

## Tuesday's Touch ...#36

...from Pastor Ed ...September 29, 2009

### *The Flesh*

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other... Galatians 5:16-17*

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die... Rom 8:12*

**T**he New Testament (especially in the letters of Paul) has much to say about *the flesh* (σὰρξ), often contrasting it with *the Spirit*. To live according to the flesh will bring death in its final and eternal state - the second death, under the eternal wrath of God (Rom 8:12-13; Rev 20:12-15). It is therefore paramount that we understand what is meant by this term.

When God created man, He formed him in His own image from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7). Man is a unique creation. Animals *are* living material bodies and angels *are* spirit. Man in his essence is the integrated union of spirit and a living material body. Anything less is not human, or, at the very least, is incomplete. We must reject the eastern dualistic idea that the body is just a temporal vessel for the spirit. The created material form of man is as intrinsic to being human as is the spirit. This is precisely why the resurrection is such a huge part of the biblical gospel. The entire man is to be saved. The farther we stray from the basic meaning of *flesh* being the human body, *including all of its physiological life functions*, the more likely we are to become unbiblical in our thinking.

When Adam sinned he died spiritually, his sin separating him from God. His whole physiology became corrupted by sin, eventually ensuing in physical death. All men from Adam are born dead in trespasses and sin (Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1) with a corrupted physiology that marches persistently toward death. The “natural” man is enslaved to his own flesh and stands condemned before God. He cannot live the righteousness required by God and he cannot erase the record of his own sinful actions. From within himself -in his flesh - *his physiologically corrupted being* flows forth with thoughts, words, and actions that continually add to his condemnation, and for which he must give an account to God. No one can say that he is not accountable because he “was born that way” or that he “can’t help it.” In so doing we confess that we are *by nature* sinners. Our “human nature” *is* “us”, not something distinct and separate from “us.” We are accountable as sinners *precisely because* we are born sinners.

Therefore, it is somewhat ironic to me that so many Christians chafe at the discoveries of medical science, especially in regards to genetics, and the effects of brain chemistry on human behavior. I understand the caution in light of man’s “victim” mentality and the unwillingness to accept responsibility for his actions. And I understand there is much to be concerned about in regards to “pop” psychology and modern “science” falsely so-called. But those findings which are based firmly on the scientific method and repeatedly observable through controlled experimentation consistently align with biblical teaching.

Now, the Bible teaches that because of sin the flesh has become corrupt, and its natural fruit is sinful - against God. So whether it is *genetics* showing tendencies to alcoholism, lust, homosexuality, etc, or *psychiatric science* showing the effects of brain chemistry on emotional feelings and behavior, Christians should understand that these things only demonstrate the biblical truth about the flesh. Although, because of common grace in its myriads of forms, few men are as bad as they would be, **all** men are corrupted beings before God. They are totally depraved, meaning that every aspect of their being is stained by sin. Every person by his own will and effort is totally without hope of being restored to God or finding eternal life.

The *good news (gospel)* is Jesus Christ. He, being the fullness of the Godhead in human flesh (Colos 2:9), lived a sinless life as a man (i.e., in the flesh); he bore the eternal wrath of God against sinful flesh on the cross; and he rose bodily, in the flesh, from the grave (Heb 4:15; 1Cor15:1-4). As the gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit quickens (makes alive) the dead heart and faith and repentance pour forth. In this regenerating power of God the believer becomes a new creation in Christ, indwelt by the very Spirit of God (Rom 8:9). For the present, however, this "treasure" is still in earthen vessels - the flesh (2Cor 4:7). *The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.* But as we walk according to the Spirit we will not be *fulfilling* the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17).

Notice, Paul does not say that we will never experience or never manifest the desires of the flesh. He says, that walking in the Spirit, we will not *fulfill* (τελεω) the desires of the flesh. This means that the flesh is not being allowed to *fulfill to completion* its desires in our conduct. By walking in accordance with the Holy Spirit and truth the flesh is restrained from its full expression. Our *total* sanctification, however, awaits a future day. For now, as we walk by faith, we groan within ourselves waiting for the redemption and glorification of our mortal bodies (the flesh) which will occur when Christ returns at the resurrection (Rom 8:23). Then shall our redemption be complete! The *whole* man shall be saved.

It is important, then, to remember that all people are born *in* sin with a predisposition *to* sin. That modern medical science should find this revealed in our genes, brain chemistries, etc, should come as no surprise. This does not excuse man but further proves him to be corrupt by nature.

The realities of the flesh have some important implications for the Christian. We will look at some of these issues in following articles.

*Complete Redeemer of Sinners,*

*Have mercy upon us and grant us grace as we struggle in these earthen vessels.*

*Awaiting the day of resurrection healing,*

*Amen*

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