

Undiscovered Self (1)

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Sin lies deeper than sins which are the outward form it takes; deeper than world attachments, which are the golden chain of its subtle enslavement. Sin is the root, sins are the fruit. Sin's dwelling place is in the ego (:the sin that dwelleth in me"), in the center of the personality, in the heart. Sin reveals itself in its subtlest shades in all kinds of manifestations of the self-life. So un-discernible are they to any but God-enlightened eyes, that the writer to the Hebrews speaks of the word of God being sharp enough to pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, to the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Only the Holy Spirit can show him his secret idolatries. How much more is it true that only the Holy Spirit can expose sin to its roots right in the inner ego of a man!

That was the complete catastrophe of the fall. The ego, the heart, was created as God's dwelling place, the holy of holies where the universal Spirit of goodness, beauty and truth, would hold converse with man's created spirit, dwell in blessed union and communion with him, be the light of his eyes, the wisdom of his mind, the strength of his will, unfold to him all the hidden glories of God's creation. Man, foolish, beguiled, self-seeking, deliberately took the frightful step of rejecting the gentle dominion of the Father of Spirits, and surrendering the throne of his personality to that impudent, usurping tyrant, his own independent self. What a harvest of horror he has reaped—selfishness, pride, lust, wrath, hatred, malice, war, disease, and death. Hidden behind the supposed dominion of *king ego*, there has lurked the all-pervading spirit of evil, that spirit which Paul says works in the children of disobedience.

Such has been man's condition, all his magnificent faculties, which were created for God's use and God's glory, enslaved, infected, defiled by the dominion of his rebel self, all together forming the "I" that is carnal, the flesh in which dwelleth no good thing, the old man corrupt according to the deceitful lust. Yet that rebel self man displays much of the common goodness still existing in God's creation, the goodness of which

Jesus speaks, when He says that sinners do good to those that do good gifts to their children: it may do kind acts; be cheerful; be polished; be cleaver, and even when Christ has been welcomed with, in humble penitence as Lord of the life, that old self, largely unrecognized, will still reveal its presence in thousand ways by self-will, self-importance, self-sufficiency; or alternatively by a self-consciousness that is bondage, or a self-deprecation that paralyses.

It seems that God's Spirit has to take every forward moving soul through a drastic process self-exposure. That undiscovered self-principle lurking in the depths, that root of sin, has to be looked in the face. Its presumptuous claim to be a sufficient source of wisdom and ability has to be exposed in its falsity. Its save-yourself attitude has to be recognized and rejected. And such knowledge can only come through failure, through humiliation, through despair. Then, and then only, is the soul ripe for that inner leap of faith: the dying of the old, the rising of the new, the full and final enthronement of its proper Lord.

What trouble God took to bring this one truth home to all who would wholly follow Him. They had to learn it. It was the key to a God-lit life.

Abraham took fourteen years after his first great step of obedience and consecration when "he went out, not knowing whither he went". Twice over, in the flight to Egypt and the advice of Sarah, his subtle old self swept him off his feet; first in a panicky effort to save his own skin, and second by preferring the advice of his wife to the plain word of God. By these two excursions into bypass meadow, the hidden existence of his fallen self was exposed to him in its two main centers of entrenchment, through the body and mind. At last he was in a condition of brokenness, in which God could speak to him that word of final deliverance: "Walk before Me and be thou perfect"; and a mighty exploit of the Spirit was set in motion which became the standard act of faith throughout all history.

Jacob's history in this respect is one of the best known in the Bible, although it is also true that he is greatly maligned and his true character unappreciated. Fallen nature prefers Esau to Jacob any day, but not so God. And the reason is obvious Esau was a rank materialist, sensual, worldly, selfish a heartbreak to

his parents. God cannot but "hate" such, for by their free choice they are the antagonist of the only two laws which can ever turn this world from a hell to a heaven: the love of God with all our heart, and love of our neighbor as ourselves. Yet Esau was dressed in outer garments sufficiently attractive almost to deceive the elect, with social charms, good looks, athletic grace and prowess, and a certain abandon and open-handedness that worldlings often have.

