



Glenn Brown

SEPTEMBER, 2018

441 ½ Lark Drive

Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

Telephone 970-434-1377

TWO SICKNESSES THAT DESTROY LEADERS

(This past June our local church hosted the Vineyard Regional Conference, and we were blessed to have two outstanding speakers, Phil Strout, whose message I outlined last month, and Abe Huber from Brazil. Abe is not well-known in our country, but he is unofficially called the Billy Graham of South America. He and his team have planted over 250 churches on the Amazon River. He planted a church in San Terain, Brazil, that grew from a house church to 70,000 members – in a city of about 200,000. And he is one of the most humble men you will ever meet. He knows it was not him but God. But God can only entrust that kind of ministry success to a person who is doing things God's way. The following is from my notes and faulty memory of Abe's teaching.)

“Today I am going to talk to you about two sicknesses that destroy leaders. The sicknesses that I am talking about are spiritual, sinful sicknesses. The first is the Samson Syndrome.

THE SAMSON SYNDROME

Samson was one of the Judges, and he was a man greatly used by God. His story is related in Judges 13-16. In a time of great persecution by the Philistines he led Israel for 20 years. He was so anointed that he caused a spring of water to come forth in a dry, rocky region....a miracle that mirrored what Moses had done in the past. He was a supernatural hero who killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, so strong that on one occasion he carried the huge gate of the city up a steep hill for over 30 miles.

But Samson had a fatal weakness – lust. His first reported words in Scripture are, *I have seen a (Philistine) woman, and I want her....* (Judges 14:1) Gentile women were forbidden to Jews. In spite of Samson's sin, God's anointing on him of supernatural strength remained. It is probable, although it is not stated, that Samson asked God to forgive him for his blatant sins. 1 John 1:9 says that, *If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.* If we commit the same sin over and over, even 70 times 7, God will continue to forgive us. That is a principle taught by Jesus. But *God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance*, not to lead us to the deception that our sin is acceptable to God.

Romans 10:9 says that, *The gifts and call of God are irrevocable.* God does not take away His gifts when we sin, but Samson was deceived by God's goodness into thinking that it was OK for him to continue to practice sin. There are some very serious warnings in the Bible, and Proverbs 29:1 is one of them: *A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy.* This warning came to pass in Samson's life after he continued to sin with Delilah: *But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and set him to grinding corn (like an ox).* (Judges 16:20-21)

There are many people in church who continue in their sins. It is reported that from 50% to 70% of the men in evangelical churches (churches that believe in and preach the Bible) are addicted to pornography. Likewise, there are people who continue with their alcohol or marijuana addictions, or who continue with their anger-fueled abuse of their spouse and children, and yet they continue in their public profession of allegiance to Christ as if all was well.

We can infer from 1 John 1:9 that even if we continue to sin God is so gracious that if we ask Him he will continue to forgive us, but the Bible also says that *Your sin will find you out* and that there are consequences to our sins that are unavoidable. Think again about Samson's sins that led finally to his destruction, and to David's sin with Bathsheba and the painful consequences that came to him and his family.

So what is the Biblical solution to this common problem? An important part of it is found in James 5:16 – *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.* The solution is genuine repentance and humble confession of our sins to one another. That doesn't mean to confess it on Facebook but to confess it to some trusted

spiritual leader or friend whom we know to be a person of grace and wisdom and confidentiality.

I (Abe) became a Christian as a young man, and I was very serious about it. But I continued in my practice of pornography and masturbation and uncleanness. My sin made me miserable, but I couldn't stop no matter how many times I made promises to God. Finally, in desperation, I went to my brother Luke. I asked him if I could unburden my heart to him, and I shared everything with him, every sickening detail of my filthy, degrading practices. He said, "Abe, most of the people in church have done the things you just shared with me, but they do not have the courage and humility to do what God tells us to do in His word and to: *Confess them to one another that they may be healed.*"

As I started being accountable to Luke by sharing every instance of my temptations in the area of lust, I was able to start growing toward liberty in this area.

