

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

by Doctor Walter L. Wilson

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THE FLESH IN EPHESIANS

It is a very peculiar coincidence that the three words, "World, flesh and devil" are all five-letter words. Five is the number of human weakness. These words, "world, flesh, devil, Satan" remind us that we are weak and subject to their evil influence. We need somebody to trust in and to walk with in order to make us strong enough to resist the weakness of the flesh, the allurements of the world and the attacks of the devil. We must be in CHRIST or we will be overcome by them.

There isn't a great deal in Ephesians about the flesh, but there doesn't need to be. Some words need little explanation, such as "skunk." You just say the word and everybody knows what you are talking about. The same is true of the flesh.

You will never find any remedy in Ephesians for the flesh. It never becomes converted. There is no such thing as holy, consecrated flesh. There isn't any help for the flesh found in the Scripture. GOD never tries to do anything with it, except to nail it to the cross. The flesh is hopelessly bad until we get our new bodies. If you are saved, you need not be surprised that your flesh wants to do something that you never thought it would do. You will be horribly surprised and deeply grieved to find desires of the flesh that you thought were not there. The flesh never gets born again. There is a preventive for it, however, and that is the blessed power which causes it to lie quiescent.

In Ephesians 2:3, we read, "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."

There are many different kinds of flesh, but they are all flesh. There is beautiful flesh and very horrible flesh. One is as bad as the other. Then there is proud flesh. The whole world is full of proud flesh. It always keeps a wound from healing. It hinders the curative processes. We have to burn it out or cut it out to get rid of it in any way. Proud flesh is harmful, both in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm. Some people are proud because they are good looking; others are proud because they are not. Some are proud because they are not like others. Pride is the worst sin in the Bible. GOD says more against pride than against any other sin. Pride is usually of the flesh. Some are proud because they have lots of hair or don't have any. Some are proud because they read without glasses at 82. Some are proud because their clothes fit them better than someone else. The devil uses every kind of scheme to give us proud flesh.

Some have pride in their strong flesh. But remember it can be lost very easily.

The desires of the flesh spoken of here in Ephesians 2 are always based on selfishness. Selfishness is behind all lust of the flesh of every kind and variety. In Luke 9, three heard the call, "Follow me." The first one was a volunteer. "LORD, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." The LORD's reply was, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the SON of man hath not where to lay his head." The LORD JESUS did not own a pillow on which to lay His head." That ended the conversation for evidently the young man did not follow Him. He could not get something for himself if he followed JESUS. He was afraid he might have to go without something so he did not follow CHRIST. Let us not be interested as to whether there is something in it for us, but let us follow CHRIST, live for His glory and quit living for self.

It is the flesh that GOD is going to raise up out of the grave. We are going to have a literal, physical resurrection of the body. The LORD JESUS, in my judgment, did not have a different kind of body after He rose from the dead. Three times before He died, He made His body invisible. It wasn't only in His resurrection body that He was able to make His body invisible. He did it at Nazareth and in the Temple. We, too, shall experience this in our resurrected bodies.

The reason the flesh is going to be resurrected is that all the sins that we commit, we commit with our flesh. It is our fleshy eyes that look at sinful things. It is the fleshly feet that takes us where we should not go. All of our sins are committed in the flesh. That is the reason GOD raises up the sinner who dies in his sins and sends his body to hell. That physical body is put into the lake of fire. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

The Christian does all of his lovely good deeds with his body of flesh. With his hands, he soothes the brow and gives gifts to the needy. With his lips, he speaks words of kindness and truth. It is with his physical body that he does his work. GOD is going to raise up the body and reward the body, as well as the soul, for all that it does for Him. He is gracious and kind and is going to give the full reward to everyone who gives the cup of cold water in His name. In the resurrection day, the sin is gone. There are no more faults and failures. All will be wiped out and we shall have a new body.

Another lovely aspect, which isn't in this book is that we are told to give the body away. The only remedy ever found for the flesh is to give it away. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) Make a present of your body. GOD is talking about this physical body, the brain, liver, stomach, nose, eyes, the body of flesh. To whom do you give it? You give it to the HOLY SPIRIT. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST." Hand it over to Him now to make it His home. When you hand over the keys to the throne room, you are acknowledging the LORDSHIP of CHRIST in your life. Do it today if you have never done it before - I am speaking to believers. Let Him take it where He wishes. If He lays it on a bed, with a cancer, that is His will. If He wants to take you to Heaven by means of an automobile accident, that is His business. The body is His body. The eyes are His eyes. You will be surprised at what you will see in the Bible when your eyes become His eyes. You will be surprised at what you will say, when your voice becomes His voice.

Give Him the body of flesh to transfigure. He will do wonderful things through you. If you ask Him to help you, it won't work. Your life will be a miserable failure. You must hand the body over to Him to use as He wishes. That is the path of peace and victory for the Christian. That is the path of usefulness in His service.

The second was a called man, "Follow me." His reply was, 'I will, but "suffer me first to go and bury my father.'" He wanted to get rid of all his other obligations and have nothing else to do. Then he would follow JESUS. The father wasn't dead yet, but when he died, then the young man would follow JESUS. That was selfishness.

The third said, "I will, but let me first go home and have a valedictory. I want to hear them all say 'what a wonderful man.' I want to have their farewell." Remember that "LORD, suffer me first" leaves Him last. Those who follow "me first" never get to follow CHRIST.

The desires of the flesh are the desires to satisfy and gratify our own personal wants. They are very expensive. Men will pay any price to have the thing they want. They will spend more for liquor in one day than most Christians give to the church in one month, because they want to satisfy and gratify the body. In application, we may consider the verse, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the SPIRIT." The flesh when filled with wine is insensitive to values, insensitive to heat or cold, insensitive to time, or to the way people treat it, or even react to it.

The LORD wants us to be filled with the SPIRIT so that we will be insensitive to the things of earth. The SPIRIT changes the whole outlook of the Christian. He never looks at the clock or at the price when the SPIRIT fills. Nothing ever stops the SPIRIT-filled man. The way people treat him never bothers him any more than it does the drunken man. The wine-filled man never cares how people treat him or what they say to him. Neither does the SPIRIT-filled man. The SPIRIT makes him insensitive to things that would hurt. Christians get hurt because they are carnal, worldly Christians.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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