

Romans: The Crown Jewel of Salvation

30 - Don't Let Your Flesh Get the Upper Hand

Romans 7:14-25

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / April 6, 2014

Your biggest enemy is your own sinful flesh.

It doesn't just try to get you to deny Christ - just dial it down on your love and passion for Christ.

Two Cold Splashes of Water the flesh tries to use to extinguish our passion for Christ.

I. **Your Flesh Knows How to Eat Away at the Edges of Your Passion and Convictions without Startling You by Attacking You Head-On**

The flesh is willing to go slow because you extinguish a love for Christ the same way you eat an elephant... one little bite at a time.

In life, little things matter. In spiritual life, little things matter even more.

"Some people have spectacular failures where in an instant they abruptly burst into flames, crash, and burn. But the more common way people get into trouble evolves from hundreds of tiny decisions – decisions which go undetected – that slowly, like water tapping on a rock, wear down a person's character. Not blatantly or precipitously, but subtly, over time, we get caught in a web of cutting corners and compromise, self-deceit and wrong thinking, which goes unchallenged by anyone in our lives." Patrick Morley, *Man in the Mirror*, 1997

In this war against your flesh, cold, dead theology – no matter how correct – will never work. Truth ignited by Spirit-fed obedience is what makes the flesh tremble.

Bible truth that is not acted on is extremely dangerous – because over time it has a deadening and deceiving effect on you. It makes you think you ARE someone you're NOT and that you can DO things you CANNOT – like say 'No' to sin when you're flesh is screaming out for it.

Luke 6:46-49 ⁴⁶ But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? ⁴⁷ Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. ⁴⁹ But he who **heard and did nothing** is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

The person who's in greatest danger is NOT the person who's never heard the Word of God! It's the person who's heard it over and over and over again... yet chooses to do nothing about it.

"Delay is disobedience in a tuxedo. Delay gives you room to rebel against the authority of God while telling yourself that you have every intention to obey, and in so doing you've eased your conscience when it actually needs to be troubled." **Sex & Money**, Paul David Tripp, p 120

"The flesh burns and is in flames. It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money... Joy in God is in course of being extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, He loses all reality... Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God... The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us... It is here that everything within me rises up against the Word of God." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall and Temptation* (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Pub. Co., Collier Books, 1959) pp. 116-117

If your flesh can get you to do nothing, it can take you places you never meant to go, keep you longer than you ever meant to stay, and wreak havoc that you never wanted to experience in your life.

II. Your Flesh Wants to Turn Your Spiritual Life into a Formal Affair

The flesh encourages you to go through the external motions with your mind disengaged and the flame of your heart snuffed out!

2 Timothy 3:5 describes a group of people as “having a form of godliness but denying its power.” And Paul says, “...from such people turn away!”

That Greek word ‘form’ means an ‘outline’ or an ‘outward resemblance’ You have the silhouette but you’re empty, so there’s no strength in fighting sin.

Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of that day saying, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me...’”

Your flesh is working overtime to find ways to reduce FERVENT worship into FROZEN and FORMAL worship that means nothing.

III. Your Flesh Cannot Get Traction in the Face of Daily and Deliberate Doses of Delighting in Your Relationship with Jesus Christ – as Your Lover and Husband

Romans 7:4 “... you have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead...”

You’re in a love relationship with a living, risen Savior! But you have to cultivate that relationship... it takes time and sacrifice.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3 NASB “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

Ways to stir up devotion to Christ in your life:

A. You Must Have Unhurried Time with Your Husband and Lover, Jesus, Every Morning

- To read the Bible
- To think about what you just read
- To pray over what you just read – as it relates to your own life

“Few people think more than two or three times a year. I have made an international reputation by thinking once or twice a week.” **George Bernard Shaw**

B. Memorize Large Portions of Scripture

“I have often said, ‘Books don’t change people, paragraphs do — sometimes sentences.’ ... This may not be fair to books, since paragraphs find their way to us through books, and they often gain their peculiar power because of the context they have in the book. But the point remains: One sentence or paragraph may lodge itself so powerfully in our mind that its effect is enormous when all else is forgotten... As I look back over my life and what I have been able to see and savor in God’s word, I give thanks for momentous sentences and paragraphs...” John Piper, ‘Books Don’t Change People, Paragraphs Do’ July 16, 2013, Desiring God blog <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/books-don-t-change-people-paragraphs-do>

C. Getting Closer to Other Believers Who are Hungry and Passionate

I Peter 4:1-10 v. 10 “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

“Five years from now you will be pretty much the same as you are today except for two things: the books you read and the people you get close to.” – **Charles Jones**

- What are you reading?
- Who are you spending the most time with?

You're being shaped by those two things more than anything else!

D. Reading Good Books – especially Biographies

Check out my list of top favorites at my website – bradbigney.com