages, the first ninety percent dealing with what is wrong with the status quo, the remaining ten percent dealing with a vision of utopian future. This organizational method may be the only way to

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sell books in the world, but has really put a limit on my outside reading for many years. If you really have something that you think is important, put it out in such a way that ninety percent is somewhat useful towards the model you would like to see developed, ten percent in background information. This is what I try to do in these weekly messages. Many times with limited success..

True to form, in Horton's book as we neared 220 pages in this 240 page book, he began to move from reporting and analysis, to the development of this new means of worship he advocated. Then in the last two and one half pages, he discussed the "*Theology of the Cross.*"

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not need 240 pages to illustrate, but it is my opinion the problem with modern evangelicalism is just that. We must start with the theology of the cross and the rest will pretty much take care of itself. But sad to say, it is usually the other way around. By the time the pastor gets to a true presentation of the gospel, if it is presented at all, the Sunday crowd is asleep, or too bored to understand the real good news of the Good News.

So in the effort of brevity, but maintaining the continuity with last weeks message, add to your homework assignment, how you stand concerning Romans 12:1,2. Lest you forget:

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

On a scale of one to ten how do you rate in your reasonable service? That living sacrifice stuff doesn't play well anywhere in society today. Ergo, your mind is not renewed, and you have no idea of what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This goes for you personally, and in the corporate sense both in your job and your life within the church, the body of Christ.

This is why the gospel is so important. It is based on a foreign righteousness for your justification before God. Therefore, your reasonable service does not save you at all. It just makes your present life, meaningful, full of promise and love. As opposed to a couple of layers of dead onion skin.

Community, within the church as in secular service, (your job), and the Sunday worship service, is contingent to a large degree in how well everyone performs their reasonable service. If pastors and church leaders do not teach service, everyone is robbed of the joy of serving God in the joy of your own created personality. The greater community suffers also.

So what would you sacrifice your life for? This is not a question of what you would die for, but more a question of what would you do to really live. What would you really sacrifice in your complex well developed personal security, to trust in God? What would you do to begin to see the first fruits of eternal life developed in you, your family, and friends.

As illustrated in the lives of most evangelical Christians today, the salvation offered in the free gift of eternal life offered by Jesus Christ, has been degraded to the worthless, because we have emphasized the free, or a cheap passing experience, instead of the priceless gift, beyond the value man can ever earn, which changes your life forever.

How can you know if you are beginning to live in that life of continual renewal? Dr. Horton in those last twenty some pages of his book references Hebrews 4:1-10 which speaks to the rest of living in the perfect will of God:

*Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:*

*"So I swore in My wrath,*

*"They shall not enter My rest,"*

*although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."*

*Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said:*

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts.”*

*For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.*

In the profound nature of scripture, this passage integrates secular service with the religious service. Both are to be done in the Sabbath rest accomplished by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It must remain clear however, that secular has not become divine, nor the Lord's Day service become secular. As we rap up this topic we will differentiate the difference both in substance and operation, but that does not mean that the two cannot be integrated within your personal and church life.

As with last weeks emphasis to find a date which I could remember, to keep it simple, this week I would like to propose the term for that integration as LLP (**Living Loving Personality.**) As an apprentice to God in His eternal education process, we as LLP's love our common ties with humanity, both sinners and redeemed sinners, in our secular employment, whether that be a real job, or a ministry job. However, the worship service as constituted on the Lord's Day is to become a community celebration of what God has done for His elect children, both in time and across time. As we will see later, a half hour of self righteous, simple choruses does not a worship service make.

## Seeds for prayer

I met with Dr. Gabriel Aldea, my surgeon late last Tuesday. He immediately took me off all my medications except for a baby aspirin per day. This was an amazing gift in that he took me off what is generically called my lopressor (which controls my blood pressure and heart rate). When I first met with him he stated that I probably would be on this type of medication the rest of my life.

Friday, my heart rate went up and would not come down, but my blood pressure remained normal. I told the cardiac nurse that I might be having a bad hair day, meaning I definitely need a hair cut, but more to the point I felt like I was having withdrawal symptoms. They put me back on the lopressor and my heart rate returned to normal. She also mentioned that “you sure have come off a lot of stuff in a hurry.” I still want to get off this drug as soon as possible, but I have learned that may come from my cardiologist, which I now have an appointment on April 25th. However, I have also got that medication down to the quantity I was on for the month before I went in to have my operation, so that I wouldn't bust my aorta gusset.

I am now able to spend most of my sleeping night on my side, which is a definite improvement over having to sleep all night on my back. But nights and sleeping definitely are the most difficult times of the day.

I have recovered well enough to begin to think about moving on into this new life. Some friends gave me a copy of a biography of George Muller. This has encouraged me to seek to fund some of the desires that God has given me for ministry. More of those details will come as I find the information hopefully still on my hard drive. It all however, is integrated in this separate opportunities for community development of secular service and religious service. This will provide a bridge between the two, making our ability to sacrifice ourselves to God, to be not easier, but with more reinforcement from others, as God rebuilds the church community. And from that base give the church a fresh witness in this lost and dying world.

As you read in the pages of this journal, the war with Iraq, while it may be going according to secret military plans, is not the easy travelogue that was portrayed to and by the media. Now, severe splits with France and Russia, perhaps Germany appear mounting. That might not be a bad thing, but it is going to change a lot of the way the world does business and the role the United States will play in it. Having said that, the prayers for all armed forces, there families, and their military leadership become more important.