

The Direction of the Christian Life, I

I will begin this session by reading a prayer of Martin Franzman. This is from a little book of his that is entitled *Pray for Joy*. Martin Franzman was professor of New Testament when I was a graduate student at Concordia Seminary in the mid 1960s. He was very warm in his personality and very kind to me, and he had something of a literary flare. He was a good scholar and is the author of the book *The Word of the Lord Grows*, which I think is the best thing for understanding how the New Testament is put together. But he composed this little book of prayers, and this one is titled “That the Word May Work in Us.”

“O God, Almighty and all merciful, once chaos gave way for your command and your creation stood forth structured, wonderful, to call forth melody from all the singing stars. Our wild rebellion shivered and blackened all that called a chaos down more fearful than the first. And you have spoken a word more powerful, your word of love, your Son, and you have made us the first fruits of your new and righteous word. How shall we show forth the splendor of the world to come, the home of righteousness which shall one day live here unbroken and entire? We cannot, but your word can. Oh, let it work in us, that word implanted in our midst, your creative word, and let us bring forth summer fruits for you.” In the name of Jesus, amen.

We started last time on the direction of grace and had begun a presentation of the Word of God. The whole Word of God is instructive for us with all its various forms of literary genre, but we were focusing at the end of the last session on the direction that the Word gives, with respect to our actions, and we were noticing various kinds of Scriptural direction as it relates to that topic. First of all, there is the area of prohibition: do no harm. Love does no harm to its neighbor. So the negative commands have their place in setting their boundaries by showing us what is always and everywhere incompatible with God’s kingdom. But the Christian ethic of grace is obviously more fundamentally positive, and we have the positive commands, which tend to be open-ended. Galatians 6:10, which says “...do good to all,” is an appropriate peg I think. And when you look at that in context, it is “As you have opportunity, do good to all, especially those who are of the household of faith.” There are a lot of judgment calls made in how we go about doing good. We have to discern the opportunities that are ours by God’s providence, and we have to arrange our priorities in terms of the ways in which various persons are related to us. So “do good to all” is open-ended. The positive commands tend to be that way, and we do not tend to think of them as commands or duties, except in a restricted area. I am suggesting that the New Testament only rarely speaks of duty. And when it does, it is in some role relationship where there is a matter of conscientiousness that is elicited, such as in paying your taxes.

There are various relationships that we do not really think of as duty. If you are an honest person, then if you go to the bank and you are given more money in exchange for yours, a mistake has been made in your favor and you give it back. That is just what an honest person does. You are not thinking of duty; you are thinking of the poor teller who is going to be short at the end of the day and what she has to make up. That is the fulfilling of your responsibility as an honest person. It is for the sake of your neighbor. So we should not think of the Christian life as something where excellence is the point where the pressure of duty leaves off and this sort of open-ended area begins. It is all done in the same reference. And where there are specifiable duties, there is an excellent way of doing your duty—that is, for the sake of the persons. And so the spirit of doing our duty is transformed by God’s grace. But by and large, the positive commandments do not fit very well with duty. Although where they do our goal is to so internalize them that we delight in doing them. The goal of grace is to be able to say, “I delight to do your will, O, my God; your law is within my heart.” And so we do not think of the positive

commands in terms of duties that are imposed upon us. We freely adopt the will of God for our lives. We ask Him to show us what we should do, and then, relying on the Holy Spirit, we put it into practice.

