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"From Addictions to Freedom"

"Don't let your hearts stray away toward her. Don't wander down her wayward path. For she has been the ruin of many; numerous men have been her victims.... Her bedroom is the den of death." (Pr. 7:24-27)

In the recent movie-version of the classic story of *Beowulf*, we are given a sobering image of how multiple generations of Kings and mighty warriors carry a dark secret that haunts them for their entire lives: They each fall prey to the seduction of Grendel's mother (played by Angelina Jolie). Grendel's mother is the last of a monster race and is able to keep her species alive by taking on the form of a beautiful woman and sexually seducing those men who have the power to destroy this evil. As a result, these great warriors - and the people to whom they have sworn their allegiance to protect - must all suffer from the attacks of their demonic offspring. And the Kings, who had the strength and the destiny to heroically save their people, instead live a lie and die with hidden shame.

What must we men today do to avoid an ending to our lives of shame and regret? Much can be learned from the Biblical story of Gideon. This story begins with the Israelites ongoing struggle: "Once again" Gideon and the people of Israel were disobeying God and doing "what was evil in the Lord's sight." (Judges 6) They had been worshipping false gods and falling prey to the Baal religious practice of prostitution – again and again. As a result of their addictive sinful behavior, God removes his hand of protection and releases Israel and Gideon to the consequences of their sinful choices – fear and bondage. The Israelites fled to dark caves to hide from the Midianites.

Yet in the midst of Gideon's sinful compulsions and before he had repented, God gave Gideon a vision for his heroic purpose - if he would turn from his sinful lifestyle and choose to obey God. God could have told him, "Gideon, you are a cockroach and a scumbag and have no more chances!" But we serve a God of redemption – a God of second chances. Instead, God sent an angel to give Gideon a vision for his life: "*Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!* Go with the strength you have and rescue Israel." Gideon's response shows his disbelief that God could have a good plan for his "unworthy" life: "How can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe, and I am the least in my entire family." (Judges 6:15)

Often, we get caught in sinful addictions and do not fight to get out of them because we believe there is nothing better for our lives and that we are unworthy. In the words of men like CS Lewis, Larry Crabb and Frederick Buechner, we choose to drink from a cesspool instead of choosing to take a glass of the finest wine. We are fooled into believing that there is no good or special purpose for our lives and that God does not have our best interests at heart. When the battle gets fierce, we often just give in to our sinful natures by resigning ourselves to, "this must be as good as it gets." That is a lie from the pit of hell! There is something better!

Gideon chose to fight for his heroic heritage by seeking forgiveness of his sins and building an altar as a monument of his decision to move forward in obedience to God. He burned the symbols of his pagan and addictive lifestyle – Asherah poles - and he pledged his allegiance to God. Gideon felt immediate peace and freedom when he finally repented and truly committed his life to God. So Gideon named the altar, “The Lord Is Peace.”

An heroic destiny is not only true for Gideon, but it is true for all of us who choose to obey God, repent of our sins, and “burn at the altar” our sinful lifestyles. God’s desire is that we live out His good and glorious purposes for our lives. God’s purpose for us is that we “become like his son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers.” (Romans 8:29) In this same chapter in Romans, we learn that “since we are God’s children we will share his treasures – for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too.” (Romans 8:17)

Isn’t this wild – that God’s desired heritage for us is to be a brother of Christ our King and to share in His rewards? The statement sounds almost sacrilegious - yet it is true! "So now Jesus and *the ones he makes holy* have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers." (Heb. 2:11) We each have an important, necessary, and yes - heroic role to play in these battles against evil. And the rewards for those who finish well are beyond our imagination. But we must *fight for holiness* in order to live out our God-given legacies and in order to have a right relationship with God our Father. Of course this fight will not be easy. The apostle Paul continues by saying, "But if we are to share in his glory, we must also share his suffering." (Rom. 8:17)

Yet many of us have lost heart that there is anything better to fill our God-given thirst and passion than pornography, illegitimate sex, alcohol, drugs, or the insatiable pursuit of power and money. We often fall into quiet, addictive behaviors - living secret lives and hiding in dark caves to shield our shame from others. "They hate the light because they want to sin in the darkness." (John 3:20) Yet we know deep down that a sinful lifestyle is not truly satisfying – and it never leads to true peace – which is what we fight for! To win this Great War against evil, it is essential that God be "*with us*" - yet sinful lifestyles separate us from a holy God. But when God is with us, "He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few." (1 Sam. 14:6)

So let’s fight to get out of the dark caves. There is something better than our sinful addictions to satisfy our thirst! There is an heroic mission that men are being called to join. This is a noble cause for which each of God's image-bearers were uniquely created and designed to be a part. And every man is essential to the cause. We are being called to be brothers of Christ - the King of kings and Lord of lords; to follow Him into battle; to become more like Him; and to have a real relationship with God the Father.

The Bible teaches us that there will be a day when men will pull out their swords and unite with Christ for freedom's sake - when men finally will embrace the "blood of the Lamb" and choose to no longer live in the dark bondage of sinful addictions - and when we clearly see that what the world has to offer is meaningless (see Rev. 12:11). Satan knows when this happens; his empire will be destroyed by the Saints of God! We are close to that day – “for such a time as this!” And “*we few, we happy few, we band of brothers*” do not want to miss out on what God is doing in this generation!

In this battle against evil, there will be no "Lone Rangers." (Heck, even the "Lone Ranger" in this American Old West classic story needed his Indian friend Tonto!). God is looking for the men who realize that in this war we will not go far without having in our foxholes other real and authentic [Jonathan/David brotherhoods](#). Sinful addictions cannot be defeated alone! The prayer of Jesus to his Father God just before His crusade to the cross was that His followers would band together: Jesus said, "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one." (John 17:21)

Satan wants us to believe that we are alone in our foxholes, and that our struggles and addictions are unique and isolated to us. Evil wants us to think that if we were open and honest about our battles that no one could ever truly understand us – or better yet - love us. That is a lie! Our internal and hidden battles and our feelings of loneliness are common to all men. And when our sins and dark places are exposed to the light by walking in authentic and honest brotherhood with other Disciples of Christ - we will experience love, forgiveness, power, and peace!

Once we truly repent and turn away from our addictive sins, we then will be free to live out the heroic purposes for which we were created. We will be free to love and rescue our wives, children, and friends. We will be free to band together, to be "mighty heroes," and to overcome evil through the power of Christ Jesus. And most importantly, we will be free to have a real relationship with God our Father.

So join us! – And let's slay our sinful addictions as we band together in authentic brotherhood. On our deathbeds, let's have no regrets and no shame.

"For you have been called to live in freedom – not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love." (Gal. 5:13)