

Jules' selections from Kierkegaard's *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*

For the Personalist Project Reading Circle on Saturday, April 21.

Purity of Heart is a longer and more difficult book than we normally discuss in our reading circles. I suspect not everyone will be able to read through the whole thing. That's why I have collected, and strung together with a bit of commentary, some of my favorite passages from the first part of book. I hope everyone can at least read these before we meet.

Some of the passages I selected may be hard to understand, partly because they are taken out of context, and also because Kierkegaard writes in a very unique, poetic and evocative style, that takes some getting used to. No matter. If a particular section is not clear, just move on to the next. We'll talk about it on April 21st.

Preface

In the preface Kierkegaard explains the purpose of the book, and what sort of reader he is hoping to reach. It has to be someone who takes the work to heart, who reads it not only for objective content, but for his own edification; someone who realizes, in the words of the Personalist Project's motto, that these things concern himself (*tua res agitur*).

This little book ... is in search of that solitary "individual," to whom it wholly abandons itself, by whom it wishes to be received as if it had arisen within his own heart; that solitary "individual" whom with joy and gratitude I call my reader; that solitary "individual" who reads willingly and slowly, who reads over and over again, and who reads aloud — for his own sake.

This reader should pay attention, not to Kierkegaard, nor to the text itself, which is only a means to an end, but to his own relationship to the good (i.e. to God), of which the text knows nothing. Kierkegaard compares his own labors, to that of a needle-women making an altar cloth:

When a woman makes an altar cloth, so far as she is able, she makes every flower as lovely as the graceful flowers of the field, as far as she is able, every star as sparkling as the glistening stars of the night. She withholds nothing, but uses the most precious things she possesses... But when the cloth is finished and put to its sacred use: then she is deeply distressed if someone should make the mistake of looking at her art, instead of at the meaning of the cloth; or make the mistake of looking at a defect, instead of at the meaning of the cloth. For she could not work the sacred meaning into the cloth itself, nor could she sew it on the cloth as though it were one more ornament. This meaning really lies in the beholder and in the beholder's understanding... It was allowable, it was proper, it was duty, it was a precious duty, it was the highest happiness of all

for the needle-woman to do everything in order to accomplish what was hers to do; but it was a trespass against God, an insulting misunderstanding of the poor needle-woman, when someone looked wrongly and saw what was only there, not to attract attention to itself, but rather so that its omission would not distract by drawing attention to itself.

Introduction: Man and the Eternal

Because there is something eternal in man, the past is never simply over and done with. A man is still responsible for it. He can still be affected by it, or affect it himself (through repentance, for instance) by changing its meaning and hold on him.

Oh, the desolation of old age, if to be an old man means this: means that at any given moment a living person could look at life as if he himself did not exist, as if life were merely a past event that held no more present tasks for him as a living person, as if he, as a living person, and life were cut off from each other within life, so that life was past and gone, and he had become a stranger to it.

The eternal, then, touches man at every moment of his temporal existence. It gathers all his moments into one, and in some sense keeps them present. That is what makes repentance both possible and necessary.

For repentance is precisely the relation between something past and someone that has his life in the present time.

It is eternally false, that guilt is changed by the passage of a century. To assert anything of this sort is to confuse the Eternal with what the Eternal is least like — with human forgetfulness. (This line is from the next chapter.)

(Not just the past, but also the future affects the present. Our death and immortality for instance.)

While it is true, then, as Solomon says, that “there is a proper time for everything”, in another sense, some things are proper at all times: e.g. fear of God, thanksgiving to God, praying, and also remorse and repentance.

Remorse, Repentance, Confession

And yet man is also temporal. He moves along in time, and does one thing after another. Doing many things at once is (usually) doing each of them badly. It is necessary, therefore, to set aside specific time for remorse, repentance and confession. Man must prepare and recollect himself for the occasion.

...remorse should be an action with a collected mind... In a setting of freedom, bearing the impress of eternity, repentance should have its time, yes, even its time of preparation. For in proportion to what should be done there, the time of collection and preparation is not a drawn-out affair. On the contrary there

is a sense of reverence, a holy fear, a humility, that that which is to be done in the pure sincerity of this act of repentance may not become vain and overhasty. That a man wishes to prepare himself is no torpid delay. On the contrary, it is an intense agitation of heart that is already in alliance with what is to be done there. From the point of view of the Eternal, repentance must come instantaneously, indeed there is not even time to utter the words. But man is in the temporal dimension and moves along in time. Thus the Eternal and the temporal seek to make themselves intelligible to each other. Just as the temporal does not wish for delay simply in order to withdraw itself, but, conscious of its weakness, asks time to prepare itself; so the Eternal yields not because it gives up its claim, but in order by tender treatment to give frail man a little time.