Now, there is a third area that we need to focus on, and that is the area of permission. Normally in Scripture what is not prohibited is permitted. It is right in the sense of being according to God's will. There is a wide area of choices that are neither commanded nor forbidden. It is often thought that an ethics of divine commands, an ethic that refers everything to the will of God as the good, is going to operate solely in categories of commanded or forbidden. Well, that is not true. The category of permission is there in Scripture, and it surfaces from time to time. To clarify this point, the measure that I would use for this is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:25 where he says, "Eat anything." Obviously he does not mean bricks or centipedes, but he is talking about the foods that God has given to be enjoyed for the nourishment of the body. And nothing is to be refused if it is received in gratitude for God's gift, but it is to be offered up in praise to Him. The issue at Corinth, as you know, was whether a Christian could eat meat given in sacrifice to idols. And so long as it does not cause somebody who has a scruple against eating such meat to go against his conscience by putting peer pressure on him to do that, you are free to eat anything. "So eat what is bought in the marketplace, not asking any questions about it, whether it is been offered to idols or not." In various places in the New Testament the question of food comes up, because there is a kind of ascetic tendency to deny oneself certain foods. And the New Testament is clear that this is an area where the foods that we eat are neither commanded nor forbidden. This was not true in the Old Testament. The dietary laws restricted the eating habits of the people of God for symbolic purposes, so you could not eat shrimp if you were in Israel in the old economy. But now, everything is made clean. You can have your shrimp, if that is what you like, but you are not obligated to go out and eat shrimp just to show that it is part of God's good creation. It is in the area of different choices for which we use the term *audi opera*. That means they are not commanded or forbidden. From the point of view of motive, of course we do everything, even eating and drinking, to the glory of God. So there is a sense in which everything is to be done in that way. *Audi opera* has the specific reference of being neither commanded nor forbidden, but permissible, and the sphere of choices is wider than is sometimes supposed. Basically what is not prohibited is permitted.

If we analyze the categories of the way in which God's Word directs us in terms of our actions, I think that those three are the main categories. There are three additional categories that I think are useful as we approach that. And the fourth category is the area of counsel. Here I use 1 Corinthians 7:25-28, which says, "Now about virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life and I want to spare you this." Here Paul puts whether to marry or not in the category of counsel. And he says specifically, "I am not commanding you," but he gives a judgment, and he gives some considerations to take into account. Because of the present crisis, you have to consider the affects of the crisis on the marriage relation and whether you are equipped for it. But if you go ahead and marry, taking this judgment into account, you have not sinned. You are free to marry or not. And I think that in Scripture there is a wide area where we distinguish between command and counsel so that with respect to a number of questions that are very important to us, we do not expect a right and wrong answer from Scripture. Rather we get a call for a sanctified judgment on our part with respect to what God is doing in our lives. If we ask the question of what God's will is for all people everywhere at all times, we are asking which actions are right and which are wrong. In that case, Scripture either prohibits or commands. If we are asking what God's will is for me in my particular situation, as a member of the body of Christ and as a citizen of His kingdom, Scripture counsels. That is, it gives principles and calls for prudential judgment. But its direction in this case is relevant to individual

gifts and opportunities. God calls us to use our biblically informed, spiritually illuminated judgment in carrying out His mandates, particularly the cultural mandate and the Great Commission. It is a matter of judgment. And in these areas of such choices, Scripture does not give specific guidance, but it does give direction. It is not necessary for us to know infallibly that one course is the only right course and any other course would be wrong. What is required is that we ask the best of our knowledge based on sound understanding of the values of God's kingdom, His purposes for human life, and the principles that promote Him.

In Murray's *Principles of Conduct*, he puts it this way: "The Christian life involves in many cases choices between things that are good in themselves, and the choice in such instances is dictated by the intelligent evaluation of the circumstances, the gifts God has given us, and the calling to which He has called us." Another author says, "What is calling?—our vocation in life, whether to marry or not, or what use of our gifts to make—is an important question for which we do not expect a right and a wrong answer. To identify a calling, two things are normally required: the God-given ability to do the job and the equally God-given enjoyment in doing it because of your desire to do it." That is from a book by Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling*, and I think that his focus is right. I would add a third qualification, and that is the providentially given opportunity to do it. There may be vocations for which we are equipped and which we would like very much to do, and yet that avenue may be cut off from us because of providential circumstances. We have to bear in mind that circumstances are under God's control, but sometimes very gifted people who have a desire to do something are prohibited from doing it by circumstances. The best example I can think of is Robertson McQuilkin, president of Columbia International University, formerly Columbia Bible College, who always had a great emphasis on missions. He was a missionary to Japan. The institution fell on hard times, and they called him from the mission field in Japan to become the president of the institution. And after much soul searching, he did that, and he was equipped in it; it expanded his missionary horizons. And then his wife got Alzheimer's, and he discerned that his vocation would be to take care of his wife, and so he resigned from the presidency in order to devote himself to caring for her. That was the providentially arranged circumstance that he accepted from the Lord as his calling in that situation.

