

Following the Rules

by Wayne Goff

“Physical therapy” is defined as “the treatment of disease, injury, or deformity by physical methods such as massage, heat treatment, and exercise...” It has many applications, but in my case it is a matter of rehabilitating a knee. Muscles surrounding the knee had atrophied due to a lack of proper movement, so those muscles had to be reactivated. Likewise, muscles which were severed had to heal and again connect to my brain. Physical exercise regenerates muscle, renews the synapses, and returns the limb to normal use. The *process* to get there can be quite painful! But there is no other way to good health, and those who have ignored those exercises have lost some or all use of their body parts!

Spiritual Atrophy?

Once a child of God becomes *lethargic* or *indifferent* to spiritual growth, then their mind’s transformation ceases. “...**be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (**Romans 12:1–2**). Excuses are made about a Bible subject being too difficult, or “study is just not my thing,” or “the class is boring” or “the sermon is so long!” The reality is that *spiritual apathy* has set in, and *spiritual therapy* is essential to the soul’s survival! A man’s soul is “diseased” or “injured” by sin, and **spiritual methods** of repentance, reinvigoration, and movement is necessary. The problem is that this process may be painful! Some assume that if there is pain then something is wrong! But it is more of getting the human will to commit again.

*“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an **evil heart of unbelief** in departing from the living God; but **exhort one another daily**, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be **hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**. For we have become partakers of Christ **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,”* (**Hebrews 3:12–14**). So you see the process in this Scripture: (1) heart of unbelief; (2) failure to exhort immediately; (3) hardened heart.

1. **HEART OF UNBELIEF.** Since faith comes by hearing God’s Word (**Rom. 10:17**), and since the lethargic child of God has stopped studying and learning, the obvious result is **UNBELIEF**! Faith is a living organism in the mind and must be nurtured. In the absence of faith, unbelief naturally sets in.
2. **LACK OF EXHORTATION.** Brethren are to look out for one another. At the first sight of apathy and indifference, brethren should begin to warn and encourage the weak saint. **James 5:19-20** speaks of the warning of a brother who is living in sin by the one who observes it. Again **Galatians 6:1** says “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” I am afraid that we have often ignored the slow slide back into sin of the weak saint. Most of the New Testament letters deal with either problems in the church or sinful departure by individual saints.
3. **HARDENED HEART.** Once the heart becomes hardened and can no longer be touched by the pleading of the Lord through the Scriptures, the brethren, sermons and Bible classes, then **spiritual death has occurred**. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (**Hebrews 6:4–6**).

If you or a beloved brother or sister needs **“spiritual therapy,”** then seek help immediately!

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