Kierkegaard thinks there is a danger of confusing genuine repentance with the mere impatience to get it over with, to end the discomfort of guilt and remorse.

Experience teaches that the right moment to repent is not always the one that is immediately present. For repentance ... can so easily be confused with its opposite, with the momentary feeling of contrition, that is, with impatience. It can so easily be confused with a painful agonizing sorrow after the world, that is, with impatience; with a desperate feeling of grief in itself, that is, with impatience. But impatience... never becomes repentance... [T]he sobs of impatience no matter how violent they are, never become sobs of repentance. The tears of impatience lack the blessed fruitfulness... [F]or that reason, precipitate repentance is false and is never to be sought after. For it may not be the inner anxiety of heart but only the momentary feeling that presents the guilt so actively. This kind of repentance is selfish, a matter of the senses, sensually powerful for the moment, excited in expression, impatient in the most diverse exaggerations — and, just on this account, is not real repentance. Sudden repentance would drink down all the bitterness of sorrow in a single draught and then hurry on. It wants to get away from guilt.

More on the importance of recollection:

[Confession, is a] holy act for which preparation should be made in advance. As a man changes his raiment for a feast, so is a man changed in his heart who prepares himself for the holy act of confession. It is indeed like a changing of raiment to lay off manyness, in order rightly to center down upon one thing; to interrupt the busy course of activity, in order to put on the quiet of contemplation and be at one with oneself... [O]ne cannot confess without this at-oneness with oneself. He that is not truly at one with himself during the hour of the office of Confession is merely dispersed. If he remains silent, he is not collected; if he speaks, it is only in a chatty vein, not in confession.

But he that in truth becomes at one with himself, he is in the silence. And this is indeed like a changing of raiment: to strip oneself of all that is as full of noise as it is empty, in order to be hidden in the silence, to become open... [W]hen we are thinking of divine things, the deeper the stillness the better.

The stillness.. impresses him... with the seriousness of eternity... [I]t calls for earnestness... And the One that is present at this confession is an omniscient One. He knows and remembers all that this man has ever confided to Him, or that this man has ever withdrawn from His confidence. He is an omniscient One that again at the final moment of this man's life will remember this hour, will remember what this man confided to Him and what this man withdrew from His confidence. He is an omniscient One who knows every thought from a distance, who knows plainly the very path of each thought, even when it eludes a man's own consciousness. He is an omniscient One "who seeth in secret," with whom a man speaks even in silence, so that no one shall venture to deceive Him either by talk, or by silence, as in this world where one man can conceal much from the other now by being silent, and again even more by talking

God knows everything. We confess, not to inform Him of something He did not know, but to know and change ourselves.

The person making the confession is not like a servant that gives account to his lord for the management which is given over to him because the lord could not manage all or be present in all places. The all-knowing One was present at each instant for which reckoning shall be made in the account... Nor is the person confessing like one that confides in a friend to whom sooner or later he reveals things that the friend did not previously know. The all-knowing One does not get to know something about the maker of the confession, rather the maker of confession gets to know about himself... A hasty explanation could assert that to pray is a useless act, because a man's prayer does not alter the unalterable. But would this be desirable in the long run? Could not fickle man easily come to regret that he had gotten God changed? The true explanation is therefore at the same time the one most to be desired. The prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who offers it. It is the same with the substance of what is spoken. Not God, but you, the maker of the confession, get to know something by your act of confession.

Barriers to willing one thing: 1. variety and great moments are not one thing.

Kierkegaard is now ready to begin the meditation with which he wants to help the reader in the act of confession. It is based, he explains, on James 4:8:

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." For only the pure in heart can see God, and therefore, draw nigh to Him; and only by God's drawing nigh to them can they maintain this purity. And he who in truth wills only one thing can will only the Good, and he who only wills one thing when he wills the Good can only will the Good in truth.