Finding one's calling is not a simple thing. It involves this complex reading of our gifts and desires, and in the case of a ministerial calling, the response of the church. It should bring satisfaction and fulfillment. God has created us in such a way that we should look for that. But there may be some false starts in the course of finding one's calling. We should not bemoan that, but it is just not so easy to put all these things together. Sometimes we receive some setbacks. The question is whether to persevere to overcome them, or whether this is God by His providence telling us we should look for another calling. And that is when we need the Holy Spirit in order to give us that insight into these various matters as to what we should be, on the basis of the counsel of God's Word.

Sometimes when we find a calling it has the force for us of a command. Mother Teresa, for example, gave herself and devoted herself to the poor. It was something that she was equipped to do; she had tremendous administrative gifts. And it was something she had a deep desire to do. In those circumstances, that became for her something that if she did not pursue it, she understood herself to be disobedient to her calling. But, God in His providence could have sometimes prevented people who have had that same motivation, ability, and zeal for something that really is important in God's kingdom, and God has not seen fit to allow them that fulfillment and satisfaction. So we have to be careful about saying that this is what I am commanded to do. Rather, we should have the attitude of this is what I perceive to be the Lord's will for me, and as I am enabled, I will carry it out to the best of my abilities.

You might ask whether this is the area where we are most likely to become legalistic and slip into a kind of false idea of the imposition of God's will. I think that all four of these are areas where we are subject to confusing man-made decisions or man-made rules with the will of God. That is the heart of legalism. Legalism, in the technical sense, is justification by works. We know enough to reject that. Legalism slips in by other ways. Sanctification by law rather than by the Spirit is another way in which you rely on the law itself to have a sanctifying influence. We reject that also. There is also this idea of legalism in rules that you make for yourself that are not derived from God's Word. Usually we do not feel as strongly about rules that are stricter than the Bible. We feel that if you are less strict than the Bible then that is really what needs to be worried about. But actually, it is not good to be either more or less strict than God. You know, we have to discern what God's will is because He is the Lawgiver and Judge. His commandments are for our good. The commandments we make for ourselves may help us in seeking the good, but they may detract us from the good, particularly if we assume that they have a universal aspect. That is, what is helpful to us may be good discipline to other people as well. That often is burdensome. And I think how that works in this area is that people sometimes impose the idea of going into the ministry as the ideal, so that you have to give a reason for not going to the mission field. Otherwise, you go to the mission field. I heard lots of sermons on this. I think that is a distortion of the idea of finding one's vocation in terms of the evangelism mandate, the Great Commission. And we should recognize that the cultural mandate is also the vocation of God's people. As a matter of fact, unless there are Christians in all the arts and sciences, our message becomes a very narrow message. God is the God of all of life, and therefore we need folks in all vocations exhibiting the richness of God's creation and glorifying Him.

The next category I call precedent. And this is more of a hermeneutical principle, I think, than it fits with these other three. But I think that Matthew 12:7 is useful to think on as the way in which Scripture directs us. In Matthew 12:7 Jesus says, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent." He is quoting Hosea 6:6, and it is actually the second time in Matthew that He has quoted it. Back in Matthew 9:13 Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6. In this context in Matthew 9, the Pharisees are complaining that Jesus is eating with sinners. And Jesus said, "Those who are well do not need a doctor; I came to heal the sick." It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Go learn what this means: "'I desire mercy not sacrifice, for I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.'" He is telling them, you have an inadequate hermeneutic; go learn what this means. "I will have mercy, not sacrifice." What is God really about when it comes to dealing with sinners? What is important here? Go learn what this means. He says in Matthew 12 that if you had known what this means, if you had learned the lesson of Hosea 6:6, you would not have condemned the innocent. The precedent that He cites is David and the showbread. They are complaining about Jesus' disciples going through the grain fields on the Sabbath day. They are hungry, so they thresh a little grain. And they get on Jesus' case for what His disciples did. They hold Him responsible for what His disciples are doing. "They are breaking the Sabbath." Well, Jesus sends them to a precedent in the Old Testament where David and his companions who were being chased by Saul and lacked a food supply were allowed to eat the showbread, which only the priests, strictly speaking, were allowed to eat. And in defending that precedent, Jesus quotes the principle "mercy, not sacrifice." He is telling them to think about what God really wants here. The ceremonial law under ordinary circumstances is to be followed to the letter, but here is an emergency need for bread. David did not just go running in and grab the showbread; he went about it in a decent and orderly way. He was given the showbread for his men to eat because the human need took precedence over the ceremonial law. The principle for us to think through is what God's purpose is in giving His commands and being able to relate them.

