

STRONGHOLDS
The Fifth Stage of Decay
PART II
ANTIDOTES

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When most of us think of the Garden of Eden, we picture a place of perfection, devoid of evil and abundant in good things. For the most part, this is true except for the presence of the most evil entity ever unleashed upon the face of the earth, Satan. We forget about his presence there and the question arises. “Why did God allow him to be where everything was so good, perfect and enjoyable? If He mentions Satan three times in the Revelation, we need to pay especial attention.

Scripture tells us that man was created in the Image of God. Most of us understand that we have a body, soul and spirit; all three *parts* were, and are to be in unity as one Image. But as we know all too well, that is not the case; we do not live up to that ideal, nor have we ever.

How did we become so opposite, so contrary to what God intended us to be? The answer is simple; sin. Lest many freak out with that word, let us examine its meaning. It means to miss the mark. Now *mark* is mentioned several places. One which is pertinent is Acts 17:26. Breaking down that passage, we find the “limits to our habitation” incorporates one meaning for *limits* as being a boundary, a limit, **a mark**. Ah! –a mark; other places we find the Greek meaning to sin as *harmatia*, a missing of the mark. In other words, we have stepped outside the boundaries, or the marks set for us. Moreover, lust means excessive desire, or put another way, the exceeding of our boundaries of any given act.

Man was created, called and allowed to choose and to exercise free will. That is why Satan was allowed in the Garden. God knew that in order for man to return to Him the love with which He loved us, we would of necessity have to have the freedom of choice. For this reason the Tree of Knowledge was placed in the middle, so that each time Adam passed by, he would have the opportunity of choosing God by refusing the fruit.

This concept of love can be easily understood when considered in the context of volunteering. It is by choice; love is by choice. The one thing God could not do is to force us to love Him. It simply is impossible.

When Adam chose to disobey God, the Divine nature in him became decadent and perverted. **The authoritative nature of the Father became the boastful Pride of Life. The loving, selfless, controlled nature of the Son became the Lust of the Flesh. The empowering, aiding nature of the Holy Spirit became the Lust of the Eyes.**

This teaching is about these natures, and how these perverted natures now reign in our flesh, or our natural man. With it you will become aware of what you were to be; more importantly, what you have become. Only by understanding what you are can you effectively and scripturally deal with your flesh and put it away.

As deeply as God was grieved over the choice made by the first Adam, He was even more pleased by the choice made by the second Adam, Jesus. In reality that is what this life is all about, turning from the choice made by the first Adam and embracing the choice of the Second.

TWO KINGDOM DOCTRINES

ONE: That the personality and nature developed from birth is redeemable and salvageable. Everyone is OK, and the natural man can be improved to an acceptable state by various means. The human will is inviolate and capable of solving all problems by effort, talent, perseverance and logic. **Humanism-Sadduceeism**

TWO: That the original personality and nature developed from birth, i.e., natural man, is incapable of holiness. There must be a rebirth of the spirit, the life-giving principle of man, to give him new life and acceptability in the sight of God. As the new man matures, he does so at the expense of the old man and his habits. **Death to Self, Yielding of the Will, Identifying with Christ.**

The concept of Death to Self (taking up your cross, denying the 'old' you even exists) is being replaced with the nature of Christ is the single issue that will, in the end times, separate the sheep from the goats, especially within the *ekklesia*. It will pit brother against brother, mother against daughter, husband against wife, all of whom are 'Christians'.

There are two issues under Two;

- A. We must know and understand what *self* is before we can work on its demise, or have,
- B. Death to self and the appropriation of the nature and image of Christ.

As it is written, let every word be confirmed by two or three witnesses. So if the Word illuminates our three sin natures, then according to God's perfect sense of justice, it must also contain scriptural antidotes for those sicknesses. Indeed it does.

There are at least three aspects to dealing with the subject at hand. (There is that number three again.) If one thinks about it, since we have three 'parts', then there needs to be three corresponding remedies or antidotes as it were.

In dealing with the outside 'part', the physical, I have found the Word has several practical things relatively easy to do. The ones I found first are in two books, the Psalms and the Proverbs.

In Psalms 1, verses 1-3, the Holy Spirit revealed one day (because I was looking!) that verse 1 enumerates the three remedies to the three natures and their potential downfalls. Verse 1 says, "Blessed (this means all for which we would want) is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked." Now we need to know the meaning of each significant word, and have the obedience and fortitude to look up the meanings in lexicons, dictionaries, commentaries. I cannot continue to do that for you.

But let us at least start the process. ‘Walk’ means the actions of your daily doings. It is where you go. Sometimes we have little choice where we walk; before we go there, we can petition for protection. The book of Proverbs has much to say about our ‘walk’.

“Counsel” has to do with advice as to a particular problem, situation, dilemma, etc., on how we are to handle same. Now ‘counsel’ has to do with the mind. We saw in the earlier pages the mind is where the Pride of Life waxes the strongest and performs its deadly deeds. “Wicked’ in this passage is Strong’s #7563, which means turbulent, chaos, unsettled, restless, undisciplined, disjointed, disturbing, et al.