Kierkegaard knows that only the Good (or God) is truly and absolutely one. Therefore, to will anything else, is to be double-minded and inwardly divided.

The person who wills one thing that is not the Good, he does not truly will one thing. It is a delusion, an illusion, a deception, a self-deception that he wills only one thing. For in his innermost being he is, he is bound to be, double-minded. Therefore the Apostle says, "Purify your hearts ye double-minded", that is, purify your hearts of double-mindedness; in other words, let your heart in truth will only one thing, for therein is the heart's purity

Pleasure, for instance, is a multiplicity of things and leads to inner conflict and fragmentation:

In the time of pleasure see how he longed for one gratification after another. Variety was his watchword. Is variety, then, to will one thing that shall ever remain the same? On the contrary, it is to will one thing that must never be the same. It is to will a multitude of things. And a person who wills in this fashion is not only double-minded but is at odds with himself. For such a man wills first one thing and then immediately wills the opposite, because the oneness of pleasure is a snare and a delusion. It is the diversity of pleasures that he wills. So when the man of whom we are speaking had gratified himself up to the point of disgust, he became weary and sated. Even if he still desired one thing — what was it that he desired? He desired new pleasures; his enfeebled soul raged so that no ingenuity was sufficient to discover something new — something new! It was change he cried out for as pleasure served him, change! change! And it was change that he cried out for as he came to pleasure's limit, as his servants were worn out — change! change!

Likewise, the desire to be respected and esteemed by the world is double-mindedness, because the world's honor is ever changing.

...like worldly contempt, worldly honor is a whirlpool, a play of confused forces, an illusory moment in the flux of opinions. It is a sense-deception, as when a swarm of insects at a distance seem to the eye like one body; a sense-deception, as when the noise of the many at a distance seems to the ear like a single voice... Whoever, therefore, wills this honor or fears this contempt, whether or not he is said to will one thing in his innermost being, is not merely double-minded but thousand-minded, and at variance with himself. So is his life when he must grovel — in order to attain honor; when he must flatter his enemies — in order to attain honor; when he must woo the favor of those he despises — in order to attain honor; when he must betray the one whom he respects — in order to attain honor. For to attain honor means to despise oneself after one has attained the pinnacle of honor — and yet to tremble before any change. Change, yes, where does change rage more unchecked than here? What desertion is more swift and sudden, like a mistake in foolery, like a hit by a blind man, when the seeker for honor has not even time to take off the garb of honor before insult seizes him in it? Change, the final change, the absolute certainty among the range of unpredictables: no matter how loud the thunder of honor may sound over his grave, even if it could be heard over the whole earth, there is one who cannot hear it: the dead man, he who died with honor, the single thing he had desired. But also in dying he lost the honor, for it remains outside, it marches home again, it dies away like an echo. Change, the

true change, when eternity exists: I should like to know if honor's crown is offered to the much-honored one there!

What is true for pleasure and honor, is true for all "worldly goals." They *appear* to be "one thing", but are never "one thing" in truth:

Carried to its extreme limit, what is pleasure other than disgust? What is earthly honor at its dizzy pinnacle other than contempt for existence? What are riches, the highest superabundance of riches, other than poverty? For no matter how much all the earth's gold hidden in covetousness may amount to, is it not infinitely less than the smallest mite hidden in the contentment of the poor! What is worldly omnipotence other than dependence? What slave in chains is as unfree as a tyrant! No, the worldly goal is not one thing. Diverse as it is, in life it is changed into its opposite, in death into nothing, in eternity into damnation: for the one who has willed this goal.

To commit to the good in a momentary fit of "brazen, unholy enthusiasm" is also not the same as "willing one thing"; good intentions and loud resolutions are no substitute for the steady commitment of the will.

But there is also the opposite error: A person may realize that it is the will that matters, and not just good intentions, and then turn this very insight into a new and even more "devilish" temptation. It may lead to contempt for the weakness of others and proud reliance on one's own strength. It may lead to the illusion that one can break free from the hold of sin without help.