You could say the Pharisees could come back and say, "Ah, that is narrative. David did a lot of things that are not necessarily right. How do we know this was right on David's part?" Well, it is true that

usually we interpret the narrative in light of the didactic, but it does work the other way. According to Jesus, we should have the ability to discern that this was right for David to do, and the narrative portions of Scripture are there to balance, lest we over interpret some things. I think one way we may be over interpreting is where Paul says in Timothy, "Do not allow a woman to teach a man." But there is a precedent where Priscilla teaches Apollos, so we need to avoid over reaching that text and not imagining any situation in which a woman teaches a man. We need to remember that precedents are also instructive. They are part of God's direction for our lives. We can talk about the specific example a little later on, but you have to think through what God is really after in giving His commandments and what the rationale is behind the commandments. And think through in every case how they serve what is truly important to Him. The verse in Hosea makes clear that the ceremonial law was subordinate to other concerns. The error of Israel was in thinking that the ceremonial law was what kept them safe, and Jeremiah even goes so far as to say the Lord did not command sacrifices. Of course He did, but it was not His primary concern, but rather the mercy was. The sacrifices and all the ceremonial law had their role and purposes, but it was subordinate to the other concerns. So I think precedent is important for us to keep in mind as a hermeneutical principle in relating to what is either prohibited or commanded in Scripture.

There is one final point to be made, one final category of Scriptural direction. John Frank calls it commendation. It is a useful category. There are certain things given to us in Scripture that give us positive direction by way of commendatory example. They cannot be made a matter of law. It is an area in which we understand that our response to God cannot be contained in strictly legal categories. There are a couple of good examples. One is the account in 2 Samuel 23 of David's mighty men. The story is that David is fighting the Philistines, and they captured his hometown. They are in Bethlehem. They have that under their control. And David, who is the Lord's anointed, should be able to control his hometown at this particular point in redemptive history and is fighting to gain that foothold. And he says as he looks over Bethlehem, "Oh, I wish I could have a drink of water from the well that is by the gate of Bethlehem." Now, that would be inside the gate, and it is inside the garrison of the Philistines. That is where they are getting their water. Well, some of David's men hear about that and they fight their way through the Philistine lines, get the water from the well inside, and then fight their way back out. It is really a very vivid story. It is an heroic action. And they present it to David. "Here, here is the water you wanted." And David pours it out as a drink offering to the Lord. He perceives that in their loyalty to him, as the Lord's anointed, the deeper loyalty is theirs to the Lord. How can he drink this water that his men have risked their lives for in this heroic deed? Now, that receives his commendation. It was an appropriate expression of their devotion to the Lord's anointed, and thus to the Lord, but it is not something that you can make as a matter of requirement.

