



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Morality's Perfect Model

David Anguish

Introduction

1. I remember exactly where I was sitting when I discovered one of the most important things I've ever learned: at my desk in my office in the building of the first church I served, reading a book as part of my preparation for a study of Christian ethics. Since the author merely cited the text to support his point, I stopped and looked it up.
2. And made a personal discovery that unlocked the door to what I believe to this day is one of the most vital things we can learn as we think about the nature of a moral life.
3. The passage is 2 Corinthians 3.17–18 where, in the context of comparing the old and new covenants, Paul teaches:
 - a. That true freedom is found “where the Spirit of the Lord is.”
 - b. That those who follow the Lord “are being transformed [μεταμορφόω, *metamorphoō*; passive voice] into the same image [εἰκόν, *eikōn*]” he has, a metamorphosis that “comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”
 - c. That this is a growth process, “from one degree of glory to another.”
4. From this, we conclude that:
 - a. Morality is about being more like Jesus, whose ideal image God wants us to share as we live out the reality of the reversal of sin's effects in our lives (“fallen short of [God's] glory” — Rom 3.23).
 - b. Doing this makes us genuinely free, even though we are completely surrendering our will to his.
 - c. God enables our growth, transforming us into the holy people we are intended to be.
5. That is thrilling and liberating! It's an idea that points us to morality's perfect model.

Body

I. God's Nature as the Basis for Being Moral.

- A. To review from our [previous study](#), God's demands are not arbitrary, nor is his will imposed on us just because he is more powerful than we are. His character gives

him the right to require moral purity from us.

1. He shows what is best: he is holy (1 Peter 1.15–16), a trait which makes him unique, whether the objects of comparison are alleged gods or human examples.
2. He knows what is best: his infinite wisdom (Isa 46.10; Ps 147.5) gives him a perspective which sees the pitfalls he then warns against.
3. He wants what is best: he is love (1 John 4.8); he will not use his superior knowledge to harm us, but only to seek what is in our best interest.

B. Even with these assurances, however, we have questions.

1. Is God, “way up there” as he is, really fair in making demands on us who live in the trenches of moral decision making? How could he possibly understand our frailty and the difficulty we have in doing the right thing?
2. The answer is stunning: he came here and lived as one of us.
 - a) Like news reporters and legislators who have gone “undercover” as men of a different race or as a homeless person in order to identify with their problems.¹
 - b) Jesus was Immanuel, God *with* us (Matt 1.23; John 1.14).

II. Jesus’ Nature as the Perfect Model for Being Moral.

- A. As seen in his unique relationship to the Father: cf. Heb 1.1–3; Col 1.15; John 10.30; 14.7–9.
- B. Jesus is the goal for the believer’s life: 2 Cor 3.18; Rom 8.29 (which also uses *eikōn*); 1 Cor 11.1; see also Heb 12.10 and Col 1.15 (where *eikōn* is again used).
- C. Remember that Jesus is the sum total of what life should be: John 14.6.
 1. He is the way — how to live — the answer to ethics.
 2. He is the truth — the reality in which all people should believe — the answer to epistemology.
 3. He is the life — what is real and meaningful, or purposeful — the answer to metaphysics.
- D. In short, Jesus answers two of the most important questions we can ask.
 1. What would God be like if he was human?
 2. What would humans be like if we were perfect?

Conclusion

1. While teaching school, I served several years as coordinator and taught an elective course for our peer counseling program. In the curriculum materials we used, Barbara Varenhorst included a story of a little girl who, because she was frightened and did not want to be alone at bedtime, cried out to her mother. To calm her, her mother said,

¹ See, for example, John Howard Griffin, the white reporter who used dyes and medications to change his skin color to experience firsthand what it was like to be a black man in the 1950s south. He reported his story in the book, *Black Like Me*. A more recent example is the CBS television show, *Undercover Boss* which featured CEOs who donned a disguise and went undercover to find out more about the workings of their companies.

“You have your doll. Your doll will keep you company.” “When I’m lonely,” the girl sobbed, “a doll is no good to me. I was someone with skin on her face.”²

2. Moral decisions are not always easy. But it is comforting to know that they can be made in light of a perfect example who is interested in helping us share his image and holiness. Writing to the Ephesians about moral issues, Paul told them the key was in how they “learned Christ” (Eph 4.20).
3. Jesus was here “with skin on his face.” Let us, too, “learn Christ.”

www.davidanguish.com

² A version this story appears in the article, “Someone with Skin On,” on the blog, *God Speaking: Walking with God*, March 2, 2018. <https://godspeaking.blog/2018/03/02/someone-with-skin-on/> Retrieved February 7, 2026.