

"Pace is a Habitual Problem"

"The Problem of Pace" (Pt. 3 ½)

June 19, 2022

"I'm swamped."

I've said it, you've said it—we've all said it at one point or another. Maybe you're in a season of feeling swamped right now. You roll out of bed each morning exhausted from not getting enough sleep. You pull open your phone to find a dozen text messages, from the ridiculous (another GIF of a dancing dog) to the exhausting ("Can you bring Chloe home from church tonight?"). If you manage to squeeze in a few minutes of 'quiet time,' you're quickly interrupted by your calendar notifying you of today's meeting that you didn't have enough time to fully prepare for.

At work, the struggle continues. Your to-do list seems to be getting longer, not shorter. Your day is filled with back-to-back meetings, with no time to think in between. When you are finally able to carve out some time to focus on some 'real work,' that familiar ambient anxiety creeps in, leading you to question if the project you're working on is the 'right thing' for you to be focused on at that moment.

After work, you rush back home to have dinner with your family or friends. Sitting across from the people you care about the most, you're there but not really there, as your brain is trying to do the thinking you didn't have time to do during the day. After dinner, it's the mad rush of all rushes: clean up, help the kids with their homework, and pray that everyone finds time for a bath. After streaming your favorite show, studying for an exam, or cramming in a few minutes of reading, you check email one last time and go to bed, only to wake up and do it all over again the next day." **Jordan Raynor**, *Redeeming Your Time*, p. xvii (2021)

Rom 7:14-23 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

...While I don't think Paul was specifically thinking of the Problem of Pace in his experience ...His informing insights about the nature of our inner desires, our outer actions, and the presence of a war being waged sound an awful lot like some of our thoughts when it comes to the Pace of Our Lives!

Whichever interpretation we take, this passage drives home the profound and perplexing disorder that sin introduces into the human mind, a disorder that can be healed only by the even more profound grace of God in the gospel. (Gospel Transformation Study Bible Notes) [Rom 7:13]

UNDERSTANDING HABITS

Definition: *a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up.*
(Oxford) *a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior; an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary; Addiction*
(Webster)

A habit is a routine or behavior that is performed regularly—and, in many cases, automatically.
James Clear, Atomic Habits (p. 6). Penguin Publishing Group

Six years after I had been hit in the face with a baseball bat, flown to the hospital, and placed into a coma, I was selected as the top male athlete at Denison University and named to the ESPN Academic All-America Team—an honor given to just thirty-three players across the country. By the time I graduated, I was listed in the school record books in eight different categories. That same year, I was awarded the university's highest academic honor, the President's Medal. ...I hope you'll forgive me if this sounds boastful. To be honest, there was nothing legendary or historic about my athletic career. I never ended up playing professionally. However, looking back on those years, I believe I accomplished something just as rare: I fulfilled my potential. And I believe the concepts in this book can help you fulfill your potential as well. ...We all face challenges in life. This injury was one of mine, and the experience taught me a critical lesson: changes that seem small and unimportant at first will compound into remarkable results if you're willing to stick with them for years. We all deal with setbacks but in the long run, the quality of our lives often depends on the quality of our habits. With the same habits, you'll end up with the same results. But with better habits, anything is possible. **James Clear**, *Atomic Habits* (pp. 6-7). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

... "the quality of our lives often depends on the quality of our habits. With the same habits, you'll end up with the same results."

Understanding the WORLD in Which We are Building Our HABITS

...We live in a particular theological setting!

- 1) *A world of pleasures... & difficulties*
- 2) *A world with an ongoing presence of "corruption" (we are in a 'fallen condition') ...and 'evil' (there is an active force outside of us with a will of its own)*
- 3) *A human body that engages these pleasures & difficulties in ways that I MUST be aware of*

"Temptation" exists in me and in this world. Temptation informs me that "I am made of FLAMABLE Material!" ...I can get around something that reaches back into what I'm made of and sets me on fire!

Gen 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever

Prov 6:23-27 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, ²⁴ to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. ²⁵ Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;
... ²⁷ Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?

...This is a “PROXIMITY Passage”!

