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12 Death to Self-BH Clendennen
The Pathway to An Overcoming Life Series

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Php 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Now, that is the purpose of you being born again, that you and I might be the temple through which our God can live and manifest Himself. Paul became that and affected his world for God. Because he died to who he was, counted it all but dung that he might gain the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are there people hearing me that have that desire today?

The story of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac is a parable of this great text. The casting out of Ishmael according to Gal 4:24 is an allegory expressing a spiritual truth. It speaks of the spiritual experience of the believer when he dies to the law of sin through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something more in this account than the deliverance of indwelling sin. In the story of the patriarch, this deliverance was followed by the offering up of Isaac on Mount Moriah. There can be no doubt what this signifies, the deeper, spiritual experience into which the fully consecrated person must come. In this act of obedience, the sanctified self is laid on the altar as Isaac was. Just as it's written in Rom 12:1 I beseech you brethren that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Thus from that point on, we become dead not only to sin, but that which is worse than sin, that self. This is the lesson of Isaac's offering and Paul's experience. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live. That is the death of sin. But Christ lives with in me. That's the offering of Isaac, the deliverance from self. Even the substitution of Christ Himself for the new self. This is a substitution so complete the faith by which this life is maintained, is no longer our self sustained confidence, but the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Thus He is our substitute.

Now there are three forms of self I want to deal with here. We read in the book of Joshua the sons of Anak, a race of giants who held the city of Hebron before Caleb's conquest and were the terror of the Israelites. The name Anak literally means long neck. For our purpose, we can compare the name to pride, confidence, willfulness, and self sufficiency. The first of these Anakites is self-will, the disposition to rule and especially to rule ourselves. It's a spirit that brooks no other will and is its own law and god. The first step in the consecrated life is unconditional surrender to God. Breaking the power of self can't be done without doing this. Only this will establish forever the absolute sovereignty of the will of God in the heart and life of the Christian. We can't abide in holiness or be wholly used of God until his self will is crucified. We must be so totally crucified that we wouldn't even think of acting contrary to God's will or orders. This is obedience and it's the law of the Christian life. It must be absolute, unquestioning, without any possible exception. You are my friends, God said, if you do what I command you to do. Now if you aren't His friend, you are His enemy.

In the life of faith, God requires us to exercise a strong will continually. There's no doubt that faith itself is largely the exercising of the sanctified and intensified will. In order to do this, our will must be totally and absolutely renounced and God's will invariably accepted in its place. Then we can put into it all the strength and force of our being and will. What God wills, as He wills it and because He wills it. In short, it's an exchanged will. The despotic will of Anak is exchanged for a wise, magnificent, sovereignty of God almighty.

Self confidence is the next of the Anak race. It's spirit draws its strength from self alone and rejects the arm of God and the help of His grace. In the milder form, it's a spirit that trusts in its own spiritual graces and virtues, its own morality, courage, faith, purity and steadfastness. It's just as necessary to die to our self sufficiency as to die to our self will. If we do not, then we will experience failure after failure until we learn what others have learned that we are not competent in ourselves to overcome.

2 Cor 3:5 Our confidence is in God, not in our self sufficiency. The sanctified heart is not a self constituted religion or engine of power. It's a set of wheels and gears that are absolutely continually dependent on the power of the engine itself

to make them move. It's a capacity to hold God, a vessel, to be filled with His goodness, held and used by His hand. The sanctified life is a possibility of which He by His abiding fullness is constantly motivating power and impelling force. Now the word consecrate in the Hebrew means to fill the hand. This beautiful definition suggests the idea of an empty hand God Himself must continually fill.

Now self glorying is the last and most impious of the race of Anak. He takes the throne of Jehovah and claims the glory due to God alone. Sometimes its form is a desire for human praise. How much of that is seen today. Sometimes it's a pride so subtle that won't stoop to care about the approval of others. Its supreme delight is in its own consciousness of its superiority, ability, or goodness. There are those who say vanity is a vice inferior to pride. Vanity only seeks the praise of others. But pride disdains the opinions of others and rests in the complacent consciousness of its own excellence. Whatever its face may be, its root and principle are the same. It's unholy self sitting on the throne of God claiming the honor and glory that belongs to God alone.

There are many Biblical illustrations. There are three forms of self that are illustrated by three examples in the Word of God. Saul, the first king of Israel is a fearful monument to the peril of self will. His downward career began in a single act of disobedience. Although his disobedience seemed to be merely a question of detail, it was an act of self will. He was making a substitution of his own choice in the place of God's command. Now the prophet Samuel characterizes his sin in these expressive words, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams, for rebellion is like the sin of divination and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you've rejected the Word of the Lord, He's rejected you as king. 1 Sam 15 :22-23.

