

The Three Great Enemies – The Flesh
Part Three

Sunday Morning, May 3, 2009

Adopted from John Herbert's notes, read by Rodd Sacchi

Romans 7:18

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) ***nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.***

As we continue our study of our three great enemies the world, the flesh and the devil, we come to the second of these – the flesh – and according to our scripture, in our flesh, nothing good dwells.

And so, as with our understanding of the world, it would be helpful to begin by making sure we understand what we are talking about when we use the term, 'the flesh'.

Note these scriptures concerning Christ –

Hebrews 2:14

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Hebrews 5:7

who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

Hebrews 10:19

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

In our three scriptures here from Hebrews we see that firstly in Chapter 2 Christ shared in the same body of flesh and blood as we have.

We see in Chapter 5 the days of His flesh referring to the duration of His natural life in that body of flesh and blood like ours.

And in Chapter 10, how His flesh, given as a sacrifice for sin has made possible our entry into the Holiest of Holies.

And the obvious conclusion we would draw from this is that because Christ was without sin there was nothing sinful about His flesh – His natural body.

And there is also nothing sinful about our natural body – that which prevents our insides from being our outsides is just flesh, and of itself is entirely neutral being neither inherently good or evil. It is the casing if you will that contains the on-going battle between good and evil within us.

So then if we are not talking about our natural body when we say that nothing good dwells in our flesh we are clearly talking about something else.

2). And that something else can be identified by comparing scripture with scripture

John 6:63

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Here we see a contrast made between the Spirit, 'who gives life' and the flesh that, 'profits nothing' – from which we can clearly see that the Spirit and the flesh are set as opposites with an inheritance in view for one but not the other.

Galatians 4:29

But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

Not only are the spirit and the flesh in opposition to each other but they are also antagonists, as we see here in Galatians. And here also in Galatians we see a connection between birth and flesh. And if we back up a few verses in Galatians Chapter 4 this connection is further clarified –

Galatians 4:22

For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

We see two separate births here, one of the flesh connected with bondage and the other connected with promise. And again from Galatians Chapter 4 the whole thing is put together for us. Lets read,

Galatians 4:30

Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

The one who is born first, in bondage, the son of the bondwoman, will have no inheritance. It is the one born second, through promise, the son of the freewoman, who alone will receive the inheritance.

And we, having been born from above at the moment of our eternal salvation, our second birth, are to be associated with freedom and promise and an inheritance not bondage,

John 3:6

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

g). And it is only by and through the Spirit that we will have an inheritance.

3). We are all born through the process of procreation into this world in an unredeemed condition, in the likeness of Adam after the fall

Ephesians 2:1

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

Being born in an unredeemed condition would be seen as our first birth and we see in our scripture that our first birth is associated with death. It is only through our new birth, the birth from above, our eternal salvation, our second birth, that we can receive life – guaranteed life for the ages of the ages – and conditional life for the age to come.

So then, when we see from our opening scripture in Romans 7 that in our flesh nothing good dwells, the phrase, ‘the flesh’, is referring to that associated with our first birth - our sin nature, that which is dead in trespasses and sins. That which is associated with the son of the bondwoman and cannot therefore have an inheritance – that which scripture also refers to as our ‘old man’ and is under the influence of Satan.

And our ‘old man’, our flesh cannot escape the sentence of death,

Romans 8:13a

For if you live according to the flesh you will die;

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death,

This is something that we will return to later, but for the moment let’s go to the foundation in Genesis to further clarify our subject.

4). Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 ¶ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

This by now is very familiar to us. In it we see the ruined material creation in the place of death, covered in darkness. In order for that material creation to be restored there must be a sovereign act of God – the enactment of His word – the breath of His Spirit.

And as God said, so light came where there was only darkness.

