

Beyond Survival: Growing in Christ as Trans Christians

I Will Survive

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dYWe1c3OyU>

Introduction

Briefly describe why it is necessary to grow in Christ during these troubled times. Stress that it is not an option. We either grow as Christians or we wither and die. Merely coasting along is not an option. Those who are content to drift in the Christian life often end up going around in endless circles until they sink or crash and break up on some needle-sharp rocks. To avoid these dismal scenarios, it is necessary to check and test the foundations on which our lives are built. This is precisely what I am going to help you do.

As trans people, we must not merely survive but learn to thrive by bearing the good spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22–23. Now let us proceed to the first readings.

First Reading: Psalm 127:1–2 & Matthew 7:24–27

The Liturgy

1) P1: To live the Christian life, it is first of all necessary to be "born from above" (John 3:3) by the Holy Spirit of God. Without the Spirit's gracious power, any attempt to lead the Christian life will produce only anger, misery, legalism, depression, frustration, disillusionment, and resentment towards God and His people. Our own feeble strength cannot live the Christian life; we must depend totally upon divine grace, mercy, and power.

2) P2: O Lord, show us your truth and enlighten our hearts. Humble us and help us to accept your divinely revealed truths so that only You and Your Son, Jesus Christ, may be glorified by the way we live. Amen.

Fight the Good Fight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YppcFC8mxKM>

Second Reading: Hebrews 6:1–3

Teaching

Since we are utterly dependent upon Christ, the next stage of spiritual growth is to understand and apply the elementary teachings, or first principles, that were listed in the previous reading:

i. Repentance from dead works, which stem from human initiative and pride (Psalm 127:1–2; Mark 7:1–23; Luke 18:9–14; Ephesians 2:2–3; Philippians 2:3).

Repentance amounts to far more than mere regret or sorrow for sin. Rather, it is a complete *metanoia*, or a drastic change of mind, that leads to a major change in behaviour. It can be viewed as a paradigm shift. There is general repentance, when we first turn away from sin and towards Jesus; then there is specific repentance, which occurs when we confess and deal with particular sins that have cropped up in our lives.

For trans people, it is important to distinguish between real personal sins and the accusatory guilt feelings that arise from internal psychological and external social pressures. Here, we may need to ask for wisdom to distinguish between the two (James 1:5).

ii. Faith, a humble trust in God, which comes through hearing, reading, and obeying His Word (Psalm 37:5; Lamentations 3:22–23; Daniel 11:32–33; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6).

Such faith amounts to far more than nominal or intellectual consent or naïve credulity. Biblical faith is the type of faith that leads to commitment and ongoing faithfulness to God's will, to the degree that we understand it.

Saving or justifying faith, which leads to forgiveness and a right relationship with God, is to be distinguished from the daily faith we exercise as Christians and the gift of faith that God sometimes imparts when we face an otherwise impossible situation.

For trans people, it is helpful to face the question: do we believe that God is capable of dealing with all the problems and complexities associated with being trans? In particular, was Christ's sacrifice sufficient to cover all the real and imaginary sins in this area? Here, the choice is between belief and unbelief. There is no middle ground. Back in 2014, I chose the path of belief, and my life has never been the same ever since.

iii. The doctrine (teaching) of baptisms—total bodily immersion in water, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and various kinds of suffering, including persecution (Matthew 3:11; 20:21–23; 28:19; Acts 2:4; 10:48; 2 Timothy 3:12). These dimensions of baptism can all play an important role in establishing us in the faith.

Water baptism is a means of publicly identifying with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through water baptism, the faith is witnessed to, and it can mark a decisive change from an old way of life. Through Spirit baptism, we receive power for service and are equipped with the gifts necessary for that service. It may also contribute significantly to our spiritual growth.

Through a baptism of suffering, which some of you know all too well, there is an opportunity to draw closer to God and to address issues we may have been in denial about. We may learn the hard way that, with Jesus at the centre of our lives, we can do nothing (John 15:5c). Undeniably, the Christian life involves immense conflict at the sociopsychological and spiritual levels. The suffering it causes can make us better or bitter as people.

For trans people, the suffering associated with gender incongruity can at times be excruciating. Personally, I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. However, the good Lord can redeem suffering and bring immense good out of it. There is an opportunity to become more caring and compassionate people. We will have been through the refiner's fire (Malachi 3:2–3).

iv. The laying on of hands for healing, deliverance, and commissioning for service. It may also result in the impartation of blessings, such as an infilling by the Holy Spirit (Mark 5:41; 8:25; 16:17–18; Acts 13:2–3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; James 5:14). Here, we move into the area of public ministry.

