

Reduction and Redemption

The fatal flaw concept took root in me before I had the ability to comprehend thought. From conception I was surrounded by negativity and blame. As an infant my needs were met barely and without much love. I spent my early years attempting to get even my most basic needs met by adapting and conforming to my parents wants as best I could. Later as my mental and language skills began to develop, I started to form a picture of what was expected from me in order for me to feel Safe and Loved. As I developed I became extremely intuitive and self-aware in an effort to predict the forever changing expectations of my parents. I absorbed their criticisms with my entire being in hopes that I could become that son that would be Loved and Protected by them. I labored tirelessly analyzing every aspect of myself reducing those that provoked disapproval, expanding those that seemed to be accepted and creating any that I did not possess. I was creating the perfect me someone that could be Loved and Protected. Nothing worked, I was always falling short of the mark and beaten down once again. I worked even harder, faster and with more passion, discarding one at a time parts of the person that I was born to be. Still, the beatings continued seemingly without end. What more could I do, what was I missing? There must be some part of me that I am blind to that provokes this disdain. I am hopeless, this is as good as it gets for someone like me. I continued to use what I had learned to reduce the beatings, but I had lost all hope that I was capable of becoming the kind of son that is deserving of Love and Protection. I was nine years old, and I was fatally flawed.

Having broken my spirit my father then began to build me into a one-man army, a soldier a monster. At nine years old. He took me to purchase my first firearm, and then taught me how to use it. It would be 32 years before I could sleep without a loaded gun close at hand. Five years later, he introduced me to alcohol. My first real experience with alcohol was one of the most powerful in my life. Alcohol temporarily erased the fatal flaw. For the first time in my life I felt normal, acceptable. I spent the next 12 years as drunk and as high as I could be. I used a combination of rage, fear, intelligence, intuition and vicious competitiveness to blast a path through my life. I found that winning, being the best, proving others wrong, and the utter defeat of others at my hand temporarily gave me the incredibly satisfying feeling of revenge against a world that had screwed me over.

When I was 21 I was living with a woman and her three-year-old son. One evening we were involved in an extremely passionate argument and she yelled "I suppose by the end of tonight you're going to try and kill me". That really hurt my feelings and my reaction was to retrieve the loaded gun from the bedroom, cock it, point it at her head and ask if she really thought I was going to kill her. She took back her words, and later called the police. I was charged and convicted for assault with a deadly weapon and sentenced to one year in jail, five years of felony probation and a five year prison sentence that was stayed on the condition that I successfully complete probation. I remember sitting in jail and thinking. I do not belong here. They just do not understand. After 74 days in jail. The probation department furloughed me into an eighteen month inpatient six month outpatient treatment program. After two years in

the program I graduated and was released. That experience scared me enough to make a new plan. I decided that if I stopped dealing drugs and did not take LSD. I would avoid jail and prison. Almost 3 years later, I was caught with marijuana in my system and went before the judge again. The result was with less than a year left of my probation it was suggested that I attend a 12 step program. I decided to take their suggestion and stay sober until my probation ended. When I finally received my release from probation I had stayed sober for around six months and was confused as to what I wanted. For no particular reason other than I did not know what to do. I went to my regular 12 step meeting that night. I have been sober ever since. After nine years of angry and bitter sobriety that included regular fits of rage, I was at a turning point. I had met a man whom I saw as peaceful and gentle. I asked him to be my sponsor and guide me through the 12 steps. The following year, when I was returning from a white water rafting trip I stopped at the scene of a terrible accident. The driver was a little drunk and had lost control of his truck, his brother that had been in the passenger seat was now in pieces on the highway. I could not shake off the feeling that the dead brother's spirit had followed me home. I began to have terrifying nightmares and auditory hallucinations. When I shared these troubles with my sponsor he suggested that I talked to a therapist friend of his up to this point in my life. I had only been completely honest with one human being, my sponsor. I made a decision to extend that trust to this therapist and soon after to the therapy group. That's simple, but not easy act of trust became the cornerstone of my path into the light. This was the beginning of the most difficult and rewarding journey of my life. If not for the guidance, faith, patience and love of countless people, this cycle of fear, hate and oppression would have continued to devastate life after life after life. Thanks to those angels, as well as my courageous commitment to permanent healing, and the cultivation of Unconditional Love, for me this cycle is ended. I have looked deeply and honestly within myself and I am empowered by what I have discovered. Within me there is not now nor has there ever existed a fatal flaw. I am filled with an incredible capacity for peace, understanding and unconditional love. I dedicate my life to the continued cultivation of these qualities. Not as a penance but as the greatest gift, one can ever give.

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