How shall one describe the nature of such a man? It is said of a singer that by overscreaming he can crack his voice. In like fashion, such a man's nature by overscreaming itself and the voice of conscience, has cracked... [N]o matter how desperately such a man may seem to will one thing, he is double-minded. If he, the self-willed one, had his way, then there would be only this one thing: he would be the only one that was not double-minded, he the only one that had cast off every chain, he the only one that was free. But the slave of sin is not yet free; nor has he cast off the chain, "because he scoffs at it." He is in bonds, and therefore double-minded, and for once he may not have his own way. There is a power that binds him. He cannot tear himself loose from it. Nay, he cannot even wholly will it. For this power, too, is denied him.

This self-willed person is more attached to his own strength and independence than to the good. And when he finally realizes that he can't, after all, "will the good" on his own, he is often unwilling to humble himself and ask for help. He would rather maintain his independence and be destroyed, than admit his weakness and be saved.

Alas, it is horrible to see a man rush toward his own destruction... [T]hat, in the anxiety of death, a man should not cry out for help, "I am going under, save me"; but that he should quietly choose to be a witness to his own destruction! Oh, most extreme vanity, not to wish to draw man's eyes to himself by beauty,

by riches, by ability, by power, by honor, but to wish... to be exceptional by means of his own destruction.

Barriers to willing one thing: 2. The reward disease

It is easy to see that someone who wills the good, not for goodness' sake, but only for the sake of the reward, is double-minded. Luckily, Kierkegaard thinks, this temptation is pretty rare because, in this world, the good is rarely rewarded.

the Good has almost an edifying quality here in this world... For here the man who in truth wills the Good, by willing one thing, is very rarely led into the difficulty of being tempted by reward. Now, that the Good has its own reward is indeed forever certain. There is nothing so certain. It is not even more certain that God exists, for that is one and the same thing. But here on earth, Good is often temporarily rewarded by ingratitude, by lack of appreciation, by poverty, by contempt, by many sufferings, and now and then by death.

It is more tempting to will both; to think one can be devoted to the good and simultaneously keep an eye on the reward. But Kierkegaard thinks this is not possible, and that the double-mindedness is evident in the extreme caution with which such a person goes through life.

Does he go steadily and firmly like one that has a definite goal before his eyes? ... Does he go like a carefree youth who lightheartedly lets his gaze wander over everything about him on his way? ...How does he go, then? He walks so slowly under the circumstances, because of the difficulty of the way. He feels his way forward with his foot and as he finally plants his foot and takes a step, he immediately looks about at the clouds, notes the way the wind blows, and whether the smoke goes straight up from the chimney. It is, namely, the reward — earth's reward — that he is looking for. And that reward is like the clouds and like the wind and like the smoke of the chimney. And so he asks his way continually. He gives minute attention to the faces of the passing people in order to learn how the reward stands, what the prices are, what demands the time and the people would place upon the Good if they were to give the reward.

What is he really after? ...this question he cannot answer in definite terms, if he is to answer it sincerely, for the reason that the answer is all too readily at hand: that he wills the Good and detests vice — when vice seems to be loathsome; that he wills the approbation of good people — when they are in the majority and possess the power; that he will benefit the good cause — when it is so good as to confer some advantage upon him. Yet in sincerity he dares not say definitely what he wills. He dares not say loudly and decisively with the full voice of conviction that he wills the Good. He utters it with the dull caution of double-mindedness.

This is what happens to the man who hankers after a reward. He is so double-minded that one hardly knows whether to laugh or weep over him, if one does not know that all double-mindedness is destruction.

Barriers to willing one thing: 3. Willing out of fear of punishment.

Willing the good only out of fear of punishment is as obviously double-minded as willing the good only for the sake of the reward.

Kierkegaard has some great passages on the topic of fear: what we should and should not fear:

...punishment is indeed not what a man should fear. He should fear to do wrong. But if he has done wrong, then he must, if he really wills one thing and sincerely wills the Good, desire to be punished, that the punishment may heal him just as medicine heals the sick. ...spiritually understood there is a ruinous illness, namely, not to fear what a man should fear: the sacredness of modesty, God in the heavens, the command of duty, the voice of conscience, the accountability to eternity... But then, in a spiritual sense, there is another illness, a still more destructive one: to fear what a man should not and ought not to fear. The first illness is defiance and obstinacy and willfulness. The second is cowardice and servility and hypocrisy.

There are two kinds of fear: fear of eternal punishment and fear of temporal punishment. In some ways the former is better than the latter. Eternal punishment *should to be feared*, in a way that temporal punishment should not (see below). Still, to be motivated by fear of eternal punishment only (rather than by the value of goodness itself) remains a destructive form of double-mindedness. Fear can only lead to a slavish, sour attachment to the good, and to a resentful avoidance of evil.