Another example is in Mark 14:6 in the account of Mary's anointing of Jesus with the pure nard, that very precious ointment. It is in an alabaster jar that is not worth so much as the perfume that is inside it, which they tell us is worth a year's wages of a day laborer. So she takes what is very expensive perfume and anoints Jesus with it, and some of the disciples protest against that. What a waste! I mean, you are talking about a year's wages, and that could have supported a person and his family for a year. What are we doing here? Well, Jesus says she has done a beautiful deed. He commends her for it. Mary has perceived something that the others are missing. She perceives that she does not have very long to do this deed with respect to Jesus. Apparently she believes Him when He says, "I am going to Jerusalem to be crucified." And so Jesus says, "She has anointed me in advance of my burial." He accepts this deed for what it is, as something that is beautiful. Do you see how Mary's devotion goes beyond legal categories? It was something fitting that she did in the responsible exercise of her freedom. It is like the widow who put two mites into the temple treasury, which was all her living, and Jesus commended her for that. She just gave everything that she had out of devotion to the Lord. I think we need to leave room

for those kinds of actions that are commended. You cannot put them in the area of command, but they are a fitting response of gratitude to God. They do not earn us extra credit with God; they are not supererogatory in the sense that we gain some special credit for them, because Mary has that perfume by God's grace and she has a desire to break it and anoint Jesus by God's grace. But still you see the response of love for our Savior goes beyond what can be put in legal categories. And I think when it comes to ethics that it is important to remember that there are extraordinary circumstances and deeds that are called for. It cannot be specified in advance, but nevertheless, receive the commendation of Scripture.

That leads me to a second category of the direction of grace, which is the relevance of the example of Christ. I think that you can move from the last example of commendation to the example of Christ through 2 Corinthians 8, where Paul holds up the Macedonians as a model when it comes to Christian giving. They gave beyond their means. They were so joyful to participate in the ministry to the poor in Jerusalem that they just gave beyond their means. And first, they gave themselves to the Lord, Paul says. It is a wonderful model of giving, and Paul encourages the Corinthians to use that example, "remembering our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, he became poor in order that we through his poverty might become rich." He has given everything, so be generous in your giving for the poor. So Paul's approach to Christian giving illustrates that the directive principle of the Christian life is the will of God as revealed in Christ and the Holy Scriptures. Now, it could be that, and our catechism says that it is, the Word of God contained in the Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, is the only rule. And we know the example of Christ from the Word of God, so I am not saying that is not an accurate or adequate way of putting it. But I think that we need to highlight the example of Christ, because it is specifically appealed to as giving us direction for our lives.

There are a couple of places in 1 Corinthians where Paul introduces the idea of imitation of Christ and then imitation of him as he follows Christ. Look at 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 11:1. And there is a similar pattern in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 1 Thessalonians 2:14, where the Thessalonians are called to follow the example of Christ and the example of the churches that follow Christ. In Philippians 3:17 Paul says, "We are fellow imitators of Christ." And so Christ's example thus becomes normative for us. John 13 is a classic passage for the example of Christ. What He does in John 13 is the most definitive example where this comes about. It is in that context of washing the disciples' feet that He says, "Love one another as I have loved you." In other words, this is the new commandment. What is new about it is Jesus' example and how He has embodied love in this fully serving way. Through the whole Old Testament the principle has always been that the calling of God's people is to walk in the ways of the Lord. That is not only the ways that the Lord prescribed, but also the ways in which He has shown us by His own activity in ministering to the fatherless, the poor, and the widow, having compassion upon the alien, and delivering folks from slavery. Those are all themes in which we imitate God, even in the Old Testament.

Now it comes to the primary example, the example of the incarnate Lord, who represents, above all, the kinds of persons that we ought to be. So far when we are talking about those categories of the Word—prohibition, command, and so forth—we are talking about how the governed activity of attitude as mental activity belongs in those as well, but here we are talking about the kind of person we ought to be. When it comes to the example of Christ, we are in the area of virtue, or character, and Christ illustrates for us in His person the kind of virtue that we ought to have. I want to use a few verses that illustrate this that have to do specifically with the cross of Christ as embodying for us certain character traits that need to be there for Christ to be formed in us. The first is love. Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Walk in love as Christ has loved us and given himself as a sacrifice for us." The sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the voluntary laying down of His life for us on the cross, now becomes the example to move us in our love for one

another. That is the kind of person we should aspire to be. That love issues in the service of others. Mark 10:45 says, “The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Again, you get the cross as the epitome of Christ’s service. So there is love and service, and His humility is seen in Philippians 2:1-11. That same passage also talks about His obedience unto death, even death on a cross. So He serves in this specific way, and the cross is also an example of endurance, as seen in 1 Peter 2:21-25. So in each of these cases where the example of Christ is appealed to specifically, with respect to the example of the cross, there are these qualities of persons that are exhibited: love, service, humility, obedience, endurance. All of those are virtues that we are to imitate. It is not so much in terms of specific actions that Jesus is our example, as it is in terms of the qualities of personhood that led Him to the cross. This is very powerful in terms of the development of our character.

