

FREEDOM'S GATE

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Setting Standard

By Robin Clifford

My husband and I were on a trip together. We had rented a pontoon for the day so I could lie in the sun and he could fish. I had found a book by a well-known preacher on healing and was looking forward to reading it.

Finding a quiet bay, we anchored the pontoon and I spread out my towel for an afternoon of tanning and reading. About halfway through the book I ran into a part where the author talked about having cancer. I reread it, thinking I had misread something and they were actually talking about someone else. They weren't.

I was shocked! I slammed the book shut and almost tossed it into the lake. This person preached healing and it appeared to me that what they believed either didn't work or they really didn't believe it themselves! In fact, the more I thought about it the madder I got, deciding then and there to never, ever read another book by this author again (that'll teach 'em)!

"Is this person your standard?" The words resounded in my spirit, causing me to come to a complete halt in my mental tirade. *My standard?*

"If you make this person your standard, that's as far as I can take you."

The words chilled me, for suddenly I saw what I had done. I had made their experience the final answer for me. What do I mean? Well, in short, if something like that could happen to them that didn't leave a whole lot of hope for me. Let me tell you, this person knew a whole lot more than I did about spiritual things! With that realization, suddenly fear rose up within me which I in turn, masked with anger and directed at the author of the book.

At that point, instead of the book, I was ready to just throw myself into the lake! But as usual, the Lord was waiting patiently for me to stop my whining and listen, which I did. His instruction began with a few questions I couldn't answer, such as... "Do you really know this person? When was the last time you sat down with them and they shared their every inner thought and feeling with you? When was the last time you walked in their shoes?" Let me tell you, it didn't take long for this farm girl to figure out that my Heavenly Father was not happy with the way I had been slamming my sibling (in Christ) around. And it is one lesson I have never forgotten.

That day I determined to look at people in a whole different light, simply because of what I am about to share with you.

1. The author's purpose in writing the book was not to edify themselves, but Jesus and who He is. Basically, it's about the message, not the messenger.

2. When I base whether or not the Word works on another human being, I limit what I receive from the Father when I pray. Why is that? I have removed Jesus as my standard and placed some one else in His place, and now it's their level of faith that I now operate in. Let me tell you something – I don't care how "spiritual" you think someone is, **NO ONE** can match Jesus' faith, so why limit one's self to anything other than the highest.

3. (And this one's a doozy!) When I make someone else my standard, I transfer my worship to that person. Think about that, I am

In this article, I would like to address a subject that seems to be a problem for many of us in the Body of Christ. We often want to make the messenger the standard of the truth of the message. If the messenger has problems, then surely the word that they teach cannot be true. A few years ago, the Lord corrected this mindset in me.

worshiping someone else when I put their experience over what the word says. Just because things happen in a person's life does not make the Word of God null and void! Listen to what I'm saying - it's **dangerous** to make anyone other than Jesus your standard to live by.

Now, I can hear some of you saying "By their fruits..." That scripture, found in Matthew 7:15-20, crossed my mind too. I felt I needed to look up the word fruits and was completely surprised at what I found. "Fruits" does not mean behavior, gifts or actions as I have always thought it meant. It actually means "to pluck, or seize, to take for one self."

Putting all this in plain down home talk, Jesus was simply saying, "I want you to take the words you hear from someone and line it up with what My Word says. Then you'll know if that person is a false prophet or not. Don't look at their behavior, actions, or circumstances, because it could be deceptive – both to the good or the bad." Now we know why Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:16a, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Paul chose not to base his opinions on people according to their flesh, but from his position in Christ, Who takes every word spoken and deals with it according to the Word.

On our farm, quite frequently we have to round up cattle for one reason or another. We do this on foot, with whips and a dog. Spreading out in the pasture we form a loose circle that gradually gets tighter until we funnel the cattle into a small corral.

Now, it's human nature to look down at the ground while you're walking in the pasture to avoid holes and cow patties. Looking down can be a dangerous thing to do. You see, in every herd there's what we call a lead cow and if she breaks rank, will take the rest of the herd charging back out into the pasture. She also will protect the herd if she thinks you are a danger to them (we've even had our herd bulls hide behind these broods).

As we work together driving them into a tighter and tighter circle the phrase "heads up" is shouted numerous times and means one thing: "Watch the lead cow, she's getting agitated."

Here's your "heads up." Don't cast away the message because the messengers are human. They live in a body of sin (outward man), which is perishing (flesh). Rather, look at each messenger's inward man (spirit man), which is being renewed day by day into the full stature and image of Christ. Know that it is about this new creature in Christ we now are a part of. **Jesus wants to be our standard.** He doesn't want the messengers of His Word to take His place in your life. We are all still learning to walk in our position and we make mistakes. But that's the beauty of this message; when we screw it up (and we do) He's there to rescue us and set everything back in order. You just can't lose!

