

Flesh Under Control

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Good morning, Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

In the book of Romans, chapter 7, we find the Apostle Paul speaking of himself and the battle that rages between his spirit and his flesh to teach us the reality of what it means for a Christian whose spirit is clean and righteous, to live in a body of flesh that is anything but clean and righteous.

In verses 22 and 25, we see that Paul is contrasting the inward spirit man with the flesh or the outward man:

Romans 7:14-25

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I [my flesh] am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I [my flesh] do I [my spirit] allow not: for what I [my spirit] would, that [my flesh] do I not; but what I [my spirit] hate, that [my flesh] do I.

16 If then I [my flesh] do that which I [my spirit] would not, I consent unto the law that *it is good*.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

19 I [my flesh] do not: but the evil which I [my spirit] would not, that I [my flesh] do.

20 Now if I [my flesh] do that I [my spirit] would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

A long time ago, when I was teaching you about faith, I shared with you a truth that on the surface seems somewhat irreverent; I told you that, “**living by faith is learning to work the system**”.

God has a system of principles, promises and conditions laid out in scripture. Learning how to apply those principles, how to claim the promises and how to meet the conditions is exactly what it means to live by faith.

Living by faith is actually a very practical daily experience; not some super-spiritual power based on how much you believe something.

To apply, claim and meet God's conditions and promises, you must first know what they are:

Living for God is really a matter of learning how to control the desires of your flesh.

Given the opportunity to do so unhindered, your born-again spirit will lead you to live for God all day, every day.

That's who **you** really are in Christ!

Every real Christian, by virtue of his new born-again spirit, desires to live for and serve the Lord; we want to serve the Lord and we desire that He may be glorified in us.

Have you ever asked yourself what it is that keeps you from living for God like, deep down in your heart, you really want to?

Your number one enemy that prevents you from being all you can be for the Lord is your very own flesh that you love and nourish and cherish. Look at a few verses out of many on this subject:

James 4:1 From whence *come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members [flesh]?*

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Ephesians 2:1-3

1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins
2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Romans 8:5-9

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.
7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.
9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Luke 9:23 And he said to *them* all, **If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.**

It is easy to stand up here and say, “repent of your sins”!

It is even somewhat easy to teach you that you must replace your sins with righteous activity.

Today we are going to take it a step further and learn some of the things we must understand in order to take control of our flesh.

Our flesh is smart; it knows what it wants and how to get it. I remember once using an appetite suppressant to lose some weight. After a few weeks, my body figured out what was going on and defeated the appetite suppressant so that it stopped working.

I had to get off the medication for a while until my body forgot about defeating it so it could start working again.

Apparently when man fell into sin, much if not all the good things God built into our flesh to bless us began to be a curse to us. Sin removed the boundaries and thus those things which in moderation were good and wonderful became just the opposite.

First of all, we should understand that:

I. There are some behaviors, desires and tendencies of the flesh that must be eliminated completely.

A. The scriptures get very plain about what most of these are:

1. Ephesians 5:1-3

1 Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children:

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

2. That is clear enough:

Ephesians 5:4-7

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

3. Here we have a list of fleshly desires and tendencies that simply must go.

4. These are so vile the details of such are not even to be allowed as the subject of our conversations.

5. **1 Corinthians 6:9-12** gives us another list:

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

B. The Bible plainly tells us the depth to which our flesh will sink (by nature) if allowed to follow its own path unhindered.

1. **Galatians 5:19-21**

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, (the Gr. Word for this is *pharmakeia* if that tells you anything) hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. Time does not permit going into the exact definitions of what each of these things mean, but most of them are quite clear.

3. This is where your flesh will go if not placed in check.

4. The last phrase of the list, "and such like", lets you know that even this is just a partial list of what your flesh is capable of.

5. As tough as eliminating these things may sometimes be; this is the easiest part.

II. There are other behaviors, desires and tendencies of the flesh that cannot be completely eliminated but must somehow be managed.

These are the toughest areas of all to deal with; here are some examples:

A. Eating; this could be known as the Baptist's favorite sin.

1. **Proverbs 23:21** For the drunkard and the **glutton** shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags.

2. Gluttony in centuries past when everyone walked or rode animals everywhere was not the problem it is today; not to mention the natural unprocessed foods everyone ate.

3. You might eliminate the drinking of alcohol entirely and we will have more to say on this; but you can't just eliminate eating; it must be managed.

4. I have a coffee cup at home that says, "I love you like biscuits and gravy".

5. I do love good biscuits and gravy!

6. When you taste something wonderful like this, how does your flesh react?

7. It says, "do that again." After the next bite what does it say? It says, "do that again." And your flesh will keep saying it until it is either all gone, or you are so full you can't move!

8. You can claim that it is glandular and in some cases that may be a factor; but the truth is that we fat people are fat because we don't have our flesh under control.

9. Oh, it gets worse; when I was forty, I could still eat without regard to how much and never gain a pound; not anymore; I am fat because I have not properly managed my flesh.