It is evident the essence of Saul's sin lay in this element of willfulness of stubbornness. He'd dared to substitute his own ideas and preferences for the Word of Jehovah. Now from this moment on, his obedience was necessarily qualified and of course worthless. God then, sent His prophet to choose a different king who had one thing on which God could fully depend. He had a purpose to obey God when he understood His will. That's the key to life. To know the will of God and to do it, is actually the absolute faith of God. For that reason, God says of David, I found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do exactly what I want him to do. Acts 13:22.

David made many mistakes, committed terrible sins, but they were done when he was under strong temptation, and blinded by passion and haste. Never did he do it with a deliberate purpose of disobeying this great God.

The sad story of Saul's downward descent and final, tragic ruin should be enough to make us tremble at the peril that lies before any willful person. May it ever cause us to cry out, my Father, not as I will but as you will. The peril of self confidence is seen just as markedly in Simon Peter, the Apostle. Strong in his transitory enthusiasm and ignorant of his own heart's weakness. He honestly meant what he said to the Lord. Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will. Sadly, there came that shameful denial, the piercing look of Jesus, the bitter tears of penitence, and the awful hours of the crucifixion. These all taught Peter the lesson of his nothingness and the necessity of walking no longer in self confidence but humbly in the strength of the Lord God alone.

We're given a vivid and impressive object lesson of the last form of self will, the pride that glories in its own achievements and excellencies, in the account of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Is not this the great Babylon which I have built, he cries in the hour of his triumph in Daniel 4:30. As he looked upon the city, surely he saw it was indeed a paragon of human glory. The metropolis of this mighty empire that literally included the world at that time. If mortal man ever had a reason to glory in earthly magnificence, Nebuchadnezzar had it. After all, God Himself had compared him to a majestic head of gold, and symbolized his power as a winged lion. But the instant that vain glorious word reached the ears of God, the answer fell from heaven like a knell of judgment. Your royal authority has been taken away from you. You will be driven from people, live with the wild animals, eat grass like cattle, seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to whom He wishes. Dan 4:30-32

Beware. This is the glorying of the carnal heart. The follower of God may mingle his own self seeking and honor with his work for God and thus impair his usefulness and lose his reward. Such was the case of Jonah. There is no picture more pitiful than that of the morbid, grumbling prophet who sat outside of Nineveh. He sat under a withered gourd, face blistered and swollen with the scorching sun, his eyes red with useless weeping. Hear him asking God to let him die because his ministry has been dishonored. He presented a spectacle of religious and ridiculous melancholy while all around him were millions were rejoicing, praising God and His mercy, in delivering them from an awful catastrophe. Poor Jonah, God had given him the most honorable ministry ever given to a human. He was called to be the first foreign missionary. He'd been sent to preach to the mightiest empire on the face of the globe, the imperial city of the world, proud Nineveh. His

preaching had been successful, as a mortal had ever known success. The whole city was lying prostrate on their faces at the footstool of mercy, with penitence and prayer. The nation's heart was turned, at least for the moment, toward God.

In spite of all this, Jonah was full of himself over the work he'd done and utterly absorbed in his own credibility, reputation and honor. God had listened to the cries of the Ninevites and had revoked the sentence that Jonah himself had uttered, rendering his prophecy null and void. Jonah was afraid that afterward he'd be ridiculed for being a fanatic and idle alarmist. Disgusted, he acted like a spoiled child, throwing himself on the ground, asking God to kill him. He did this why? Because God by His mercy, had spoiled his reputation as a true prophet. Jonah couldn't see as God did the unspeakable horror and anguish that had been averted. He couldn't see the joy of the divine heart in exercising mercy in hearing the penitent cries of the people. He couldn't see the great principle of grace that underlies the divine threatening. He couldn't understand the great pity God felt for the 100,000 infant children of that great capital city who would have moaned in their dying agony if Nineveh had fallen. All he thought about was his own reputation as a prophet and what people might say when they learned his prophecy hadn't come to pass.

With that one little worm gnawing at the root, his peace and happiness, like his gourd withered away. So God had set him up as a dried specimen of selfishness to show others, you and I right now, the meanness, and misery of the self life can bring to a person who tries to mingle his own glory with the sacred Word of the Glorious God. The worm of self has rendered it impossible for God to use many a gifted man or woman. It has blinded the church of Christ, rendered vain the ministry of thousands because God couldn't use them without giving them the glory that He'll never give another.

God knew the secret worry of Jonah's heart that's why He immersed him for three days in the belly of a fish. Out of that experience, Jonah came as a great many other people come, out of the experience of sanctification with a big self supreme even in the sin cleansed soul. Let us therefore lift up the earnest prayer to God, oh to be saved from myself, dear God, oh, to be lost in thee, oh that it might be no more I but Christ who lives with in me. Let that be your prayer. Let me be able to say it's no longer I but Christ that matters. I must die that Christ may live then a world will come to know Him.

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