Only one thing can help a man to will the Good in truth: the Good itself. Fear is a deceitful aid. It can embitter one's pleasure, make life laborious and miserable, make one old and decrepit; but it cannot help one to the Good since fear itself has a false conception of the Good — and the Good does not allow itself to be deceived.

Kierkegaard describes the contrast between love of goodness and fear of punishment by comparing the support of a loving mother to that of a “dry nurse” or “bloodless corrector.”

The Good suckles and nurses the infant, rears and nourishes the youth, strengthens the adult, supports the aged. The Good teaches the striving one. It helps him. But only in the way that the loving mother teaches a child to walk alone. The mother is far enough away from the child so that she cannot actually support the child, but she holds out her arms. She imitates the child's movements. If it totters she swiftly bends as if she would seize it — so the child believes that it is not walking alone. The most loving mother can do no more, if it be truly intended that the child shall walk alone. And yet she does more; for her face, her face, yes, it is beckoning like the reward of the Good and like the encouragement of Eternal Blessedness. So the child walks alone, with eyes fixed upon the mother's face, not on the difficulties of the way; supporting himself by

the arms that do not hold on to him, striving after refuge in the mother's embrace, hardly suspecting that in the same moment he is proving that he can do without her, for now the child is walking alone. Fear, on the other hand, is a dry nurse for the child: it has no milk; a bloodless corrector for the youth: it has no beckoning encouragement; a niggardly disease for the adult: it has no blessing; a horror for the aged: when fear has to admit that the long painful time of schooling did not bring Eternal Blessedness.

Fear also wishes to help a man. It desires to teach him to walk alone, but not as a loving mother does it. For it is fear itself that continually upsets the child. It desires to help him forward, but not as a loving mother's beckoning. For it is fear itself that weighs him down so that he cannot move from the spot. It desires to lead him to the goal, and yet it is the fear itself that makes the goal terrifying... It often happens with such a double-minded person, that the older he gets the more impoverished his life becomes: when his youth, in which there was something better than fear, is spent, and when fearfulness and cleverness conspire together in order to make him into a slave, if one wishes to put it so — to the Good. It is so different with the one who wills the Good in truth. He is the only one who is free, made free by the Good. However, a man does not in truth will the Good if he only wills it out of fear of punishment, and hence is only in a state of slavery to the Good.

It is more common to be fear temporal punishment than to fear eternal punishment. This is even more misguided.

Of a man who only wills the Good out of fear of [temporal] punishment, it is necessary to say with special emphasis, that he fears what a man should not and ought not to fear: loss of money, loss of reputation, misjudgment by others, neglect, the world's judgment, the ridicule of fools, the laughter of the frivolous, the cowardly whining of consideration, the inflated triviality of the moment, the fluttering mist-forms of vapor... He fears that which has power to wound, maltreat, ruin, or strike dead the body, but which has no power whatever over the soul unless it obtains it through fear.

We should not fear the opinion of the world or shame before others. There is, however, a good kind of shame to which we should pay attention; namely, the shame we feel in front of ourselves.

Yes, there is a sense of shame, that is favorable to the Good. Woe to the man who casts it off! This sense of shame is a saving companion through life. Woe to the man that breaks with it! It is in the service of sanctification and of true freedom. Woe to the man who is scandalized by it as if it were a compulsion! ...Each one who is not more ashamed before himself than before all others, if he is placed in difficulty and much tried in life, will in one way or another end by becoming the slave of men. For to be more ashamed in the presence of others than when alone, what else is this than to be more ashamed of seeming than of being? And turned about, should not a man be more ashamed of what he is than of what he seems?

One way to awaken and nourish true shame is to imagine ourselves in front of an innocent and trusting young person earnestly asking us how to live his life. What would we say to such a person?

