

Surely you've heard how a brand new car loses a significant amount of its value as soon as it is driven off the lot. The pristine condition of the car as it came from the factory is gone immediately. Sand from the road gets in the wheel wells, dust settles on the interior surfaces as soon as the door is opened. The new car can keep its status as "new" for some amount of time depending on a few things, like how much care is put into keeping things clean and maintained, and what is one's **tolerance for imperfections**. The same is generally true for restoring an older car. The level of detail one chooses to pursue when trying to return that pristine, "like new" condition varies depending on the goal, patience, ambition, and resources of the restorer. And when shopping for a used car, you will see general descriptions of the condition of the car that will mean different things to different people. A few of the many terms are Like New, or Excellent, Good, Fair, Parts Only, or, my favorite, "Runs and Stops." The condition of any car will naturally progress from better to worse over time. Even if someone performs continual maintenance with intense scrutiny and diligence, (i.e. wipe off the dust, buff out the scratch, sand off the rust, replace the worn part, change the oil...) after years of use, the condition will deteriorate, and the car will require restoration. As you know, this progression toward a poor condition is not limited to cars.

*But evil men and impostors will **proceed from bad to worse**, deceiving and being deceived.
(2 Timothy 3:13)*

Scientists call this progression "entropy." Entropy is the tendency for the universe to move toward disorder. Examples of this include an ice cube melting in a glass of juice (what would it take to reverse this?) planting a beautiful flower garden (without tending the garden, the weeds would take over quickly) mixing together salt and pepper (separating them would take hours with a magnifying glass and tweezers) simply letting the air out of a balloon (you will not inflate it again without expending effort.) Reversing this process of entropy takes concerted, intentional, and often costly, effort and energy.

Our sinful nature follows this pattern. Like how a drug addiction over time requires increasingly more substance to produce the same effect in the user, if left unchecked, our sin will progress (probably better called "regress") to a deeper, darker, more devastating level. I have heard it said that **this "regression" is a blessing!** Eventually we will reach a point in our state of sin where we cannot take it anymore. Things will get so bad that we will wake up and realize that we are on a downward spiral and need to climb out. This realization could be what saves us. One famous example of this regression in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel 11. This is the story of King David's "big sin." One day he notices a beautiful neighbor woman... What starts as an unhealthy attraction toward another man's wife, devolves into adultery, lies, deception, and cold-blooded murder. And, most importantly, it ends with repentance. Here is what David wrote to express his remorse for these sins:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalms 51:1-5)

Our condition changes over time – and generally the change is more of a fluctuation than a steady trend. We would love a "continuous improvement," but most of us experience our condition getting better or worse depending on... all kinds of things. Remember, the law of entropy says that without putting in concerted, intentional effort, our condition will naturally deteriorate. Whatever fluctuation we experience is due to our **efforts and entropy battling it out in our conscience and actions**. Here in Romans 12, Paul encourages us to not let ourselves be conditioned (conformed) by the world and its ways.

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

Our “condition” is a direct result of what we allow or accept as “conditioning.” Conditioning, like what an athlete does to improve their performance, can be a positive thing. Or, conditioning can be a negative thing, like how some people have been conditioned to believe that money can buy happiness. These types of conditioning might also be called “training,” or “brainwashing,” depending on the connotation you want to ascribe. We also receive conditioning in our spiritual walk from our environment, influences, experiences, history, and our own sub-consciousness. Thankfully, **we have control over the type of conditioning we accept and implement** – the good or the bad: the “training” or the “brainwashing.”

He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm. (Proverbs 13:20)

We’ve been granted an excellent and effective tool to promote the “training” and discourage the “brainwashing.” We would be smart to use it every day. That is the Word. Even signing up to receive a “verse of the day” would prove to be a beneficial action toward positive conditioning and fighting our “spiritual entropy.”

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for **training in righteousness**; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

Conditioning takes place simply by being alive and it starts the moment we are born. As our condition “leaves the lot” in its pristine, from-the-factory state, it begins its regression toward corruption and disarray. It requires maintenance. But, like the car analogy, even with diligent maintenance, our soul will eventually need a restoration. God takes pride in the potential we have and if we choose to allow Him, if we ask according to His will, He will be The Master Craftsman that restores us to that pristine condition.

*For **we are His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)*

While the condition of our walk may fluctuate due to the nature of our human ability, **our position in God’s plan does not change**. Our position is Rock solid and constant. Don’t ever forget that our position is a redeemed soul, chosen by the Creator, being prepared to receive His gift of eternal life. The knowledge of that fact, the faith we have in that Truth, will carry us through the difficult times. Our walk is not easy – in fact it is impossible. But with Him, all things are possible.

*Looking at them, Jesus *said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27)*

In the 3rd chapter of 1 John, we are reminded that we are, or become, what we practice. If we practice lawlessness and sin, then we end up lawless and sinful. If we practice righteousness, we remain righteous.

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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