Now it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to put the two together and deduce our antidote to our sin nature of Pride of Life is to not take the advice of those who exhibit these traits. Proverbs reinforces these premises.

Continuing in verse 1, he says, “nor stands in the way of sinners.” ‘Way’ here means what it says, no camouflage, no innuendoes, no secrets. It means do not stand where sinners stand, you will get into trouble. Now notice here the decreasing mobility words, walk, stand, sit. Walking speaks of activity, standing speaks of a measure of laziness, sitting a measure of contempt.

Thus we can safely say the second of these admonitions refers to the physical, or the Lust of the Flesh. In a nutshell, don’t just stand around, especially with ‘sinners’.

The third section in verse 1 says, “nor sit in the seat of scoffers.” Well, the simple process of elimination would tell us this one applies to the third nature, Lust of the Eyes. One of the primary characteristics of a person with this sin nature is to scoff at people, their ideas, possessions, ways of doing things and so forth. Another characteristic is to sit while others work. Body language in this case speaks volumes, as in a professorial attitude, leaning back in his chair, going “hrrumph” at a student making an error.

Then in verse 2, he says, “..but his strong attraction and delight is in the law of the LORD , and on his law he does meditate day and night. This passage applies now to all of us. He then continues with the blessings resulting from such behavior; “be like a tree by the waters, bearing fruit in season, his leaves never withering, and prospering in all that he does.” My goodness, all that by just obeying the first three lines!!

The second aspect is our minds, the part of us that consciously directs what we do. The Psalmist has already told us the benefits of ‘meditating on his law’, but it also is the remedy particularly for the person who think he/she knows best, who has a very high opinion of himself. Chewing on the Word corrects and neutralizes this.

The third aspect is the one with the deeper part of their being, the sixth sense, as some call it. Intuition, sensitive, even moody are characteristics, along with a degree of some sort of control of the situation at hand. This one is difficult to reach, very difficult, mainly because they do not even entertain the concept they have a problem.

In the process of the LORD teaching me things, He saturated me at one point in time with men with the nature of Pride of Life. They were all around, everywhere I went, everywhere I talked, everywhere I sat down. This went on until he had taught me how to deal with them as Christ would. This went on for several years. Finally it dawned on me there was a characteristic of Christ that was the antithesis of the sin nature. In the case of Pride of Life, it was the Humility of Christ!! Wow!! Once that surfaced, I realized there were two others, my own included.

The antidote to the Lust of the Flesh is the Self-Control of Christ, pure and simple. Stay out of places where I could fall, and exercise self-control derived from Him.

Then I was inundated with Lust of the Eyes, men who were controllers, manipulators, dissemblers. For years everyone around me was a Controller, male and female. (The others left.) It was a while before He let me know the characteristic of Christ which nullified these. Finally it surfaced; the Guilelessness of Christ was the antidote.

One other observation from the last 30 years is that there is a hierarchy of difficulty dealing with the three sin natures, whether by God or by fellow believers. I have seen the size of God's two-by-four increases according to the sin nature. The LOF requires the smallest, the POL even larger. The LOE is the very hardest, requiring drastic levels of pain and duration. The occurrence of repentance is the reciprocal of this order. I find more with LOF, fewer with POL and the very least with LOE.

The ones in whom the sins are obvious are the ones with the Lust of the Flesh. They readily admit their sins, and are ashamed. These are the "church's" whipping boys.

The next hardest is with those with Pride of Life. Maintaining a lifestyle of perfection in every nook and cranny eliminates visible sins of the flesh. Be that as it is, others perceive these uncovered sins of pride, arrogance and superiority towards them. But being 'hidden', little is said about them. How would you address impeccability? How would you uncover that which is not visible?

Then there is the third level of difficulty found in the ones with the sin nature of Lust of the Eyes (LOE). They also do their best to maintain an outward appearance of excellence, accuracy and being outstanding. In my experience, these do not even entertain the possibility of being wrong. That is not even an option; everyone else is wrong, not I. But equally, those around them 'perceive' and resent their contempt towards them, or being manipulated and scorned.

Our Heavenly Father designed that the follies of our youth were to be addressed by our parents through the inculcation of the Word. Equally, the curses and vain traditions of our fathers were to have been acknowledged before God, as did Daniel, but rarely has this been the case. That is why He said it is better to bear the yoke in our youth.

It is also better to have gone to war with ourselves in our youth; the younger the better. But reality is reality; those who do reverse directions of mind and soul are usually in their late 30s-early 40s. By then the pain of life has softened their resistance and revealed their folly. After that age, so many of the bad seeds we planted have come up, thereby hardening us to anything any messenger might say. If this hardening is not addressed and corrected, stupor occurs. By then there is little that can be done.

Godspeed.

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