Alas, gradually as a man gets older, he grows accustomed to a great deal in life. Among other things, he gets in the habit of saying much that he has not properly reflected upon... But when [he] seriously admonishes a child, a youth, a maiden, he speaks with shame. There is at this point a beautiful reciprocity, for the youth approaches his elder with shame and the elder in admonishing the youth always speaks with shame... In the act of admonishing, and this deserves emphasis, the older person shall by no means set before the youth a horrifying picture of the world. To do so is never earnestness, but is only sickly imagination. But in the act of admonishing, he will shrink before the thought of leading the youth straight into the danger of double-mindedness by deceptively focusing his attention upon the punishment the world metes out. For in this, instead of impressing upon him a holy fear and shame before the Good, he is polluting the pure one by teaching him the fear of loss of money, loss of reputation, misjudgment by others, neglect, the world's judgment, the ridicule of fools, the laughter of the frivolous, the cowardly whining of consideration, the inflated triviality of the moment, the fluttering mist-forms of vapor... even the man whom double-mindedness has eaten most bare, when he speaks admonishingly to a youth, is reminded that, out of shame, he dare say but one thing. In the act of admonishing even he will say..., "Do not be afraid, be slow to judge others, but attend closely to yourself, hold firmly to willing one thing, to willing the Good in truth, and thus, from now on, let this lead you wherever for now it will lead you — because eternally it will lead you to victory. In this world let it lead you to prosperity or poverty, to honor or insult, to life or death: only do not let go this one thing. By its hand you may walk confidently even in danger. Even in danger of your life itself you may go as confidently as a child who clasps the mother's hand. Yes, even more confidently, for the child does not even know the danger."

Barriers to willing one thing: 4. Egocentric Service of the good.

If a man wills the good simply so that *he* can score the victory, this is a pretty obvious case of willing the good for the sake of the reward. There is, however, a much more subtle form of ego-centrism. A person may truly desire and work for the victory *goodness* in the world, and do so not for his own benefit but *for goodness' sake*. His double-mindedness lies in *not wanting to submit to the good's own methods*. He may be impatient, for instance, with how long it takes for good to defeat evil, and be tempted to hurry things along. He wants to have an effective role in achieving the victory of goodness; he does not want to be "an unprofitable servant".

He does not will the Good for the sake of the reward. He wills that the Good shall triumph through him, that he shall be the instrument, he the chosen one. He does not desire to be rewarded by the world — that he despises; nor by men — that he looks down upon. And yet he does not wish to be an unprofitable servant. The reward which he insists upon is a sense of pride and in that very

demand is his violent double-mindedness. Yes, violent, for what else does he wish than to take the Good by storm, and by force to press himself and his service upon the Good!

It is all-important to keep in mind the difference between the “eternal victory of the good,” which has already been won, and the “temporal victory of the good,” which, alas, seems a long way of.

Now it is indeed the case, that eternally the Good has always been victorious. But in time it is otherwise, temporally it may take a long time. The victory is slow, its uncertainty is a slow measure of length. Again and again the faithful servant's life ends, and it seemed, at his death, as if he had accomplished nothing for the Good. And yet he was a faithful servant, who willed the Good in truth, and he was also loved by the Good, that prizes obedience more than the "fat of the ram." Alas, why does time exist; if the Good eternally has always been victorious, why should it then creep slowly forward throughout the length of time or almost perish in time's slowness?

... Alas, men often enough confuse impatience with humble, obedient enthusiasm;... [But impatience] is a kind of ill-temper. Its root is already in the child, because the child will not take time for things. With the double-minded one, it is thus clear that time and eternity cannot rule in the same man. He cannot, he will not, understand the Good's Slowness; that out of mercy, the Good is slow; that out of love for free persons, it will not use force; that in its wisdom toward the frail ones, it shrinks from any deception. He cannot, he will not, humbly understand that the Good can get on without him. He is double-minded, he that with his enthusiasm could apparently become an apostle, but can quite as readily become a Judas, who treacherously wishes to hasten the victory of the Good. He is scandalized, he that by his enthusiasm seems to love the Good so highly. He is scandalized by its poverty, when it is clothed in the slowness of time.

The double-minded man stands at a parting of the ways, and sees there two apparitions: the Good, and the Good in its victory, or even in its victory through him. This latter is presumptuousness, but even the first two apparitions are not wholly the same. In eternity they are the same, but not in time. And they must be kept apart. The Good so wills it. The Good puts on the slowness of time as a poor garment, and in keeping with this change of dress one who serves it must be clothed in the insignificant figure of the unprofitable servant. With the eye of his senses he is not permitted to see the Good in victory. Only with the eye of faith can he strive after its eternal victory. Therein lies his double-mindedness. For as there is a double-mindedness which divides up the nature of the Good which the Good has united for all eternity: so is his double-mindedness of that sort that unites what the Good in time has set apart. The one double-minded person forgets the Eternal and on that account misuses time, the other misuses eternity.

