



Dan's Divinities
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The Venomous Snake that Healed

Bobby and Jane were visiting the grandparents on their farm one summer. Bobby was given a BB gun and he went on a hunting trip in the woods. He saw a robin, but his shot went high. He missed the woodpecker, too. The squirrel didn't even seem to be afraid of him and he couldn't hit it. Time after time he shot and every time he missed. Frustrated and hungry, he returned to the farmhouse at suppertime. On his way into the yard the disillusioned and disheartened young man saw his grandmother's prize hen and on impulse took a wild shot at it. To his horror, the chicken fell over dead. He had hit it between the eyes. Scared and not knowing what to do, he grabbed the hen and took it behind the henhouse, burying it under some leaves. As he turned to re-enter the yard, he saw his sister staring at him. Jane did not see a word, but Bobby knew his misdeed had been discovered.

After supper, Grandma said, "Jane, let's wash the dishes." But Jane responded, "Grandma, I'd be happy to help, but Bobby said he wanted to wash them tonight." Then she whispered to him, "Remember the chicken?" Bobby did the dishes.

The next day, Grandpa said to the kids, "Let's go fishing!" But Grandma said, "Why don't you just take Bobby, Jane needs to help me clean the house." "Oh, but Grandma, Bobby said he really likes to sweep floors. Don't be a CHICKEN, Bobby, you stay and help Grandma and I'll help Grandpa catch the fish." So, Bobby got to clean the house.

After a week of not only doing his own chores, but also Jane's, Bobby could not stand it any longer. He blurted to his grandmother, "I'm sorry, but I shot your prize hen!"

"I know," said Grandma. "I was looking out the window when you shot it. I forgave you then and I forgive you now. I was just wondering how long you would let Jane make a slave of you."

Bobby had been a slave to his guilt. He was guilty of doing something wrong and that caused him to live in fear until he finally decided to confess his misdeed, own up to his transgression, and seek forgiveness.

Numbers 9:4-9 tells the strange story of a venomous snake that brought healing. It seems that the children of Israel grew restless and began murmuring against God and Moses. They said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food" (Number 9:5). The truth was they had manna and quail that the Lord was providing for them and they had water from the rock that Moses struck with his staff, but they were unhappy with the Lord's provision and turned against Moses to express their discontent.

When we have attitude problems, our disenchantment often tends to bite us in the behind. The children of Israel were bitten by venomous snakes, so they confessed their rebelliousness to Moses and asked for deliverance. Moses prayed and God directed him to cast a bronze venomous serpent and put it on a pole. Everyone who took their eyes off their own self-centered rebellion against God and looked up in faith at the bronze serpent was healed. In effect, the venom of the snakes led to the healing of their souls when they turned to God.

Jesus said, "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15, NRSV). If we want to get over our bad attitudes, our guilt over our misdeeds, and consequences of our bad behavior, we must come to the cross and realize that it was our own venom that put Jesus on the cross. Jesus did not want us to live in rebellion against God because he knew it would mean the death of our souls. Our sin makes us hate ourselves and ruptures the health of our spirits. Our guilt imprisons us and chains us to self-loathing. It keeps us from God and disables our relationships with those we should be cherishing. Our only solution is to look up at the cross, confess our guilt, and receive the sacrifice made on our behalf by God himself. He will forgive our waywardness, restore us to relationship with him, and give us the gift of eternal life.