Let me emphasize this process so it is absolutely clear. The **first step** in getting free of the sins that cling to all of us is intimacy with Jesus and confession when we fall short (1 John 1:9); the **second step** is discipleship, which includes being accountable to some trusted person and transparency and repentance concerning every little temptation and sin.

But my testimony continues: After a period of time my brother Luke was killed when the ultra-light airplane he was flying crashed in the jungle. (Note: Luke was flying over remote villages in the Amazon and throwing out printed evangelistic material. It is believed that hostile villagers shot his little plane down, so that he died as a martyr.) After Luke died, I asked a mature Christian leader named Jeff to take Luke's place as a person with whom I could be accountable, but I was once again attacked in my thoughts and my eyes with lust. After two months, I cried out, "God, show me what's going on." I had a vision. I saw myself under an umbrella of protection. I knew that the Bible says that Satan sends fiery darts or arrows to attack us. God showed me that Luke had been my umbrella.

I said, "But God, I have asked Jeff to take Luke's place and be my umbrella." God immediately replied, "Yes, but you are not really under Jeff because you are not being completely transparent with him." I knew that was true. I had not been confessing to Jeff every little detail of my unclean temptations and the times I fell back into my old sins. It was embarrassing to admit I was so weak and so double-minded.

You remember the story in 1 Samuel 15 about King Saul and the Prophet Samuel. King Saul disobeyed the clear commandment of God and then tried to excuse it because he had been partially obedient. Samuel said to Saul that his disobedience was the same to God as rebellion, and in 1 Samuel 15:22 Samuel said: *.....Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.....For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.*

In Brazil we are very familiar with witchcraft. It is called *Macoumba* in Brazil. On many nights we can hear the drums calling the witchcraft spirits to the priests. Witchcraft is to call demonic spirits. Rebellion is the same, it is calling out to demonic spirits, and when we do that they will come.

I went to Jeff and I vomited out all the unclean, degrading thoughts and temptations and actions that I had been too ashamed to confess. And that was the start of my victory over those things. It is not that I became victorious because of my own righteousness. I don't have any personal righteousness, nor do you. I continue to be accountable to a mature friend to this day. If we want to get free and stay free, we must obey God and humble ourselves and do it His way.

I invented a little story that I shared with the pastors in Brazil: 'A certain pastor came home from his church and started watching an immoral movie. The next night he did it again. It became a habit. Then he started watching hard-core porn on the internet. Each time he would do this, he would repent and ask God to forgive him. Does God continue to forgive him? Yes. But he is being dragged down step by step to bondage and destruction. God wants to heal him and deliver him. The question is, will he humble himself and confess to some mature brother and repent and cry out for freedom and healing.'

At one pastor's meeting I shared this make-believe story, and afterwards a pastor came to me and said, "Pastor Abe, that is my story. I want to get free!" I admired that pastor more than I can say. He is now on his way to freedom.

(Next month I will share Pastor Abe's message on the second Sickness: **The Cave Syndrome**.)

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

(I borrowed from one of Robert Morris's messages on TBN for part of this message.)

One of the best known stories in the Bible is Jesus' encounter with the religious leader, Nicodemus, found in John 3. In John 2, Nicodemus makes three statements about Jesus that probably put him ahead of some people who attend church in

our day. He says to Jesus, (1) we know you are a teacher who has come from God (2) you perform miracles (3) therefore, it is obvious that God is with you.

Jesus immediately tells Nicodemus that even though he believes those things, he is spiritually blind and can't even see the reality of God's Kingdom unless he is "born spiritually, born from above, born again." Jesus metaphorically connected spiritual birth with natural human birth.

I have heard many testimonies that go something like this: I was born again when I was 14 years old (or 24 years old, or) but I didn't change. I kept living a life of alcohol and drugs and immorality. I was having fun, but inside I was getting more and more miserable. Then, after about five years, something happened. It was as if the light came on and I surrendered my life to Christ. Something changed inside, in my heart, at that time, and it was then that I started growing as a Christian.