In closing, I would like to leave you with the prayer that Paul prayed over the Ephesian Church: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19

it's dangerous to make anyone other than Jesus your standard to live by

Ain't No Good Thing

By Shelly Diehm

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21

With the biggest snarl I could muster, I growled, “I refuse to raise them for you. I will not! I will not! I will not!” I could feel myself getting angrier by the second. The “poor little things” scenario wasn’t working this time.

“Aw, come on? Why can’t you? They’ll be fun.”

Once again I repeated myself, “I will not raise another coon. You’re asking for trouble. I’ve done this before and you know the result.”

How could a mother like me pass up this exciting opportunity? Easy! Been there, done that.

Twenty years ago my soon-to-be husband brought me five baby raccoons. I agreed to feed and care for these quiet, sweet creatures, or so I thought. The adventure began the very first night when I snuggled into bed with my babies in a box only an arms length away. There was only one thing I hadn’t accounted for; they were nocturnal.

I quickly rationalized life as a con-artist and got rid of four. With only one remaining, I became the proud parent of a baby boy and named him Spud.

Spud shared a barn with the horses where he lived in a cage that appeared to belong in a zoo. He was extremely smart and fun, but never was there a time where he was so relaxed that you could sneak up on him. He was a wild animal and there was just no getting around it.

As Spud grew, I began to leave the cage door open so he could come and go at will. He became good buddies with my horse Sonny. It was common to find Spud perched upon the top fence rail holding Sonny’s halter with one hand and scratching his face with the other.

One Friday evening while preparing for a horse show, I had put Sonny in the cross ties when Mom called for supper. I ran in the house to grab a bite to eat when I heard the most painful screeching coming from the horse barn. I barreled out the kitchen door only to find my little coon’s hand smashed under Sonny’s hoof. Spud had crawled under my horse and hugged his leg, unknowingly cueing him to pick up his foot. Five minutes after I rescued him, his little hand swelled up like a big marshmallow leaving a half moon shape across the top.

As time went by and Spud grew, the wild animal in him only increased. He made more trips to the woods and spent less time in the barn. Playing with him produced more caution. No longer could I grab him up from behind because he would wheel around and try to bite me. He was not trying to be mean, it was just who he truly was: a wild animal.

In a similar way, your flesh is like a raccoon. No matter how much you decorate, discipline or feed it proper nutrition, the truth is, it’s still wild. Regardless of your endless attempts to tame it, flesh is still corrupt and the desire to be wild remains.

Alcoholics Anonymous tells us once a person is an alcoholic, they will always be an alcoholic. Judging from a carnal standard that’s true. Why? Because the desire to drink is still present. Carnally, you will never overcome being an alcoholic, but thank God He doesn’t leave you in that hopeless state.

According to the Word you do not have to remain imprisoned to fleshly desires nor spend a lifetime trying to tame the wild animal within. Plainly speaking, there ain’t no good thing in that flesh of yours and just when you think you’ve conquered it, think again!

In the same way a raccoon can’t help the fact that he’s born wild, neither can you help the fact that your flesh is wild. One moment you may be as sweet as a kitten and in an instant become as a roaring lion. Flesh simply cannot be trusted or fixed.

Romans 6:11 says to reckon your flesh dead. What does that mean? If you visit a graveyard, you will observe that none of the residents there have an opinion. Dead people have no voice and neither do they react. They are lifeless which means no life.

When you became born again you experienced not only a resurrection, but a death. Your wild man died (passed away) and you became a new creature in Christ Jesus. So ... if the wild man died, why are you still experiencing the same old desires?

Walking in this new creature requires agreement. It is agreeing with the fact that regardless of how I feel or what I see, that wild nature in me is history, dead, gone, over. I am what the Word of God says I am. I am what Galatians 5:22-23 says I am. Look it up. What does it say about you?

Be conscious of your thoughts. The Bible talks of renewing your mind in Romans 12:2. Renewing your mind is nothing more than agreeing with the Word of God and receiving by faith the inheritance that Jesus purchased for you with His blood.

The blood of Jesus decrees you are no longer under the control of alcohol and reborn into the Kingdom of God. A dead man can’t desire so you might as well receive by faith that those old desires are passed away. Continue to remind yourself who you are in Christ until it becomes a reality within your nature and desires. As you do that, one day you will awaken and find that change has taken place.

The things you struggle with no longer have to be a temptation or desire. The choice is up to you. Will you focus on the wild symptoms of your flesh or will you really choose to believe it is dead and you are no longer that person.

Sometimes accepting truth by faith is a process, but you can do it. You may not see that old man dead over night, but as you keep considering Jesus and putting the Word first place, the wildness of the old you will begin to subside. Declare to yourself what God has said about you over and over! It will change. Let patience have her perfect work and not get discouraged

because results don’t arrive in 24 hours. Keep at it, they’ll arrive.

As for Spud... After I married and moved away, my brothers would recall seeing a big coon walking along the peak of the barn roof while they played basketball at night. Unfortunately, in our family it continues to remain an unsolved mystery. After all, who has the guts to get on a barn roof and grab a big ole coon’s paw just to check for a half moon shape anyway?



**Regardless
of your endless attempts to tame**