... A Variety of Things are “Beautiful” to us (Attractive for pleasure or problem solving or relief or distraction)—thus the allure!

“HABITS... and the “Presentation Principle”

Romans 6:12-16 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Paul invokes what we might call “the presentation principle.” You are the slave of the person to whom you present your life (v. 16), so, by all means, present yourself to God! (Gospel Transformation Study Bible Notes) [Rom 6:15]

***NOTE:** Many “Habits” are not “Unrighteous” in themselves—the problem comes, when they begin to exercise CONTROL over us!

v. 12 ...a Command (Remember Pr 6:23) **for something that's Not "AUTOMATIC" ...**
"Don't let sin reign in you ...it is seeking (actively) to make you obey its passions"

- **"Sin" has some kind of "passions"** (strong desires) ...sin has an "unrighteous default setting"
- **"Evil" is also described as present** ...this is probably more "personal"! Satan & demons are the "personalities" behind evil.

...So, when it comes to managing the Lure of Habits, I am going to bump into the "General Operation of Sin" (we all face that) ...&... the "Specific Agenda of Evil" (that's a little more "Tailored to ME")

To What am I "Presenting Myself"— and Why?

- ***Why Do I Have the Habit of so Much "Fearful Meditation"?***
- ***Why Do You Have the Habit of Taking in So Much Social Media?***
- ***Why Do I Spend So Much Time Listening to Social Commentary?***

*...Why are you so quick to follow the "Discipleship Programs" of media and commentary tribes?
...what's flammable in me?*

Is it FEAR? ...Is it "TRIBALISM"? ...Hint: You know you're becoming guilty of "tribalism" when you line up COMPLETELY with "Group Think"

- ***Why do you have such an Enlarged Habit of Gaming?***
- ***Why do you watch so much TV or "Binge Watch" Netflix?***
- ***Why Do I Have Habits of "Over-Parenting" or "Super-Parenting"?***

"...the connection between finitude and child-rearing was not difficult to make. Our kids don't need to be good at everything. In fact, they are not supposed to be good at everything! And once we finally believe and embrace this, it liberates our children (and us!). We can now start delighting in other people rather than viewing them as challengers to be overcome. ...from parents' inclination to overschedule their children's lives, to how they imagine their kids should be stars in everything. Such homes are consumed with activity and have little space for rest and reflection. ...we sign up the kids for more activities, hoping they will eventually succeed. And until they do succeed, we lie to them and tell them they are amazing at everything, hoping one day it will be true. Kids start to believe the problem lies not with their own shortcomings, but with the judges, with the teachers, with their peers— with anyone and everyone but themselves. Although meant to encourage self-esteem and success, this strategy eventually undermines our children's long-term self-esteem and view of self because the myth of their "excellence" at everything cannot be sustained. At some point the course of life will expose what we then receive as painful truths: we are not the best, the brightest, the most able. There are always stronger, more beautiful, more brilliant people. At some point the illusion comes crashing down, and when it does, it can have devastating consequences. ..."

As a college professor, I frequently see young adults coming to terms with these very difficult facts that had been, in various ways, hidden from them. But no “helicopter” or even “bulldozing” parents can protect the child forever. Each of us must face our limits and weaknesses at some point, whether we want to or not. **Kapic, Kelly M.** *You're Only Human* (pp. 11-12)

...As we can see—Pace is NOT Merely a Time Management Problem! ...It is also a “Habit” and “Presentation Problem”

Romans 7:21-25 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Clearly Paul’s words express gratitude for a present deliverance, but it is likely that they also have eschatological significance. The deliverance we have today is wonderful, but it is partial and incomplete. It is but a first instalment of greater things to come, and Paul looks forward to that great day with his burst of thanksgiving. **Leon Morris**, (Pillar New Testament Commentary Set (14 Vols)) [Rom 7:25]

...Clearly—Paul did not live a “frustrating” & “freedomless life”!!

Habits are a Battleground ...but the Life in the Spirit (Rom 8) brings the “first-fruits” of Eternal Freedom

2 Cor 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.