



Fight the Good Fight, Week 4: The Battle of the Flesh

Key Texts: Romans 8:1-9

Sunday, June 21, 2020

We are in a constant battle with our old self. The enemy would love to entrap us in addiction, and in believing lies, that we can never overcome our sinful nature.

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ²You used to **live in sin**, just like the rest of **the world**, obeying **the devil**—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. Ephesians 2:1-2

Setting the Scene:

- Ephesians 2:1-2 – Paul says our enemies are the world (culture will conflict with God's Word) , the devil (Accuser and Divider, the enemy of God), and that of the flesh.
- These three punish all who are not in Christ. They enslave you!

"Spiritual warfare is the leveraging of everything that God promises against everything that opposes God's purposes." – Drew Larson

"Sinful nature" or "flesh"), *sarx* in Greek – Human value system that stands against God. Human nature is inherently in rebellion against God. The flesh motivates selfishness.

²¹I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²²I love God's law with all my heart. ²³But there is **another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.** ²⁴Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? ²⁵Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ, our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind, I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature, I am a slave to sin. Romans 7:21-25

- There will be a constant tension between our flesh and the Spirit. (At War)

"The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us." – C.S. Lewis

- Are we suppose to live our entire life defeated by sin? The answer is NO!!!!

To Defeat the Flesh (sinful nature)

1. Focus on Christ, Not Performance (Romans 8:1-4)

In Rom. 8:3, God's "condemnation" of sin is set forth in that Christ, His own Son, sent by Him to partake of human nature (sin apart) and to become an offering for sin, died under the judgment due to our sin.¹

- **In Christ: There is no condemnation** If you belong to him. You have a righteousness which is not from you, but that of Christ.
- Those who are not in Christ stand condemned.
- Condemnation operates through regret.
 - Past failure will often come back to our minds.
 - Shame, lack of love for oneself, and compulsions can entangle us.
- Condemnation is difficult to overcome because it's a counterfeit version of conviction and repentance. *Rationalization*: You think to yourself that something isn't that bad, so you do it. (Makes you feel like a complete hypocrite)
- *Exaggeration*: You did _____, therefore you are _____. It takes one mistake and makes you think it is a permanent pattern of behavior. Will bury and eat you alive We have this picture of ourselves of something that God never intended to be for us.

¹ Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#) (Vol. 2, p. 119). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

- When God speaks is not of condemnation: Condemnation tries to turn a momentary lapse into a permanent condition. Condemnation is God's correction without God's kindness. And this is not God's way. (Rom. 2:4)
- Condemnation is over-identification with what you've done and disassociation from who you are in Christ.
- Unbelievers will notice (and point out) our inconsistencies.
- Unhealthy comparisons with other believers will make us feel insufficient.

¹⁹ Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ²⁰ Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. 1 John 3:19-20

²⁴ "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. **They will never be condemned for their sins,** but they have already passed from death into life. John 5:24

¹³ If we are unfaithful, **he remains faithful,** for he cannot deny who he is. 2 Timothy 2:13

- We need an ongoing, day by day, second by second presence of the Holy Spirit.

2. Focus on the Mindset of Christ, not of the world. (Romans 8:5)

Mindset refers to our motivation, goals, and attitude.

- The Flesh Mindset focuses on death, rebellion, resistance to submission, and attitudes and actions that do not please God.
- A Spirit Mindset focuses on life, peace, relationship with God, listening to the voice of God, a love for God and neighbors, knowing, and following the Word of God.

How do we go about taking on a different mindset?

- Ask Him!
- Purposely humble yourself Before God.
- Look to the Bible for guidance.
- Only move forward when you have a clear direction. (Wait on Him!)

3. Focus on giving up control to Christ (Romans 8:6-13)

Having the Spirit of Christ is the same as belonging to Christ. This is not a criterion for judging others' lives; it is a helpful encouragement in our struggles. When facing times of doubt, Paul's statement supplies us with two questions that must be answered: **(1) Do I have the Spirit of Christ? And (2) Do I belong to Christ?** Paul's point is that answering yes to either determine the truth of the other. The first tends to be a less settled answer experientially; the second is clearly answered by the assurance given in God's Word.²

One Last Thought: When the Spirit of God is working in you, you will believe in Christ, and you will begin to act as He directs. He will help you in your daily battle.

¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³ Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, **give yourselves completely to God**, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace. Romans 6:12-14

² Barton, B. B., Veerman, D., & Wilson, N. S. (1992). [Romans](#) (p. 153). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.