Light now enters where there was only darkness and a division is made between the two. And in this and the five days which follow, an unalterable pattern for the restoration of a ruined creation is set. We will note however, that although light is now the dominant force the darkness still continues. But although it continues for the present there is an inevitable terminal point when the darkness from Genesis 1:2 will be done away with – there is a promise made –

Revelation 21:5

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

And a promise fulfilled –

Revelation 22:5

There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

The darkness, which came as a result of Satan's sin and is connected with the ruined material creation, will be done away with. In the new heaven and new earth all that is connected with the ruined material creation will be gone and darkness as a part of that will be gone also. Just as at the end of the Millennial Kingdom sin will be no more and the consequence of sin – death - and the place of the dead will be thrown into the lake of fire, so darkness as part and parcel of this whole picture cannot and will not any longer exist.

5). Our first birth – our natural birth through procreation that brings us into the world dead in trespasses and sins places us as a slave in Satan's kingdom. Our 'old man', our sin nature is inextricably connected to the present world system under Satan. And that which we have seen in the last two weeks – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are manifest in the actions and thoughts of our 'old man'. And as these three are in the world, and the whole world is under the sway of the wicked one, it is not difficult to see how through our first birth, through our 'old man', the god of this world has a direct access to us – and that which has to do with the present world system and the god of this world is also connected to the darkness –

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This is further corroborated through the scriptures - connecting our own sin nature with this very same darkness, that darkness which came into effect because of Satan's sin. That same darkness that we see in Genesis 1:2 –

John 3:19

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Evil deeds find their place in darkness under the authority of the rulers of the darkness of this age, and this darkness is set in antithesis to the light.

Romans 13:12

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Here in Romans the evil deeds of John 3 are described as works of darkness – and the counter to these is the armor of light.

1Corinthians 4:5

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

And here in 1 Corinthians we see the hidden things of darkness – which can only be the works of darkness of Romans 13 – the evil deeds of John 3 connected to a time of Judgment when the Lord comes. And at this time the hidden things of darkness will be brought into the light.

This of course is a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ when all things will be revealed by Christ as Judge –

Hebrews 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

And we know that in that Day our works will be tried by fire as to what sort they are. The works of wood, hay and straw would be the hidden things of darkness, works of darkness, evil deeds – works of the flesh done outside of faith in the word of God. That which is apart from the light.

Now we must also keep in mind that the hidden things of darkness would have to refer to the works of our flesh done apart from faith that have not been confessed and repented of. In other words this would be sin in our lives that we have not chosen to deal with.

And as we have seen earlier, and as we know already –

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death,

Our 'old man', our flesh is incapable of producing anything except works of darkness – please don't be deceived – as our opening scripture said, in our flesh nothing good dwells – and our 'old man' does not improve with age –

Ephesians 4:22

that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

Because of this our sin nature, our 'old man', our flesh, which finds itself in complete opposition to God is under sentence of death and that sentence will be carried out – there will be no reprieve or act of clemency.

We can either choose to carry out that death sentence now or Christ will carry it out at His Judgment Seat, but this sentence will be implemented.

And we don't have to be that smart to work out which is the best option here. We can either choose to put off concerning our former conduct, our 'old man' now, as an on-going process, or we will suffer death at the Judgment seat that will be Millennial in length. As always we have a choice – and the down side of that is, we can make the wrong one.

At the risk of being repetitive let me reiterate this one more time as I really want us to grasp the reality and certainty of this – we can either choose to die now, or Christ will carry out the death sentence on us then – but one way or the other death cannot be avoided. Please don't let the residue of the doctrine of Balaam filter out the truth. In that Day we will be judged by the Word in accordance with the Word – and all without partiality –

1Peter 1:17

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

There will be no extenuating circumstances and no plea bargains.

Because of the certainty of this judgment the Lord warns us, through the pen of Peter, to conduct ourselves during the time of our stay here in fear.

Exactly the same admonition is given to us in –

Matthew 10:28

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna].

Hebrews 10:31

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Again remember what is written in –

Galatians 6:8

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting [age lasting] life.

