

GOODNEWS LETTER

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ONCE AGAIN

I've wanted to re-cap some past articles for some time. While, I advocate reading, I am aware that few get the strength of meaning that an article conveys as much as the one writing it. Writing is a real learning experience.

Besides, it's February: Football is over, Baseball hasn't started and the NBA is losing money. Plus, a lot of the world lies in the cold, huddled down in the warmth of their house.

Then, there's rain in Southern California and snow in the east. Perhaps, now is the time to re-write a couple of the most cherished truths I have learned. After all, we all need something to do. So, here's one from October 29, 2004. It's number 29, an analogy of riding horses and controlling the flesh. Originally, it was titled "**Riding A Green Broke Horse.**" Let's re-title it as:

THE TRINITARIAN EQUESTERIAN

As you observe his big and muscular body, you guess that he weighs around 1000 pounds. You know you can get on him. He stands quietly. But, you better know what you're doing. He isn't mean. He's a green broke horse. And, many miles on the trail or in the arena will be needed to get a real good handle on this big fellow.

But you've been around the barn for while and know that discipline must be applied in order to have a safe ride - to ride correctly. You've seen many seasoned equestrians control their mount, and you've been told by them to always have a lot of respect and a little fear, when straddling any horse. If you don't respect a green broke horse, you'll soon learn what fear is all about - Whoa!

Easy, big fellow, 'cause, when you get into God's Word and learn that a fight is ever ongoing between the flesh and the spirit of man, you will quickly learn that respect (to hear) and fear (to do) must be applied in order to control man's flesh. After a short time, you learn that it's a lot harder than getting on the back of a horse - green broke or not.

Just like a green broke horse, the flesh is prone to spook. Suddenly, in a flash, it can bolt and leave you speechless. Easily attracted to worldly things, the flesh may seek a peek at Bathsheba, or it might want to make a few fleshly statements that

Peter made. Both can be just the fleshly reaction that causes a runaway. You've gotta watch and be ready. Ready is careful!

Knowledge of what the flesh does is vital in the Christian's walk. And application of truth has to be applied. It's like any Equestrian; a Christian must learn that there is a huge difference between "**horsing around**" and correct equestrianism. Discipline is always in order if the flesh walks the straight path. The flesh weighs too much to "horse around" with.

Discipline is mandatory in order to "**Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**" (Ro 12:1). Paul illustrates what discipline means in I Cor. 9:27, "**I beat my body and make it a slave.**" He also wrote that "**The flesh sets its desire against the spirit,**" Ga 5:17. A living sacrifice is serious business.

But too many church members ride correctly on Sunday services only; or on Wednesday nights. Even then, they ride nonchalantly, unconcerned about what is said or read. Barely in control, their minds wander. Uninvolved with what's going on, they laugh, sing and look at the birds in the trees.

Then suddenly, off they go into the sunset - hanging on by the horn of the flesh, only; while the "**reins of discipline**" dangle on the ground.

It happens all the time. Losing control over the flesh is something that Paul wrote about, saying: "**And, I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ,**" 1st Corinthians 3:1.

That's why Babes are **NEVER** put on a green broke horse. Babes must learn off a seasoned horse - one in better control. The Pastor or another strong member must be followed; for since it was created, the horse has not changed.

Likewise, since the **FALL** of the flesh (actually, man fell totally; body, soul & spirit), Paul is telling us that the flesh will never - at best - get past a "**green broke**" stage. It is hostile against the spirit and never will be seasoned. Thus, until the change comes, controlling the flesh has to be done; and discipline is mandatory.

Yes, I am aware that scripture refers to the flesh being dead. However, it is dead only through Christ's work and God's **declarative Word**. You and I both know that the flesh is still alive.

What Jesus accomplished at Calvary did not remove carnality of man's flesh. Jesus paid for man breaking the Law of God; He paid man's sin debt. However, His work is granted to us through God's grace, allowing the flesh to be crucified at Calvary; which God declares to be based upon His Son's death - the perfect and final offering for sin.

Calvary gave believers life through God's declaration. This life is received by faith when we believe in what God said about His Son - the **GOSPEL MESSAGE**. Jesus paid the price for sin, but we are granted forgiveness based upon His work alone; it's as if we actually died.

What happened was: God's declarative Word brought release from the flesh. Now, our spirits are free to "worship God in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). But until Jesus died at Calvary, man was held in bondage, controlled by the flesh.

After we received and believed the Word, we are free to walk in spirit (our spirits) as we follow the Holy Spirit. He leads, guides and directs our spirits "into all righteousness" (Jn 16).

What control the Devil had over the flesh has been destroyed by the power of the Holy Spirit. And here, we must understand all that the victory involves. It is a spiritual victory, not a fleshly one. If we serve God, it has to be in Spirit and in truth.

This new walk of our spirit came available only since the New Testament; which, is beautifully explained in a condensed version of Ephesians 2:1-10: "You were dead in trespasses and sins where you formerly walked, according to the prince of the power of the air, indulging in the desires of the flesh... But, God loved us, and even in this state, he made us alive and raised us up with Jesus to show His kindness by grace...Therefore, we are His workmanship, that we might walk in good works."

Clearly, anyone attempting to serve God through a fleshly means might just as well try to ride a wild stallion bareback; without a saddle or reins. It won't last long. Before we get settled in, sin takes us and slams us to the ground.

Sure, it feels so good to engage the flesh. Yet fighting the required spiritual battle in the flesh is like a two-year old getting off a "merry go" and jumping atop a mustang. Dust flies and often bones are broken!

Paul makes it clear: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." 2 Cor.10:3,4.

Certainly, the victory is secure, but our witness to His work may not be. Here, like getting in the saddle, knowledge, respect and controlled-fear are required to stay on top of fleshly desires. Otherwise, we'll find ourselves flat on our spiritual backs, dazed from the heavy blow, while the flesh skedaddles off into the worldly sunset.