

BRINGING OUR DARK SIDE INTO THE LIGHT

Many Christian people have trouble coming to terms with their flesh, or their carnal nature. They keep hoping that it will just go away, or they indulge in all kinds of discipline, hoping that by denial that it may some day become civilized, and cease to try and influence them to sin. It ain't gonna happen in this life. ***Part of us will never get any better, just older and unfortunately, more sneaky.*** We are called to crucify our flesh, and to take up our cross daily and follow our King. This morning I want to talk to you about how to keep on daily killing a part of yourselves, without hurting yourselves in the process.

I am going to do it in two instalments: **First** Four Stages and then **Second** Seven Keys, cause I'm just a mean old Messianic Jewish rabbi. ***You are condemned to be happy in Yeshua, or He will make your life miserable.*** You gotta bring your Dark Side into the light. May His force be with you. Let's pray.

Martin Luther, before he drank too much beer and turned on the Jews, said something profound about our greatest spiritual dilemma: ***simul justis et peccator*** (at the same time saint and sinner). In Judaism, the rabbis teach that we have two basic drives in our psyche: yetzer hatov (the drive to do good) and yetzer hara (the drive to do evil). Rather than focusing all our energy on killing this basic drive, Judaism teaches that learning to control basic drives actually empowers us to walk with G-d. **Our flesh (yetzer hara) can either become the wild donkey we learn to ride to Heaven, or the savage donkey which drags us to that other place.**

In 2 Cor. 5:17, when it says that in our Messiah, all things have become new, Paul is talking about a **renewed perspective**, based on a **spiritual transformation**. When Israel left Egypt, she brought all her problems with her, and all the real problems and tragedies she encountered along the way, had to do with these problems, and never with any adversaries or situations which were too hard for her to handle.

The spiritual transformation of Israel occurred during the two years she camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, when the tabernacle was built, and the L-rd took up residence in her midst. This **golden "transformer"** empowered rebellious Israel and taught the people how to walk with G-d. In Yeshua, by His Spirit, the L-rd takes up residence in our hearts and our hearts become that transformer and as we listen to His voice inside (of course according to His Word – for those other voices, I believe there is some very effective medication). ***The presence of G-d in the camp gave the people access to spiritual strength and accountability.*** They were the same people, learning to make different choices, on their way to the Promised Land.

In Yeshua, that's us and, while we will never be free from yetzer hara in this life, we can learn to use the power of those drives to help us learn to walk with the L-rd. Turn with me to Romans 5:3-5 and let's look at the fourfold path to learning to master our flesh: **(1) affliction** (He will now use the whatevers we encounter to teach us to let the transformer show us how to tame the wild donkey), **(2) perseverance** (when we get thrown off, He picks us up, dusts us off and sends us back to taming that donkey) , **(3) victory** (He will keep bringing us back to the same defeats, until we learn how to win, until we learn that His grace is sufficient and His strength is perfected in our weakness) and **(4) hope** (when we learn how to tame the wild donkey, then we have confidence in both the world to come and in His ability to bless us through the valleys of this life). Israel had a miserable time because she didn't persevere – what kind of time are you having in the L-rd?

There is really just action verb in this passage which applies to us: **perseverance**. Afflictions, or trails happen, and victory and hope are by-products. So how do we learn perseverance, in order that our victory can give us hope? The principles are not complicated, and in good biblical form, there are seven of them. So, all of you just put \$200 in an envelope, mail it to my home, and I will send you my exciting series in seven easy instalments. Not likely. **To understand is easy, to obey is heartbreaking clincher**. I am not going to such much which is new, I just want to give you a tune up, and keep that donkey tamed, day by day, week by week, issue by issue, till He returns, and we are set free forever.

- (1) **John 3:16** **Decision:** you need the tabernacle in your heart. If you are not sure, make sure – people who have no means of invisible support are really spiritually challenged and, in light of eternity, are insane.
- (2) **I John 1:9** **Confession:** Let Him forgive and cleanse. Life is too short to play denial games with G-d.
- (3) **I Corinthians 10:13** **Provision:** Look for G-d's way of escape in every situation. He is faithful. Always.
- (4) **Hebrews 12:13** **Compensation:** Know your limits and weaknesses.
- (5) **2 Cor. 10:3-5** **Brain "washing":** Let G-d, and His Word convince you.
- (6) **Phil. 4:6, 7** **Prayer:** If you are right with G-d, everything else falls into place. Until then, you will keep falling from your place.
- (7) **Heb. 4:12** **Study.** It is not an option. It is your life and your lifeline. In Hamlet, Polonius gives his son some good advice: "*To thine own self be true.*" The only way, practically and finally, for this to become a reality in a believer's life, is to let the Bible study you. Go deep, daily and constantly.

Two final words. Let your pastor be your spiritual coach, your spiritual trainer. Don't expect him to tame your donkey and when he guides you into the principles of spiritual health you need to hear, listen, learn and cherish his ministry, cause it's gonna hurt if you want to be a disciple. **Spiritual life comes from our faith, spiritual health comes, painfully and slowly from our obedience.** There ain't no other way – don't blame him for your problems. Don't blame G-d either. **You are never going to change into someone else, you are going to learn to be the best rodeo rider this side of glory, that is if you are willing.** Are you willing?

Final point. An Anglican friend of mine once said: "my sins never find me out, they always find me in." **From an eternal, healthy spiritual perspective, the condition of your heart, which spills over into your life, is the only part about you which really matters – all the rest is just hay, wood and chaff.** How are you doing with your wild donkey? Is yetzer ha'tov in the driver's seat, or are you still letting yetzer ha'ra run the show? Get back up. Fight. Surrender to His Word.

When we all stand before the Jewish carpenter on that awesome day, His judgment will only deal with the contents of your heart, that is, your spirituality. You can fool some of the people some of the time, but beloved, there will be very few real surprises on that Day. What condition is your condition in? No, really. Seven keys to help your afflictions teach you perseverance, so your victories can give you hope. Nothing else really matters, now or forever.

Let's pray.