

A Kitten, a Scorpion, or a Dragon: How Do You See Your Government?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | October 28, 2021



I have many patients who struggle with feelings of hurt, anger, and bitterness stemming from longstanding mistreatment in their relationships. Some of my patients experience such ongoing emotional wounds in their relationship with a parent, others from a spouse, and others from their children. When a patient's history reveals a pattern of repeated, persistent, and predictable slights, rejections, betrayals, and exploitations yet they keep exposing themselves to the offender to be wounded again and again, I share this metaphor.

Consider the story of the scorpion and the frog. The scorpion asks the frog for a ride across the lake. The frog objects, saying, "No way! If I let you onto my back, you'll sting me and I'll die."

The scorpion replies, "Well, if I did that, we would both drown! So I would never do that." Assured that the scorpion means no harm, the frog gives the scorpion a ride on his back. Halfway across the lake, however, the scorpion stings the frog.

As the toxin works its way through its body, the frog asks the scorpion, "Why did you sting me? Now we will both die!"

The scorpion replies, "It's my nature."

One problem some of my patients have in relationships is failing to understand the nature of the people with whom they are in relationship. We all want our spouse or parent or child to love us in a healthy way. But some of us have relatives who are not mature, or worse, who have hardened their hearts in selfishness. And sometimes, because we love them, because we want them to be better, kinder, more loving, we resist the truth, we resist seeing them for who they have chosen to become, what character they have developed and, thus, we expose ourselves to them to be hurt, betrayed, exploited, and wounded over and over again. This results in anger, frustration, and discouragement.

One's longing, desire, or wish for the other person to love them can be so strong that despite repeated injury, when the pain of the most recent assault diminishes, the happy fantasy overshadows the painful reality, and they expose themselves to being hurt again.

Imagine looking across the room and seeing the cutest kitten you have ever seen. Immediately, you smile brightly and imagine how soft its fur will feel when you pick it up and cuddle it, how comforting its gentle purr will sound. But even though you *see* a kitten, what actually waits across the room is a vicious scorpion—so, when you reach out to pet the "kitten," you actually get stung. You instantly pull back your hand crying out in pain and retreat across the room. You tend to your wound and, over time, the pain decreases. And once the pain diminishes enough to no longer demand your constant attention, you look around the room and once again *see* a cute little kitten that you long to hold and pet. So once again, you go over and attempt to pet the kitten, but every time you do, you get stung because there is only a scorpion.

Why, in this scenario, does the person keep getting stung? Because they don't see reality for what it is—they don't see a scorpion. Instead, they see what they long for, what they hope for, what they wish for, and thereby deceive themselves. Why? Because accepting a harsh truth is painful—accepting that one's parent, spouse, or child doesn't love you hurts and, thus, instead of accepting the nature of whom they are dealing with, many people deny the truth and continue to project their fantasy onto the relationship, resulting in repeated exposure to unhealthy people with their repeated mistreatment.

Jesus said that the truth sets us free (John 8:32). He didn't say the truth would always be pleasant to deal with or accept—but it will set us free; it will heal. My patients who accept the truth of the nature/character of the people with whom they are in relationship are empowered to set boundaries that prevent repeated injury, and when they do, they are also set free from the constant anger, hurt, and disappointment.

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This metaphor is also applicable to any situation in which our expectations are contrary to reality, any situation in which we allow our desires, longings, wishes to overrule what actually is—including how we see our nations and our understanding of law and justice.

If we expect the nations of this world to act with Christlike grace, kindness, love, and justice, and we seek to find godly justice through the outworking of the laws of this world, then we will get stung over and over again. For the Bible teaches that all the kingdoms of this world are Satan's. This means that all the nations of this world operate upon the principles of Satan's government: imposed rules, coercive enforcement, lies, and the exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few.

If we are unwilling to accept the true nature of the kingdoms of this world—imperial law, coercive enforcement, arbitrary rules, injustice upon injustice—then we will be hurt repeatedly. If we insist on seeing our nation as a “kitten,” or perhaps a lioness who wants to protect its cubs (citizens), rather than see it as a scorpion controlled by people in power who will exploit the masses for the benefit of the few, then we will end up being pawns supporting the very exploitation we claim to be fighting against. We will be hurt, and we will hurt others while claiming to seek justice.

The Bible warns us that at this time in human history, the one kingdom of the world that arose with “lamblike” features of religious and civil liberty turns out to be much worse than a scorpion—it speaks like a dragon and uses all the powers of the grotesque, monstrous beast that was in power before it (Revelation 13). The Bible plainly states that this beast will violate every principle of God’s kingdom and will persecute those who remain faithful to Him, those who live out God’s law of love and faithfully reveal Jesus. Moreover, this beastly nation will lead the entire world into joining it in violating God’s law under the guise of obeying the law, of doing justice.

Our only safety is in Jesus, in having His law written upon our hearts, of living out the truth in love while leaving others free. God is calling His people to awaken out of their slumber, to realize that the nations of this world do not represent Him and do not practice His principles—to come out of Babylon, that fallen system of imperial corruption, coercion, and control, to have their hearts’ affections and loyalties cut away from the things of this world and sealed completely to God. Then, we will stop looking to this world to make us feel safe; we will stop seeking to get the governments of this world to enforce mandates on others to make us feel secure; and we will instead place our lives fully into the hands of the only truly trustworthy One, our Lord and Savior, our Deliverer and Protector—Jesus Christ.

Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus!