

Romans 8:13c

Carla told me yesterday that this is one topic she thought I was very qualified to speak about. I had to laugh. I am talking about dealing with the evil deeds of the body. I wondered if she thought I was so qualified because no one would know more about the evil deeds of the body than I would. I trust that isn't what she meant. But either way we are moving forward this morning.

Last week we talked about a broad understanding of living a godly life- how to put to death the deeds of the body. The four points were:

- 1. First we must understand and believe that we have what we need to do what we must.**
- 2. If we are guilty of sin we are grieving the Holy Spirit**
- 3. We must keep the end goal in sight**
- 4. There are things we can do to live in a godly manner**

I don't know about you but I was given a clear and unmistakable opportunity to apply the third point this week. It was as if God was saying, well Jon, you can preach it easy enough. Do you really believe that you are a pilgrim here and your eternal reward is worth anything you might face. So far I am doing ok with that but I may need your help in the future.

I hope you were given good opportunities this week to apply what we are learning.

This week we will go into more specifics of putting to death the deeds of the body. We will start with 6 things we must do to stop the negative. Then we will talk for 4 points about enforcing the positive.

So the fifth point in our series (remember we had 4 last week) is

- 5. Abstain from sin**

I Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

Now, we need to be careful here. Remember how the word flesh is normally used in Romans. It is used as a state of a non believer. A non-believer is in the position of being in the flesh. But here we see the phrase "fleshly lusts". I think this is a synonym of deeds of the body. It is talking about the same thing. These are the lusts that those who are in the position of being "in the flesh" would have. And that would be consistent with deeds of the body. After all, our bodies would have picked up all the lusts of the flesh when we were in the fleshly position. The sinful residue in our body would include the lusts of the flesh, even though we are no longer in the flesh.

So, what are we told to do here? Abstain from fleshly lusts. How could this be said any simpler? There is no hint here of a believer having no ability to comply to this direct order. There is no insinuation of a helpless state that a believer is in. We are being told to stop it, stop it at once. Never do it again.

We must completely abstain from submitting to those fleshly lusts. That is what the command tells us. That is what is expected from followers of Christ by their Master.

We have no right to say yes to these lusts. We have no reason to say yes to these lusts. We have no excuse for saying yes to these lusts. I really like what Martin Lloyd Jones says about this. He says,

“You have no right to say, “I am weak, I cannot and temptation is powerful.””

The answer in the New Testament is , “Stop doing it!” You do not need a hospital and treatment, you need to pull yourself together and to realize who you are as “strangers and pilgrims”. Abstain from.... You have no business to touch such things. Recall again the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Chapter 4. “Let him who stole steal no more”. “Let no filthy communication proceed out of your mouth”. None of this foolish talking or jesting! Don’t do it! Abstain! It is as simple as that and as practical as that. Stop it!” End quote.

We need to ask ourselves, do we have a place that we know we must apply this to our lives this week? Do we know of some fleshly lust that we knowingly and regularly comply to? Scripture isn’t real complicated here. It says “Stop!”. Will we? Do anything you must. Get help from other believers. Blow the whistle on yourself. But for God’s sake we must stop!

6. Have no fellowship with sin

Ephesians 5:11,12- And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

Notice in verse how it says “done by them”. By who? By the ones who are doing the unfruitful works of darkness. So when it says to have no fellowship, it is talking about having no fellowship with certain people who are doing the unfruitful works and have no fellowship with the sin itself.

We should not only abstain from sin but we should have no fellowship with those who live this kind of lifestyle and we should have no fellowship with that lifestyle itself.

I Peter 3:10,11- “He who would love life

And see good days,

**Let him refrain his tongue from evil,
And his lips from speaking deceit.**

11 Let him turn away from evil and do good;

Let him seek peace and pursue it.

Where it says “turn away from evil”, the word for turn away is used 2 other places in scripture.

Romans 6:17 Where the Romans are told to avoid those who cause controversies. They are to turn from them. Shun them. Stay away from them.

Romans 3:11 and 12 tells us that every person has turned aside from God. They have actively tried to avoid God.

The word means to turn (one’s self) away, to turn away from, keep aloof from one’s society.

So if we hope to receive God’s blessing in our lives we too should be quick to **turn away from evil and do good**. We need to stop buddying up to the deeds of our flesh or to those who make that their lifestyle.

I don’t like bees. I tend to be keenly aware of every bee’s nest on our property. I don’t have a good memory, but somehow I almost always remember where a bees nest is and make sure I don’t go anywhere near it unless I am intending to destroy it.

That is the kind of turning away that this verse is speaking of. Avoid it like the plague. Avoid it like your worst enemy. Avoid it like the thing you are most afraid of. How much heartbreak in our lives would have been avoided had we obeyed this one simple command? Is there an evil that you play with in your life? Are there people that you are buddies with that have a sinful influence in your life. God’s will is that we avoid them like snakes or spiders or bees. That is a tool in our arsenal against deeds of the body.

7. Keep your body under

I Cor 9:27 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Our bodies need to be under subjection. And our bodies certainly don’t take to that well. As I have been studying about the deeds of the body I have been more and more aware of my body’s influence over my behavior. If I want to work, it wants to goof off. If I want to study, it wants to sleep. If I want to lose weight, it wants to eat. If I want to pray, it wants to do anything but pray.

If we want to be useful in the body of Christ and if we want to put to death the deeds of the body, we must be in control of our bodies and they cannot be in control of us.

I think there are a couple of good questions to ask in applying this truth.

- 1. What did I make my body do this week that it did not want to do? I made my body do it but it really resisted me.**
- 2. What did I do simply because my body wanted it- in other words I felt like I had to.**

If we sleep when we feel like sleeping and eat when we feel like eating, if we laze about when we don't feel like working, we are in a very dangerous position. How successful do you think we will be in putting to death the deeds of the body if we do everything else it tells us to do? Paul knew that was true. That is why he beat his body. He would allow it no mastery.

At one point I have been accused of gluttony because I weigh more than I should. I argued against the accusation because I didn't think it was a fair evaluation. But the longer I live the more I think that the issue isn't gluttony, but it very well may be mastery. I'm not trying to make this some kind of absolute or anything, but I do think we should fight against anything that gives the body mastery over us. And the heavier I get, the harder it is to gain mastery. I think this is something worth considering for myself.

But whatever the case- we must have mastery over our bodies if we hope to put to death the deeds of the body.

8. Make no provision for the flesh

Romans 14:13- But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Provision means forethought, to make provision for a thing. It means to do something today to provide for the opportunity to sin tomorrow. It is essentially leaving the avenue open for sin.

If Caleb knows there is a spot in his fence where a cow keeps getting out, and he leaves that fence un-mended, he is essentially making provision for the cow to get out. He doesn't have to do anything. He can do nothing and that will suffice. It is something that he decides today to allow for an event to happen tomorrow. If he decides to do nothing, that is a decision.

There is a lot we can do to mend those fences that our flesh likes to take advantage of. The first thing is to expose the sin. We need to confess that sin to God and to a brother or sister if we need help to overcome it. Then we need to cut it off at the pass. This may involve personal legalisms, but that is ok. Maybe your temptation is looking at evil stuff on the internet. Maybe the solution is getting a filter and having all your surfing viewable by a fellow believer. That is often successful in taking away any provision for the flesh. Maybe you waste too much time in front of the tv. Do something to make sure that time is limited. Maybe you know something good you should do, but it is easier not to do it. Don't leave the fence open. Close it some how. There is almost always a way to close the fence. But first you need to admit you have a problem. Then you need to actively pursue a solution. What deed of the body can you do over and over and you know that at present you can get away with it? What failure of your duty to Christ can you get away with not doing? Make it so you can't get away with it. Shut the fence. Take away the provision. Do battle with that sin. Take away the provision and you will flush the sin into the open.

9. Deal with the first motions of sin

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Do you see the progression here?

First something appeals to the residual sin in our bodies.

It starts as an idea of something that appeals to us that is wrong.

If that desire is allowed to go to term it is going to have a baby. That baby is a sin that we commit. And if that sin grows to adulthood it will kill us.

When is the best time to stop sin? Right at the beginning.

We fight best when we fight quickest. And this battle is done in the mind. A sinful thought that is free to roam is a dangerous beast.

II Cor 10:3-5 3For though we walk in the flesh (we live in flesh and blood), we do not war according to the flesh. (According to Romans we must war by the Spirit of God.) 4For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5casting down arguments and every high thing

that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

The best time to spray an apple tree with pesticides is before you ever see an apple. The trick to kill the worms is to kill them even before they have opportunity to get into the apple. You nip them in the bud.

That is how it is with the deeds of the body. If you bring a sinful idea into captivity, you deprive it of the damage to conceive sin. All of us have lots of wicked ideas. There are lots of wicked things that cross through our minds. That is because of the sinful residue in our bodies. We cannot stop those wicked ideas from crossing our minds. But we have power over what we do with them.

I always liked Martin Luther's quote. He said you can't stop a crow from flying over your head but you can stop him from making a nest in your hair. I think that is the gist of the thing. When we start to linger on a wicked idea and start thinking how good that idea is and how much fun it would be and how satisfying it would be, that is where sin starts to grow. We must stop it there.

First we must call it sin. And then second we must replace the lie with truth. Lies are like fiery darts. They don't just cause damage at the point of entry. They will destroy everything if allowed to continue. If we are to put to death the deeds of the body we must do it at the first thought level.

10- Do the true business of repentance

There are a lot of people who treat repentance as if it is feeling bad about sin. But that is not how the Bible defines repentance. While it includes sorrow over sin, it includes action against sin. **1 Cor 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.**

To repent of a sin is to turn from a sin. You can't be repenting and committing the sin at the same time. If you continue to knowingly commit a sin you have not, in the truest sense, repented of that sin.

To repent of a sin we must do some severe truth telling with ourselves. We must first believe it to be a sin. If we aren't sure we should stop there until we are convinced. Once we are convinced we should consider how this sin happened. What were we guilty of thinking or doing. What was so appealing about this sin? Why did we allow it to continue in our mind even though it was in rebellion

against our Savior. What truth is there that counters this sin? What truth takes away this sin's power. And what can we do or believe to see that we don't do it again. Also, is there anything we must do to make right with others for any sins we have committed against them.

We are always tempted to go to extremes in repentance. Either we are flippant about our sin or we are morbidly obsessed with it. Both are mistakes. We need to be in a reckoning state of mind. We must call it what it is without mercy. We must deal with it forcefully. We must understand why we did it enough to understand how to not repeat it. Then we must confess it fully and believe that the God who says He is faithful to forgive that sin really forgives it.

Well, we have dealt with the do-not's. Now we are finally to the positive final 4 Do's

11 Stand fast in the faith-

I Cor 16:13- Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Here is a gutsy appeal, a manly appeal to both men and women. Our world has seen a lot of examples of the milk toast followers like the characters on tv who portray religious leaders. But the world has not seen enough of true Christianity. It has not seen enough people who say I will follow Christ at any price. I will not accept what my emotions tell me is true. I will not accept what my body tells me is true. I will not accept what my enemies tell me is true. I will not accept what the media tells me is true. I will only accept what God tells me is true. And I will hold up that flag and not relent, no matter what pressure comes to bear.

The world has heard plenty of excuses for our failures, but it has not seen enough successes. Do you realize these are commands that Paul fully expected to be obeyed. Every believer is capable of this. We cannot accept a powerless Christianity. It is a disgrace to our Lord. We must stand fast in the faith and be brave and be strong. It is only then that we represent our Lord as He deserves to be represented.

12 Walk in the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-17 Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The passage in Galatians 5 really helps us understand Romans better. Like I said before, sometimes the word flesh is used referring to our position. Sometimes it

is used referring to our operation. No believer is “in flesh” or in the position of flesh, but we certainly wrestle with flesh, we wrestle with our bodies of sin. And we can choose, as believers what we will walk according to. We can say yes to the Spirit or yes to the deeds of the body, to the fleshly lusts. We need to realize these two are at war with each other. There is no middle ground. And it is going to pose a problem as long as we are in these bodies. So what does Paul tell us to do?

He says the secret to the winning is to walk in the Spirit. Walk in the constant awareness of the truth and openness to the Spirit’s leading. Walk saying yes to every truth we are aware of at any second. The Spirit will work in us reminding us of what God says. We can count on that. If we will live that way we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Really, how could we? How could you say yes to God and yes to sin at the same time. That is impossible. So this is a most positive truth. Intentionally keep your focus on where God is leading you and you will avoid the harmful effects of the deeds of the body.

13 Keep adding

Again we look at II Peter 1:5-8. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We live by adding. We start with faith. Everyone who is born again was given faith by God for salvation. So that is at the beginning of the list.

Then we add virtue- which also means strength. Even manly valor.

We then add knowledge. Knowledge won’t just happen. We must add it. And it will take work. How do you have the process of adding knowledge included as an important part of your life? Is it regular? Is it significant? If we are to add knowledge it must be there and it must be prioritized. Don’t ever depend on one hour at church to give you what you need.

Then add temperance- Discipline and self control must be exercised.

Then add patience- We need to keep on keeping on in the path we are on.

Then add godliness- this is essentially living as Christ lived in this world.

Then add brotherly kindness- This is phileo- This is the love for one another we should have. The mutual affection believers have toward one another

Then add love- This is agape- the self sacrificing self spending love.

If we will be diligent about adding these things we will find ourselves fruitful. Our lives won't be wasted. They won't be spent in the endless cycle of habitual sin. They will be well spent lives focused on eternity and spent in that regard. They will be lived walking according to the Spirit because these things that need added are all things that the Holy Spirit wants for us.

14 Approach it from positive prospective

When a kid plays little league and they get up to bat they usually approach it in one of two attitudes. I want to hit the ball. Or I don't want to miss the ball. The kids who want to hit the ball look forward to getting the chance to whack it. The ones who don't want to strike out are struck with fear when they approach the plate.

Well the Christian life is meant to be lived like the kid who wants to whack the ball. We are to be bold, be strong, be active, be conquering, be battling, be loving. We were not given this new life to just "not sin." Our lives are intended to bear fruit. So we shouldn't look at our lives in such a negative way.

When we get obsessed with our sin we are really missing the whole point. Our view of the Christian life is far too small.

We should be looking to live in a way that brings glory to our wonderful Master. We should focus on Christ and his smile. We should see our lives as the wonderful opportunity to do things for Him, to please Him, to live for Him, to share His love with others. If we think the primary reason we were born again is to stop committing a sin, we have completely missed the big picture. And our lives will be fearful, just like the kid that doesn't want to strike out.

We are a chosen generation

We are a royal priesthood

We are a holy people

We were not a people, but now we are the people of God.

We have already obtained mercy.

God has called us His children.

We must realize the truth about ourselves. We must see ourselves as what we truly are. We must see our purpose for being on this earth for what it really is. Then putting to death the deeds of the body takes on its proper perspective. We are here to Glorify God. We are put here as a light in the darkness. We are here to publicly portray God's glory by our deeds and our words. We are put here as ambassadors, representing the interest of our sovereign to those who do not

know Christ. And as such we refuse to allow anything to undermine what Christ is doing and malign the name of Christ.

The bad thing about falling into sin isn't all the things we so typically feel about it. We worry because it has bad consequences to us or it makes us feel rotten. We end up feeling bad that we weren't any better than we were. Our focus gets centered on God doing one more thing to make us act better than we did.

The really bad thing about falling into sin is that it maligns the work of our Savior on the lives of His children. It makes the God who has given everything to us for life and godliness look like he is powerless. It looks like his provisions for His children are shabby and ineffective. That is the real horror of sin.

It causes people to look at us and dismiss Christianity and Christ as being undesirable.

We are the channels that God has chosen to show off His glory on this planet. We are to be the display of Christ's victory over sin. We are to show off this new life that has been provided in Christ.

I'd like to finish with another quote from Martin Lloyd Jones.

“Therefore, in the name of God, and for the glory of God, and the honor of God, just as men and women are ready to die for “King and Country”, so should we be ready to live for the glory of God and His kingdom, and to the praise of His dear Son. This is the New Testament way of sanctification and holiness. Let us then, through the Spirit and in these various ways, mortify the deeds of the body, and make our calling and election sure, and thereby have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God when we die. And in the meantime, let us show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. “