During the period of the Toronto Deception (from 1994 to 1997), I saw this gift woefully abused in ministries operating in the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3). Those who received what I termed "the laying on of claws" suffered badly from depression and confusion. In the case of one student I ministered to, these negative traits were lifted only when he renounced them in prayer. It was like watching a cloud lift very quickly.

Before receiving such a ministry, it is wise to check the teaching and credentials of anyone offering it. For trans people, it is perhaps necessary not only to do this but also to actively renounce any unnecessary self-condemnation created by a laying on of claws. If there's spiritual junk in your life, get rid of it.

v. The resurrection of the dead—to meet God in perfected, resurrected bodies (Job 19:25–26; Daniel 12:2; Luke 14:14; John 5:29; 11:24; Acts 23:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

To the Ancient Greeks, the idea of a physical resurrection was incomprehensible and a subject of public mockery (Acts 17:32). This was due to their Platonic dualism, which separated the spiritual from the physical. Whilst the former was exalted, the latter was derided. A pure soul was seen as being trapped in a carnal body.

This way of thinking penetrated the Church and had long-lasting effects, particularly, though not exclusively, in the monastic movement. Even today, it enshrouds some sections as if it were some slow-acting poisonous miasma.

For trans people, there is the hope that they will be given perfect new bodies, free from any hint of incongruity. In these resurrected bodies, we will be recognisable but also endowed with new powers. Here, Christ's own resurrection appearances may serve as a guide as to what our own bodies will be like. He is, after all, the first fruits of a wider resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20). In our glorified bodies, we will rule over angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). The distinctions and social structures associated with marriage and earthly gender roles will have been surpassed (Luke 20:34–36).

vi. Eternal judgement will take place at:

a. The Bema Judgement, where our faithfulness in Christian service will be assessed (Romans 14:10–12; 1 Corinthians 3:10–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). There will be both reward and loss of reward. A careful examination will take place of the fruit our lives bore. We may well be asked what we did with the gifts and blessings we were given.

b. The Great White Throne Judgement, which will examine whether we have actively rejected or casually ignored Christ or rejected or ignored the spiritual light we had received. It is very much a judgement for the wicked. There will be an eternal separation of the sheep from the goats. You don't want to be there (Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 8:12; 25:31; Luke 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9; Revelation 20:11–15; 21:8).

Whether these judgements occur concurrently or are separated by a long period of time is a matter for theologians to dwell on. What is clear is that all of us, without exception, will have to appear before God to give an account of our lives. As Hebrews 9:27 warns, "after death comes judgement."

Our Lord will not condemn us simply for being trans, something that is not, in itself, a moral choice. However, we may well be asked, "What did you do with being trans?" It is here that personal responsibility comes in.

To grow in Christ, we must apply these basic teachings as far as we are able. If we don't, our lives will collapse. All that is needed to make progress is a humble, teachable spirit that is willing to learn and apply even the hard teachings of Scripture. Being a Christian does involve being a perpetual student.

However, successful application is conditional on having Christ in the first place. You must know Jesus personally to have Him as your foundation. This happens through receiving the new birth, or spiritual regeneration, mentioned in John 3. On offer is the gracious promise expressed in Romans 10:9: "*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.*" In short, get to know Jesus first, and then you can build your life around Him.

Restore, O Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBYITC5ROs>

3) P1: May we grow in maturity by taking these foundational teachings to heart. We need to build upon them through prayer and regular participation in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. May we continually appreciate that Jesus alone is our Great High Priest. By His death, He abolished the need for any other form of propitiatory sacrifice, designed to appease God's justified wrath against sin. In addition, let us be joyfully aware that Jesus is in heaven interceding for us and continually pouring out His strength and grace (Hebrews 7:25ff). Even now, He hears and actively responds to our prayers, answering them in ways we cannot always imagine.

4) P2: Dear Lord, we are thankful that, through Your Holy Spirit, You are actively at work during this time of prayerful worship. Please help us be sensitive to Your guidance and promptings.

5) P1: Moreover, there is no need to flounder in despair or confusion, because in heaven there is—

6) All: "One Lord and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

7) P1: It is He who offers the hope of eternal life. Our prayers are answered only because of the merits of Jesus Christ. He alone is our High Priest; without Him, our prayers would never be acceptable before His holiness.

8) P2: All the prayers of the angels and saints in heaven could never replace those made by Jesus on our behalf. Alleluia!

9) P1: Be strengthened by the realisation that, in Jesus, God is our friend, who will work tirelessly for our welfare, especially during periods of sickness, financial hardship, suffering, confusion, temptation, and persecution. So go boldly about your Heavenly Father's business, carefully and joyfully obeying and following the confirmed guidance of His Holy Spirit (Luke 2:49; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1). Be like Jesus, who, out of love, always spoke and acted according to His Heavenly Father's will (John 5:19, 30; 8:38; 14:10, 24).

10) P2: This we will do in the power granted to us. Amen.

11) P1: Living an effective Christian life that glorifies God depends upon having a sound knowledge of biblical teaching (1 Corinthians 14:20). To wilfully ignore biblical teaching is to dismantle the safeguards against spiritual deception and, indeed, every other form of deception.

12) P2: Lord Jesus, thank You that You know each of us completely and call each of us by name. Help us to receive our lives with gratitude and to bear faithful witness to You in every circumstance.

13) P1: What we believe is the foundation of what we do, and what we do can sustain our beliefs, keeping them real and alive.

14) P2: Although we are in right standing with God by faith alone, we need both faith and works to grow spiritually and to be effective witnesses for Christ in this world.

15) P1: Be encouraged that, in His wise mercy, our Heavenly Father has provided twelve ways to grow spiritually and to become more like Jesus.

The Presiding Participant and the Other Participants take turns reading each sentence aloud.

16) These are:

- i. Spiritual regeneration** (being "born from above" by the Holy Spirit).
 - ii. Sound knowledge** and application of fundamental biblical doctrine.
 - iii. Self-honesty** about our sins and weaknesses.
 - iv. Self-knowledge** about our talents and strengths.
 - v. Spiritual discernment:** avoiding deception and finding, and remaining within, the will of God.
 - vi. Submission to God's will** on a day-by-day basis.
 - vii. Self-correction:** learning from, and not persisting in, our mistakes.
 - viii. Study of God's Word** and other relevant material, enabling us to serve Him better in this world.
 - ix. Sacramental participation** in Holy Communion.
 - x. Sung prayer and worship**, which add beauty to our devotion.
 - xi. The disciplined struggle against sin**, whereby, relying upon God's grace, we control and subdue our many sins.
 - xii. Christian fellowship**, whereby we engage with and learn from other people.
- 17) P1:** Be wise! Follow these ways and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, show God's love to a fallen world.

18) P2: This we will do, relying upon God's strength.

19) All: O Lord, teach us to depend upon Your grace alone, so that we may grow and become effective witnesses for You. Please do this for the exaltation and glorification of Your great Name. Amen.

20) P1: Remember, true freedom is found in humble submission to God and to the truths He has revealed (John 8:32). To pursue our own way in life, with no reference to Christ, is to court disaster.

21) P2: Abba Father, grant us the strength to remain faithful to You and obedient to Your will. Amen.

22) P1: "Be not children in your understanding, but in your understanding be men," for "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (1 Corinthians 14:20; John 8:32).

23) P2: Lord Jesus, send Your Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, so that we may enjoy true freedom and the ability to honour Your Father in every area of our lives. Amen (John 16:13).

He Who Would Valiant Be

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydPn31WCkNs>

Discussion

There are four questions for us to discuss and reflect upon.

- A. What are the lessons we have learnt through being trans?**
- B. What can we do that we could not do if we were not trans?**
- C. How has being trans shaped our walk with Christ?**
- D. How does being trans help us grow in the faith and make our lives a blessing to others?**

I shall now open the session for discussion and for people to share their prayer needs.

Summary

1. Christian growth is essential, not optional. The liturgy begins by emphasising that Christians cannot simply drift through life. Trans Christians are called not merely to survive difficult circumstances but to grow and thrive in Christ, bearing the spiritual fruit described in Galatians 5:22–23.

2. Christ is the foundation of spiritual life. Genuine Christian growth begins with being "born from above" through the Holy Spirit and recognising our complete dependence upon God's grace, mercy, and power. We are encouraged to build our lives securely upon Christ rather than relying upon our own strength.

3. Spiritual maturity requires foundational Christian teaching. The liturgy explores the teachings in Hebrews 6: repentance, faith, baptism, the laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgement. These doctrines are presented as foundations that Christians must understand and apply as they mature in their faith.

4. Trans Christians can find meaning, responsibility, and hope in their experience. The liturgy distinguishes between genuine personal sin and unjustified guilt or self-condemnation. It acknowledges the suffering that may accompany being trans while affirming that God can redeem suffering, use it to develop compassion, and ultimately bring His people into the hope of resurrection and perfected life.

5. Growth in Christ requires active spiritual practice. Twelve means of spiritual growth are identified: regeneration, sound biblical teaching, self-honesty, self-knowledge, spiritual discernment, submission to God's will, self-correction, study, Holy Communion, sung prayer and worship, disciplined resistance to sin, and Christian fellowship. The liturgy concludes by encouraging trans Christians to grow in faith, follow Christ faithfully, and become a blessing and witness to others.