10. We all have to keep learning how to manage our flesh.

Background story: Many of you know I am the youngest of 12 kids. Nearly all my brothers and sisters were adults while I was growing up. One of my sisters married into a local family who were Pentecostals.

As a youngster, I grew up with my sister taking me to the local Pentecostal church.

The typical family group at our local Assembly of God was a very overweight lady in a moo-moo and a bun; with a very skinny husband who was there because he was told to be and a half a dozen or so very wild kids.

The number one subject preached was "you gotta live it" and if you don't you will lose your salvation.

11. I just want to say to all the Pentecostals who may see or hear this recording: If the lie you have believed about losing your salvation was true; all you fat people are definitely going to hell!

There is another area in life that may be even harder to manage:

B. Sex; this would probably be our least favorite subject to address.

1. Again we have a huge overpowering fleshly desire that in most cases cannot rightly be eliminated but must be managed.
2. Sex is a huge part of our lives; the sex drive is possibly the greatest defining force in the lives of most people; mismanaged, it is certain to cause many if not most of our problems.
3. We must learn to deal with and manage all kinds of sexual issues:
 - a. Children growing up and discovering themselves sexually.
 - b. Sex before marriage.
 - c. Improper sexual activity after marriage.
 - d. Improper relationships between members of the same sex.
 - e. The influence and prevalence of pornography.
4. Real studies show that in a given day men think about sex an average of 19 times a day as opposed to women who think about sex an average of 10 times a day. (For whatever it is worth, studies show that women think about fashion more than men think about sex.)
5. The Bible is filled with the examples and consequences of mismanaged sexual activity.
6. King David watched Bathsheba as she bathed (and yes, she knew she was in sight of the King's balcony). David looked, he lusted, he took, he lied and then he murdered; all because he did not control the desires of his flesh.
7. In the family lineage of Christ; (the Lion out of the tribe of Judah) read this:
Genesis 38:2-10
 - 2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.
 - 3 And she conceived, and bore a son; and he called his name Er.
 - 4 And she conceived again, and bore a son; and she called his name Onan.
 - 5 And she yet again conceived, and bore a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, (*kez-eeb'*) when she bore him.
 - 6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar.
 - 7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.

8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

10 And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

Before it is over Tamar role plays as a prostitute and becomes pregnant with twins by her father-in-law, Judah.

8. Our Churches are filled with sexual mismanagement; and this is not new to our age:

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

1 It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed.

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

10 Yet not altogether the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

9. If we win the lost as we are commanded, we will experience a constant influx of new believers who are laden with sexual baggage!

10. We also see the other extreme; before we read this, a eunuch is a castrated male:

Matthew 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be

eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

On the list of things that cannot simply be eliminated is also:

C. Emotions: This is another area that cannot be eliminated; only managed.

1. Anger, temper, tenderness, love, sadness, joy; emotions cannot be eliminated, they must be managed.
2. We all, but especially women, are emotional creatures.
3. Most women will by nature do virtually anything to feel valued and loved. This is of course, often exploited by sinful men.
4. What little girl ever said, "When I grow up I want to be a prostitute"?
5. What little boy ever said, "When I grow up I want to be a rapist or a murderer"?
6. Failure to manage our emotions or failure to meet the emotional needs of those in our care leads to divorce, assault, molestation, prison time, injury, misery, even walking out on God and our Church.
7. What a huge area of life that we must learn to properly control!

III. There are other behaviors, desires and tendencies of the flesh that for some must be eliminated and for others may be managed.

A. Most people are misinformed at best when it comes to addiction.

1. The fundamentalist Baptist slams his pulpit and calls it SIN; and he is right, but sadly only half right.
2. The liberal do-gooder says it is just a disease.
3. The fact is that what began as a sin and became a pattern of sin caused your body to change and now in addition to the sin, you've got yourself a real qualifying disease as well.

B. Because of this, some of you must completely eliminate what, by others, may simply be managed.

1. Some of you (and you know who you are) simply cannot drink alcohol.
2. Some of you (and you know who you are) simply dare not take narcotic pain relievers.

C. Because of this, God tells believers to abstain from things that actually do not harm them for the sake of their weaker or “diseased” brothers and sisters in the Lord; at least while in their presence.

1. **1 Timothy 5:23** Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

2. But this same Apostle Paul also said:

1 Corinthians 8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

3. **Romans 14:21-22**

21 *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

22 *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God...*

In Conclusion: I am so glad that, thanks to Jesus, being fat cannot send me to hell!

Aren't you glad that thanks to Jesus, sexual stupidity cannot send you to hell!

Aren't you glad that thanks to Jesus, out of control emotions cannot send you to hell!

Aren't you glad that drugs and alcohol and bad financial decisions and every other bad choice you have ever made cannot defeat the blood that Jesus shed for you!

There are at least three things that we as Christians can learn to do:

1. Learn to walk after the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

2. Recognize our problem areas and plan ahead.

Romans 13:14 *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof*

3. Use liberally the number one best tool we have been given in managing our flesh.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

We can stay walking in fellowship with the Lord all day, every day!