6). Our flesh then on the one hand is our mortal enemy –

1Peter 2:11

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

And on the other our flesh is to be our sacrifice, the death of the firstborn, which we should willingly present to God –

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Whichever facet of this we are looking at the scripture is clear on the action we are to take in order that our flesh will not have the ascendancy and be able to take our crown.

Romans 8:13

Again our scripture here is very plain – if we allow our flesh to live now and thereby choose to walk according to its lusts then death awaits us in that Day – if however, we put to death the deeds of the body now, by the Spirit, then we shall have life in that Day.

Colossians 3:5

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

Again the responsibility is ours to ‘put to death’ our members which are on the earth – and the wrath of God is coming upon those who are disobedient to that command.

Galatians 5:16

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For 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.

So then putting to death the deeds of the body and putting to death our members which are on the earth – which are two ways of saying the same thing – is accomplished by the Spirit and walking in the Spirit – another two ways of saying the same thing.

7). What then does it look like to put to death the deeds of the body by, and walk in, the Spirit? Simply this:

John 6:63

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It would be no great surprise to us to realize that it is faithful obedience to the word of God that puts to death the deeds of the body enabling us to walk in the Spirit. It is the choice we make to be holy, to separate ourselves from the lusts that are in the world, clinging instead to the truth of scripture.

8). It is exactly that which we saw at the beginning of Genesis. It was God's word, 'let there be light' that brought light into the darkness then. And it is the same Word, who became flesh and dwelt amongst us, who is the light of the world who was sent into the world in the person of Jesus the Christ – and it is the same Living Word, the same light, that we have in written form who now makes a division between the soul, our darkness and our spirit, our light -

2 Colossians 4:6

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

9).

1John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Walking in the light and walking in the Spirit would be one and the same thing.

And if we would do that, then according to our scripture, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

In simple practical terms this means that we will choose to conduct our lives in accordance with the scriptures.

In so doing our 'old man' will be the sacrifice tied firmly to the horns of the altar in the outer court of the Tabernacle and our hands cleansed by the washing of water by the word as we enter the Holy place –

Psalms 24:3

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

We will be determined then to keep our 'old man' as a living sacrifice in the place of death, pictured for us in the bronze altar – and as works from the darkness within us continue to manifest themselves, so we will find cleansing from our High Priest through confession – pictured for us in the bronze laver.

This is the implicit picture that we see in –

Leviticus 17:11

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

It is imperative that the death of our flesh, which is our responsibility to achieve, is an ever present priority and a continuous endeavor.

If we do not do so and leave undone that which should have been done then the consequence is implicitly presented in –

Leviticus 7:17

'the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day must be burned with fire.'

11). Jesus spoke to His disciples of this very thing immediately after He had rebuked Peter for being mindful of the things of men rather than the things of God.

Matthews 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

To 'come after' Jesus, to come to the exalted position that He now holds, to be a joint heir with Him, necessitates denying our-self , taking up our cross and following Him into death – losing our life now that we might find it then.

1Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

The focus of our flesh will always be on the present, but our focus needs to be in the same place as Christ's – He was not focused on present suffering, but on the joy set before Him. Our suffering always has to do with the dying of our flesh, and suffering must always precede glory.

And in conclusion we can know for certain that the only way will can overcome the flesh is by putting it to death – there is no other way, there are no alternatives.

Just as our faith is the means of victory over the world, so is our faith, in believing what God has said about dying to self, being put into practice the means of our victory over the flesh.

Galatians 5:24

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Those who will be Christ's Bride in that Day will in their present have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We must realize that if we choose to let our flesh live, we are choosing the lie rather than the truth, the darkness rather than the light, and death instead of life.

We will in effect have tried to exult ourselves above the stars of God, we will have declared our-self to be God in the temple of God – we will have become an idolater.

12). There is no better time, as we see the day approaching, to recommit ourselves to putting to death the deeds of our flesh – please don't put Christ in the position of having to do it for us at His Judgment Seat, because we have become stiff necked at hard hearted –

2Corinthians 6:1

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.