There is a problem with this testimony. There aren't any Scriptural parallels. Let me suggest another explanation for this common phenomenon: Everyone knows that in the natural there is growth after birth. Right? But isn't it obvious that there is also growth before birth? The natural process is: Conception – growth (gestation) – birth. The process is not: Conception – birth. Just ask the mothers here today. Isn't the growth during pregnancy essential to the birth of a healthy baby? Of course. I suggest that that experience that originally happened at age 14 or 24 may have been the moment of conception, and the months or years of struggle and pain and misery was the process of gestation; while the time of breakthrough when you actually started to change and grow was the moment of birth, of being born again.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has some somber warnings. He says, *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.* Jesus says that the way is wide and broad that leads to destruction. Does destruction represent heaven or hell? Obviously, it represents hell. *And the way is small and narrow that leads to life.* Obviously, life represents heaven, and it probably represents the *zoe*, abundant life in our present existence as well.

One of the most terrifying statements in the entire Bible is found in the next few verses. Jesus says in John 7:21-23 – *Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles.?" Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.*

Jesus said that "many" are on the road to destruction, hell, even some of the people working and serving in church. If that is true, what about those who attend church periodically, or at Christmas and Easter, but their lives are no different from their unbelieving neighbors? And the fact that their father was a pastor or a missionary and their mother was an intercessor makes no difference. As has been said, "God doesn't have any grandchildren."

My friends, there is nothing more important, more crucial, than for you to know that you have been born again, born from above, born spiritually. I John 5:13 says that we can know that we have received eternal life....by the things written in that little book of 1 John, which was penned by the Apostle John and authored by God himself, the Holy Spirit. If you are not sure, if you don't know, isn't it high time for you to make sure?

EMOTIONAL ADDICTIONS

I saw a documentary on PBS about a mountain climber who watched his two best friends fall to their deaths from a mountain the three of them were climbing in Alaska. He almost froze to death that night, and lost part of his nose and some fingers and toes. He was rescued by a team who risked their lives to save him. A year later he again had to be rescued from another mountain. He now has a wife and new baby. He was asked how he felt about putting other men's lives at risk and also risking the loss to his family if he were killed while mountain climbing. He said, "That's who I am, and I have to be true to myself." In other words, his fun, his thrill, his endorphin rush outweighs all other considerations and is worth sacrificing his life and the lives of strangers and even his family. I think that is called idolatry.

It seems to me that this emotional addiction to excitement is behind a lot of things in American life: from drugs to risky sex to sky diving to high risk adventure travel to gambling to ever higher roller coasters. It might even explain why many Christians want a big show in their church services. But 95% of life, including the Christian life, is normal, mundane, every day living. It is going to work, driving in traffic, paying the bills, being faithful to your spouse, studying your Bible, striving to know and obey God, praying day after day without seeing any answers. It is perseverance, without flash or excitement.

On the other hand, Christianity is not boring. Read the Book of Acts. Imagine being in an ongoing vital relationship with the Creator! But sometimes the church reduces Christianity to an intellectual pursuit, *Having a form of godliness but denying its power*. No wonder the young people are bored. They are not being challenged to give their lives to Christ in a radical commitment, to risk their lives in the inner city, or in the Muslim world, or wherever God leads them. And since there is in the heart of young people this universal desire to go for it, they look for alternate ways of expressing their manhood.

A friend of mine has recently gotten involved with prison ministry through Freedom Fellowship and Kairos. He is being used by God and has seen God do some exciting things. But he returned from a recent seminar completely exhausted and said he had learned this this ministry is hard work. Yes, that's it! It is exciting and fulfilling and rewarding - - and it is drudgery with nothing to show for it. Christian service is by faith, and the results usually remain hidden until judgment day. If we will not put our hand to the plow and keep plowing and plowing, the harvest will be meager. But, my brothers and sisters, *Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* (1 Cor. 15:58)

PRECIOUS MEMORIES

(I hope to be able to continue to hold my Pathway to Freedom seminars here in my local Church and in the state prisons in western Colorado, but it has been several years since I have been able to go on an out-of-country mission trip, and I really miss doing that. Following is a part of my report on a trip to Mexico in April, 2003.)