I want to say something about Christ and character that needs to be said to try to help us understand how character is formed in us. Somewhere in the *Allegory of Love*, C. S. Lewis remarks on how foreign the notion of the Christian warfare would be to Plato and Aristotle in connection with ethics. It is just something that they would have even considered. The reason is doubtless their lack of the doctrine of the fallenness of human nature, something a Christian view of character development or growth in grace must necessarily take into account. This is one reason why I think we need to take this into account, as well as actions. Behind actions are always motives. And the motivation of greed, for example, affects the way people look at a number of things.

The right relation of virtue to action is important. One author that I read put it this way: “While virtue enables a person to act in accordance with divine law, sin creates obstacles to doing so. In other words, inordinate love of pleasure, money, power, honor, and glory, as well as anger, resentment, sloth, anxiety, and the like, lead people away from the good. It is not hard to see how these disordered passions in turn have negative, sometimes devastating, consequences for families, large social units, and governments.” The virtue is the key to ethics in a very real sense.

How should we approach this question of virtue in terms of the example of Christ? The Bible gives us various lists of vices and virtues. There is no standard list in the New Testament. The virtues list occurs in various places, such as James 3: the wisdom from above. The fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians 5. The characteristics of love are in 1 Corinthians 13. One way of getting a handle on the virtue of grace that overcomes the fallenness of our nature is to look at them in terms of what are called the seven deadly sins. They really are root sins. At some point, the adjective deadly got attached to them. But they really are better understood as root sins—that is, capital sins from which other sins flow. Pride is an example. By the way, these go back to the inter-testamental literature. The testaments of the 12 patriarchs written about 100 BC are about the first times these seven appear, so it became standard teaching in the Middle Ages and in some of our most prominent authors in English—Chaucer, for example, and Dante in Italian. Their literary works revolve around the seven deadly sins, so it has had a prominent history. Pride is a root sin. In Ezekiel 16:49 the sin of Sodom is traced to pride. The sin of Sodom is traced to their arrogance, and the specific sin that results from the sin of pride is their negative attitude toward the poor. In Ezekiel 16, it is not the sexual side of the arrogant rebellion against God, but it is rather the social side in terms of their refusal to take care of the poor. That is characteristic of pride.

After pride is envy, and this is explicit in James 3:16. “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, all sorts of destructive things follow. Envy is a spirit of opposition to others’ happiness. Envy is displeasure at another’s good and the urge to deprive him or her of it. And it goes back as far as Cain and Abel. What was Cain’s problem with Abel? Well, Abel’s sacrifice was accepted and Cain’s was not.

Cain could not stand it. It is envy that led him to murder. Joseph's brothers could not stand the idea that he was the favored one. What was Saul's problem with David? Well, the people sang about how Saul had killed his thousands while David killed his ten thousands. Saul could not let David get that kind of praise. And in the Gospels it is envy that lies behind the Pharisees' pursuit of Jesus' death. So it is a root sin. All sorts of things flow from it.

Anger is mentioned in Ephesians 4:31, for example. Then sloth is found in Hebrews 6:12. Sloth, by the way, in its best understanding is not just laziness. It is more apathy; that is, the loss of desire to do anything. And particularly, it is the loss of moral desire, the lack of hunger and thirst after righteousness, giving up on life and particularly giving up on goodness. Avarice is explicit in 1 Timothy 6:10. Avarice is the love of money. In 1 Timothy 6:10 Paul says that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." It is a root sin, and it leads to various kinds of destruction. Philippians 3:19 names gluttony. And finally, lust is mentioned in Ephesians 4:19.