Not so Jacob. Cautious, crafty, stay-at-home, there is little to appeal about him, but one thing and that only God and his mother could see. He believed in God. In his own crabbed way he loved God. God and His promises, which Esau would barter for a bowl of beans, were so real to Jacob that, with all the intensity of an intense nature, he set himself to obtain them. This, perhaps was why God called Himself the God of Jacob; not because He has mercy on the crooked, but because He is ever found of those who seek Him with the whole heart. But what a dominant "I", what a scheming bargaining self! Obvious enough to all except the possessor! It took twenty-one years for Jacob to make the discovery that his one enemy was his own uncrucified ego. Tricking and tricked, still he did not see that it was self he was trusting. There remained one trump card, and God played that. He knows just when and where to give the coup de grace, for He knows our soft spots. One fear Jacob never conquered, and that was the sworn vengeance of his brother. Wild horses would not drag him back within his reach. But God's voice came to him, "Return"; and, deeper than all his schemes and fears, one voice had the last word with him. He was God's, and it is important to note that these deeper dealings of the Spirit are only possible in lives which are first so wholly given to God that when the pinch comes they will take anything He gives them and go anywhere He sends them. So back he went. Every wile that his scheming brain could devise was made ready to placate Esau. But well he knew that such would be but as straw to a whirlwind. Was not Esau coming with four hundred men to make no mistake about it? That night, alone at Jabbok, the real fight was fought, not with his outward enemy—for outward things are not really our enemies at all—but with his inner, that unrealized, unbroken, self. Set, as he was, somehow still to scheme some final clever

getaway, filled with his own thought, far too preoccupied to think of transferring his trust to God's the Lord Himself could do nothing with him, until his very body cracked under the strain. Lame and helpless, at last the light dawned, self was seen in its true colors; and all the energies of that intense personality which for twenty-one years had centered in his own scheming, burned from himself, helpless and broken, and clave with a like intensity to his God. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He was through. "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." And next day the avenger who came to slay him met him with embraces!

Joseph that holy and consecrated young life, precious to the Lord as are all who are pure from their youth up, is sometimes foolishly portrayed as a conceited and pampered young fledgling. A thousand miles from it! Morally mature and courageous, he stood undefiled along amongst his brethren, although it may not perhaps have been his business to expose them to their father. Rarely can God entrust a vision of greatness to a mere stripling, but He did to young Joseph. Again he overstepped the mark in telling it to father and brother; but the father, who well knew God and His ways, even while rebuking his son, sensed the Divine origin of the dreams and took good note of them.

But it was the same old story—Joseph consecrated, holy, fearless; but, mingled with this, the self-assurance and self-righteousness of the unsanctified ego. Tremendous fires had to do their purifying work to fit them for tremendous responsibilities. Consecrated but uncurcified self could never stand the dizzy and desperately dangerous heights for which he was destined. So down he was taken to fourteen years, down, down, first to slavery to which he was sold by his own brethren, then to the dungeon, falsely stained with the vilest of accusations; and, even then, when it seemed that a word to Pharaoh from a grateful heart might relieve him, left to rot in forgetfulness. Could God still be with him? We wonder that Joseph did not curse God and become an atheist. The iron entered into his soul. But faith held. That was all he had left to him—naked faith; and by that golden thread he steadied himself; received the blows as from God's living presence, triumphed

over inward resentment and the outward appeals of flattery and sensuality. A character indeed sanctified, meet for the Master's use; a self, purged of itself, able to live in the glittering and sinful surroundings of a heathen metropolis, married to the daughter of a heathen priest, yet walking with God in while, bearing a witness to the true God which reached from the palace to the humblest cottage.

Taken from "THE LAW OF FAITH," chapter 5, page 37.