- I spoke in about a dozen churches; plus two 2-hour sessions on the radio in Mexico City; plus two 2-day seminars in the Oaxaca area; plus one 3-day seminar in San Luis Potosi, specifically to train leaders in ministry and deliverance; plus much personal ministry to drug and alcohol rehab people.
- Preached in San Bartolo, a Zapotec Indian village in the mountains near Oaxaca. About 200-300 people. The men sat on one side, the women on the other. The Zapotec women wore their bright colorful long dresses and scarves. What a picture. At the end of the message everyone started weeping and praying out loud.
- At another church one night (very hot, concrete floor, slat walls, tin roof, open to the jungle, about 80 people) as I started preaching a roaring sound commenced. I have tinnitus and thought it had suddenly got much worse. (There was no indication that anybody else could hear anything.) It got louder still and I really thought I was going deaf. I stopped and asked Israel, my translator, if he could hear anything. He said, "Oh, I thought it was me!" It seems that he also has tinnitus, so both of us thought we were losing our hearing. I asked the people what the sound was and they said, "Chicharras" which translates cicadas. They were in the trees all around us.
- In Mitla (which translates "City of the Dead") we encountered much spiritual opposition. For no reason I experienced much fear – which usually happens one time each trip. I was stuttering, losing my place in the teaching, experiencing confusion. Later Israel told me that at times he saw my mouth moving but could not hear my words. The first lady we ministered to after the teaching had been deaf in her left ear for three years, since her sister-in-law had put a curse on her. We broke the curse and immediately her ear was opened. She started praising the Lord, as did we. The next day I got Montezuma's revenge. I don't know if it was all the witchcraft in that town or the mole' I ate for breakfast.
- In San Luis Potosi a nice looking middle aged lady named Julietta received ministry and had a wonderful breakthrough. She then brought us her teenaged daughter who had much bitterness and was alienated from her mother. She finally agreed to forgive her mother and got set free with much joy. She then brought her nephew who was lost and addicted to drugs. We led him to salvation and cast a bunch of stuff out of him and he looked like a different guy. Julietta kept coming back and holding my hand and thanking me for coming to their church. I know we are not supposed to serve for the strokes that occasionally come, but it does feel good to get some appreciation now and then. Ha!
- We returned from Oaxaca with two live rabbits (a gift) and a nine year-old boy, Edmundo, to add to the children that Pepe has started taking in as an additional ministry at the Bible School, in addition to the students and the drug rehab group. When I left they had 18 kids, ages 5-13. These are abandoned, abused children that they are rescuing. They are coordinating with the government to make sure everything is legal. I asked Pepe why he had started this additional program, which is a lot of work and expense. He said that a few months ago God started impressing on him to reach out and help the suffering, and he knew he had to start helping all the children he could.

My dear friends, when we receive an impression that we think is from God, we need to test it and if we then believe it is from God we must obey it, just as Pepe did in this situation. If we are claiming we want to be used by God but are squelching impressions that come to us that require some level of work and trouble and expense, we are kidding ourselves.

In a case like that, God will definitely stop giving us further impressions. Why should he continue to give us directions if we are ignoring the directions he has already given us? If it seems that at a certain point in your life God stopped communicating with you, stop and ask what happened at that time. Did God speak to you and tell you to do something specific, but you did not obey him? Did God tell you to:

- 1) forgive someone and possibly seek reconciliation;
- 2) reach out to a neighbor or coworker and share the gospel;
- 3) start tithing;
- 4) stop ignoring some sinful habit or addiction and obey God by confessing your sins to some appropriate mature Christian;
- 5) volunteer your time and effort to help the poor;
- 6) etc.

Frankly, there are a lot of church members who say they have accepted Christ as their **Savior** and **Lord** (the two go together), but they carefully avoid extending themselves in any way that will involve risk, expense, or discomfort. Such people are not disciples, and I believe their salvation is in question. Once again look at Matthew 7:21, where Jesus said, *Only he who does the will of my Father in heaven will enter the Kingdom of Heaven*. I will have a teaching about this next month. Love you!

Glenn

e-mail address casabrn441@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.glennbrownministries.com

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you may send them to:

CANYON VIEW VINEYARD CHURCH

736 24 ½ Road Grand Junction, Co. 81505