Those are the seven deadly sins, so-called, the seven root sins, and there is a kind of logic to the order that I listed them. You notice that the list begins with the more spiritual sins of pride, envy, anger, and apathy, rather than the more physical, material sins of avarice, gluttony, and lust. We tend to focus on them from the bottom up. In fact, Dorothy Sayers has a famous essay on the six other deadly sins, because so much focus is particularly on sexual lust that we neglect these others. But that is starting at the bottom. That is not an important area that we need to attend to, but there is a certain logic in this order.

What are the opposites of these, in terms of the work of grace in our lives? Well, obviously, the opposite of pride is humility. And that is one of the most often mentioned character qualities of Jesus: His humility, His recognition of who He is in relationship to God, particularly God the Father, and His subordination to Him. Humility did not make anybody's list in the classical period of philosophy. In fact, Aristotle considered pride to be one of the virtues, so that there is this radical differentiation between the ethics of grace and humanistic ethics right at this particular point.

In a recent book on virtue ethics by Richard Taylor, published in 1991, he has a chapter on the virtue of pride. He titles it "Pride is Justified Love for Oneself." And this is what he says. You will think that I am making this up and that this is a parody, but he is serious. "Genuinely proud people perceive themselves as better than others, and their pride is justified because their perception is correct. Thus, they love themselves not as children and ordinary people do, for these do not possess the kind of worth that justifies such self-esteem, but because they really are, in the classical sense of the term, good. They are their own in the truest sense, that they come from within themselves and win the approbation of the only judge that counts, oneself." You think I am making it up, but that represents humanistic ethics. That does represent Aristotle, and it is why Augustine said they are splendid vices when you look at the classical lists of virtues. They are rooted in self-achievement, the opposite of gracious bestowal. In the preface of this book, Taylor takes a really Nietzschean turn. He says, "This book repudiates the debilitating egalitarianism of modern ethics in favor of the ideals of the ancient pagan moralist. We have for so long been taught to think first of the outcast and to regard others as equal to ourselves that we have all but lost sight of the ideal of individual excellence." He is talking about the impact of Christianity in the Western world. And he wants to get back to paganism. "We have been so conditioned and enervated by the beatitudes that we are hardly capable any longer of understanding, much less appreciating, the truth that was so obvious to the pagan moralist. Virtue originally meant strength and superiority and was correctly believed to be rare." That is the context into which the Christian message comes with the example of Christ, who being found as a man humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

I think I need to say something since Aristotle is advocated again. I think we need to make a distinction. In the next session I will talk about a common morality and the natural knowledge of the moral law that we want to affirm. But the idea of self-salvation through exercise of our freedom is quite different. In Mortimer Adler's book, *Six Great Ideas*, from 1981 before he became a Christian, he makes a point that is relevant. He says, "Our natural freedom consists in freedom of the will." Well, we agree with natural freedom in the sense of the natural ability to make choices that are not coerced. We act according to what we are as human beings and what we call in the Reformed tradition free moral agency. And human beings always have natural liberty. That is something that is necessary to being a human being. Adler goes on to say, "Our acquired liberty, which is sometimes called moral freedom, consists in our having a will that is habitually disposed by virtue to will as it ought." Now, that is where the difference comes in. Aristotle, and Adler at this point, is thinking this is an acquired habit by the exercise of our natural freedom in the direction of virtue. We become virtuous by making those choices habitually. So it is acquired liberty, the freedom to act as we are. That was basically Pelagian's view. Augustine's position was that we become virtuous by grace. We need to be born again. We need to have the disposition, the *habitus*, of grace implanted in us in order for us to become truly good. So there is that radical distinction.

On humility, we should understand that for us it means that we recognize and see ourselves as God sees us. That is not self-deprecation; we are creatures of God, and therefore there is a certain dignity to our humanity. It is not humility to deny that. Sanderson is very good on that subject. The artificial fruit of self-deprecating humility that Christians sometimes confuse with humility needs to be rooted out, as well as the weed of pride. But it is seeing ourselves as God sees us, which means recognizing that He is our Creator. As we are sinners, it involves our contrition. And with respect to others, it means serving them in terms of their needs, esteeming our neighbors with ourselves.