Barriers to willing one thing: 5. Commitment to a Certain Degree.

This common type of double-mindedness is the result of weakness. It is basically the failure to maintain ones commitment to the good in the distractions and difficulties of ordinary life.

This may happen, for instance, to a busy person, who, because of his busy-ness, loses sight of the true good and his ability to act on it. Such a person rarely pauses to regain perspective, to let the good “sink in,” and to turn good intentions into true, formative principles.

Just as the echo dwells in the woods, as stillness dwells in the desert, so double-mindedness dwells in the press of busyness. ...in the press of busyness, there is neither time nor quiet to win the transparency that is indispensable if a man is to come to understand himself in willing one thing or even for a preliminary understanding of himself in his confusion. Nay, the press of busyness into which one steadily enters further and further, and the noise in which the truth continually slips more and more into oblivion, and the mass of connections, stimuli, and hindrances, these make it ever more impossible for one to win any deeper knowledge of himself. It is true, that a mirror has the quality of enabling a man to see his image in it, but for this he must stand still. If he rushes hastily by, then he sees nothing. Suppose a man should go about with a mirror in his possession which he does not take out, how should such a man get to see himself? In this fashion the busy man hurries on, with the possibility of understanding himself in his possession. But the busy man keeps on running and it never dawns upon him that this possibility which he has in his possession is rapidly fading from his memory.

Another example. There are moments when a person sees clearly where his duty lies, and what steps he must take to carry it out. But this abstract “seeing what he must do” is very different from the experience of actual doing it. The reality is both harder and more complicated.

Perhaps the double-minded one had a knowledge of the Good. In the moment of contemplation it stood out so distinctly before him, so clearly, that the Good, in truth, has all the advantage on its side, that the Good, in truth, is a gain both for this and for the future life. Yes, it lay on his heart, as though he must be able to convince the whole world of it... Alas, ...it is here as when an artist sketches a country. The sketch cannot be as big as the country, it must be infinitely smaller; but on that account it also becomes all the easier for the observer to scan the outlines of that country. And yet it may well happen to the observer, if suddenly he were actually set down in that country where the many, many miles really exist and are valid, that he would be unable to recognize the country, or to make any sense of it, or as a traveler, to find his way about in it. So it will be with the double-minded person. His knowledge has indeed been a sense-deception. What was there, in air-tight fashion pressed together in the completeness of contemplation, shall now be stretched out at its full length. It is now no longer rounded off but is in motion. For life is like a poet, and on that account is different from the observer who always seeks to bring things to a conclusion. The poet pulls us into the very complex center of life.

Kierkegaard ends this section on weakness, by reminding his reader of the importance of the will. It is not enough to desire or intend the good. We cannot count on favorable circumstances, the help of others, etc. We must truly commit ourselves to the good, come what may. We can't let ourselves be born along. We must *will* it.

So the double-minded person may have had a will to the Good...; but it received no power... He is not without intentions or purposes, and resolutions and plans for himself, and not without plans of participation for others. But he has left something out: namely, he does not believe that the will in itself is, or indeed should be, the most solid of all... He does not believe that it is the will by which a man should steady himself, yes, that when all fails, that it is the will that a man must hold to. He does not believe that the will is itself the mover, but rather that it should itself be moved, that in itself it is fluctuating and on that account should be supported, held firm, that it should be moved and supported by causes, considerations, advice of others, experiences, rules of life. If we, quite properly, should compare the will in man with the headway impetus of a ship in which he (the man) is carried forward: then he believes, on the contrary, that the will, instead of its propelling all, is itself something that should be tugged forward, that there are grounds, considerations, advice of others, experiences, rules of life, that go alongside of and push or pull the will forward as if the will could be compared to a barge — yes, to a freight barge. But in the same stroke the will is made impotent, "up to a certain degree" discounted in relation to causes, considerations and advice, and in relation to how these react upon one another. He has turned everything around.

This is all for now. I will post more for the next reading circle (Saturday, May 19) when we cover the 2nd half of the book.