

## Sanctification: Transformed Into the Image of Christ

### Lesson 22

#### I. The Dualism View

- a. There is a difference between a programmed, deterministic, mechanical response and the mental process we call consciousness. Consciousness is more than perceiving and knowing; and this is what Cartesian **dualism** addresses.
- b. Dualism is the concept that our mind is **more than** just our brain. This concept states that our mind has a non-material, consciousness and some would say that it includes a spiritual dimension which possesses an eternal attribute as well.
- c. Dualism is the only position that is compatible with a Biblical anthropology of man and it is diametrically opposed to the philosophical position of **Materialism**.
- d. One way to understand the concept of dualism is to consider our “**self**” as a container including our physical body and physical brain along with a separate non-physical, immaterial mind, spirit, and or soul which floats above the material brain.
- e. Although, **no one** understands the nature of the interaction between the mind and the brain, we have many reasons to hypothesize that such interaction does take place and it is to that area of functioning that we now turn our attention.

#### II. The Spiritual Mind

- a. The concept of dualism as articulated by Descartes is accepted by some neuroscientists of our day and **fits** comfortably with the Biblical anthropology of man as we understand it.
- b. While both regenerate and unregenerate persons possess mind, the regenerate person accesses the mind of the Spirit from his spiritually **endowed** mind. Phil 2:5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: KJV*
- c. Therefore, with dualism we would expect the spiritual mind to have **similar** attributes to that of its source. Genesis 1:26 *“Then God said, ‘let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness . . .’*
- d. The spiritual mind is an **observer** of the sensory stimuli of the brain, monitoring brain reactions as a stimulus is encountered. It is aware of the mental models, interpretations, and intended actions which automatically form in the brain.
- e. When the intended actions are not consistent with the Spirit, the observer (spiritual mind) seeks to change the emotional or behavioral reaction. Saying no to the “**old sin nature**” is one of the primary roles of the spirit mind in the believer.
- f. At the point where the spiritual mind **over rides** the inclination of the brain (old nature), it provides an alternative behavior, and instruction to positively do that which is consistent with the Spirit. Gal 5:16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. KJV*

#### III. Dualism – Rational and Scientific Support

- a. The question remains: Why do dualists believe that there is a distinction between the mind and the brain; what **evidence** exists apart from the Bible that such a division exists. There is actually a great deal of data to support the dualist notion.
- b. A British study published by the journal “Resuscitation” provided evidence that consciousness **continues** after a person’s brain has stopped functioning and he or she has been declared dead. Consciousness after death lends support to the notion of dualism.
- c. Other research has discovered that there is no place in the brain where electric stimulation can **cause** a person to believe or to decide. These functions apparently occur outside of brain activity and thus, suggest the distinction between mind and brain.
- d. Our thoughts can be true or false. However, brain states cannot be true or false. A brain state is **active** or inactive, not true or false. The ability to have thought content that is not explainable by brain states supports dualism.
- e. Libert’s research attempting to identify decision making activity in the brain points out that the conscious will retains a right to veto an action (button pushing) in the last few milliseconds (sometimes referred to as “**free won't**”).
- f. Therefore, desires from the mind to perform a volitional act which **differ**s from that which is set in motion by the brain, are able to over ride the neuronal activity of the brain by the conscious efforts of the subject, even at the last second.
- g. When Roger Sperry and his team studied the differences between the brain’s right and left hemispheres, they discovered the mind has a causal power **independent** of the brain’s activities. This led Sperry to conclude that materialism was false.
- h. These are just a few of the hundreds of research projects which raise questions about the validity of Materialism as a **theory** and suggest that some form of dualism is in play that explains the relationship between mind and brain.

#### IV. Brain Research and the Link to Sanctification

- a. Research of **OCD** patients notes that these patients report that they simultaneously experience two distinct awareness’s. The one is an observer, the other directing behavior that seems apart from, and at odds with, their intrinsic sense of self.
- b. They report that some part that is “**not them**” (not their conscious mind) is taking over the brain’s controls (a hijacker), compelling the unwanted behavior which is so common in the experience of OCD patients.

**Sanctification: Transformed Into the Image of Christ**  
**Lesson 22**

- c. For example, this “hijacker” may urge them to wash their hands, when they are fully cognizant of the fact that their hands are not dirty. The objective observer (mind) knows that there is something wrong but the compulsion from the brain to act seems irresistible.
- d. Various treatment modalities have been applied to these patients in an effort to free them from the torment of their OCD. Everything from talk-therapy and behavior modification to electro-shock, to drugs, and lobotomies were tried without success.
- e. In the late 1980’s and early 1990’s some researchers began using cognitive therapy in which the patient is helped to assess the contents of their thought stream, teaching them to note and correct the distortions that characterize their pathology.
- f. Around that time, brain research identified specific brain structures that were involved in the repetitive thoughts and rituals which they labeled as the OCD circuit.
- g. Further brain research was able to isolate areas within the orbital frontal cortex which once stimulated, created the obsessive thought that something is wrong. This thought in turn drives the compulsive behavior which is an effort to right the wrong.
- h. Additionally, a pre-post PET scan was able measure the actual brain shape changes that occurred as a result of 10 weeks of therapy in which the patients were able to substantially overcome their OCD symptoms without the use of medication.
- i. While the precise brain circuitry in operation may be different, what happens within the brain of an OCD patient is analogous to the experience of the believer who yields himself to sin.
- j. In both cases, the actor is faced with a strong impulse to act/think/speak in some way that is unwanted by the true self. This impulse to act is recognizable and is acknowledged as contrary to the desires of the true self. Rom 7:18-19 *For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. NIV*
- k. Unless the actor takes the conscious steps to overcome the unwanted behavior, the brain will compel action that is undesirable. Rom 8:13 *but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, NIV*
- l. In the case of the OCD patient this unwanted behavior may be hand washing, or some other repetitive behavior. In the case of the believer the unwanted behavior will be some sinful response.
- m. In both cases, there is an observer that objectively knows the truth of the situation and yet this objective observer is countermanded by an opposing force (the brain) which exerts pressure to act in ways that are not in harmony with the true self. Rom 7:17 *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. KJV*
- n. It is documented that OCD patients can be trained to defeat these unwanted behaviors in spite of the impulses, without medication, and that the brains of these subjects actually show a change in shape as a result of the training. This is called brain elasticity.
- o. If unregenerate persons with verifiable brain pathology can habituate to new more desirable behavior through a cognitive approach to modifying brain activity, then a Spirit filled Christian ought to be able to learn Christ-like responses to situations. Rom 8:4 *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. KJV*
- p. Given the presence of the Spirit and the instruction of Scripture, therefore, with an understanding of the mechanisms of the brain and how to defeat its sinful ways, it should be possible for a believer to achieve life changing results. Rom 7:24-25 *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. KJV*
- q. The situational application of Scripture to experience is the key variable which will unlock the mysteries of “how” one is able to put on this new man. How this is done shall be the focus in the final phase of this Sanctification series.

**V. Application**

- a. From what you know thus far about this theoretical approach, in what ways is this distinguishable from “self reformation”?