

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Christian Living

The Flesh Is Alive and Kicking

Bill Brinkworth

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Romans 7:15-20

On one early winter day, I cut down many small trees and brush hoping to build a new garden there in the future. My friend and I stacked them in a large pile to burn later.

Three months later, I burned that well-dried pile of brush and trees. As I was feeding the “dead” cut limbs into the fire, I noticed something very unusual. Most of the old foliage, except the pines, had sprouted buds, and in some cases, little wisps of green leaves were showing. I thought they were dead even before they were cut down, but there was still life in those old limbs. The plants must have been

feeding off stored sugars in their branches, even though they were long severed from their roots.

This curiosity reminds me of the dilemma that most Christians battle their entire life. They may have accepted Christ as their Saviour and even repented of most of their sins, but every once in a while, their old sinful habits, thoughts, and actions rear their ugly heads.

We may be saved from the wages of our sins and are forgiven by our Creator, but we still have the same flesh with which we were born. Our flesh still would like to sin. If we do not keep a tight rein on it, it will certainly take back its control and do what it wants, rather than what the indwelling Spirit of God desires us to do.

It is a battle that we all face. When we least expect it, our old life can pop up and try to grow. That is why those saved and serving God for a long time can fall as quickly as those saved for a shorter time. If sin creeps in, anyone can fall. Temptation or sin allows the old ways to attempt to flourish in our lives again. The “old man” (Rom. 6:6) in us will come back to life if we let him.

With God’s help, we can avoid many temptations by obeying His commandments, having a regular prayer life, and feeding daily on the Word of God. It is possible to limit the damage done by our old sinful nature. Being stronger spiritually is the only way to keep one of our main enemies, our flesh, under subjection.

We can be victorious in living the way the Lord desires. He would not command us to do something that is not possible. Our old, sinful nature does not have to be fed. Make the right spiritual decisions. Do not give in to the flesh's desires. Be obedient to the Spirit's calling, not the flesh's weaknesses.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Mat. 26:41

"If you were perfect, your first name would be Jesus, and you would have holes in your hands!"

Other Verses about Our Flesh's Weakness

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6:5

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Mat. 12:43-45

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." Mat. 15:19

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Rom. 7:18

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Philippians 3:3

A Blessing Or A Curse?

Bill Brinkworth

In Deuteronomy, Moses reiterated to Israel some of what God had shown and done for them. He also made it clear to them that as God was with them in the past, He could be with them in their future. Although the proper context of the following verses was to Israel, there is certainly application to those that are saved (Romans 10:9, John 3:3) today.

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; 27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: 28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.” Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Christians, as well as the people of Moses' day, can receive a blessing from God. If one hears the commandments of God, be it from the reading of His Word or hearing it, and obeys what one hears, one can have God's blessing on one's life.

The choice is up to us what we do with God's message. Do we get convicted about something as we read the Bible, or get that gnawing guilty feeling when we are reminded of our sin? Do we obey the Holy Spirit's reminder to our conscience as a warning from Him and do our best to change our behavior to what is pleasing to our heavenly Father, or do we ignore it? Obeying conviction and doing our best to live a life approved by God is the way to get His blessing on our life. There may still be trials and difficulties in our lives, but one living for Him can have God's blessing, protection, and guidance on one's life.

Unfortunately, too many hear the commandments from God and make wrong choices not to obey what they have been told to do. Excuses for not heeding the Holy Spirit's tugging on our hearts can creep in and justify our not following what we are told.

It is easy to be convicted of our lying lips, but quickly write it off to, "Well, I had to lie, or I would have gotten in trouble." A temptation to justify not going to church because of work or "being too tired from a week's work" hardens one's conscience, so it is easier to ignore what God's Word instructs us to do. Refusing to tithe because "I hardly have enough to live on, let alone give to the cause of Christ" is one more act of disobedience that can bring God's curse on your life or even His not helping and protecting you.

All Christians have similar opportunities to obey or disobey the still, quiet, convicting voice of God. The difference

between a flourishing, growing Christian and a stagnant, disobedient Christian is that the one growing is the one that said “Yes” to what they were convicted of and did their best to obey. The one that may be “cursed” or have God’s helping and guiding hand removed from his life may be the one that ignored what he was told or shown to do by the convicting Holy Spirit.

Are you receiving the blessing of God on your life because of your obedience, or are you suffering because God’s hand is not guiding and helping you in your life? The choice is up to you. Whom do you choose to obey: God or your own will?

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:15

Stand Up and Tell Them

Bill Brinkworth

Continuing from Acts 6, it is read in Acts 7 that religious Jews and their leaders persecuted Stephen. He turned their time of questioning him into an opportunity to preach to them.

He started by preaching a condensed history of the Jews. I am sure all who were listening agreed with him as Stephen gave a synopsis of their Jewish past, starting with

Abraham. Heads may have been nodding as he progressed through the experiences of Joseph, Moses, and David. All must have agreed as he spoke of David and Solomon.

Then Stephen's history lesson ceased, and he got to the reason for his reviewing the great prophets and leaders of the Jews. Stephen reminded them that the Jews had persecuted all the past prophets (Acts 7:51-52) and, because of their hardened hearts, were not even obeying the law they were given. I can imagine for a brief minute, heads stopped nodding, and a silence came over the crowd.

After that brief, silent second, anger burst out of every person in the room. "Who does Stephen think he is accusing us of being disobedient to the law?" certainly had to be the majority attitude. Shouting ensued. Hands went over their ears in a vain attempt to keep them from hearing any more of Stephen's accusations.

The mob grabbed Stephen and took him outside the city, and stoned him to death. As their anger at the preacher caused them to hurl rocks at the man, they saw a scene they did not expect. They saw Stephen kneel, ask the Lord not to lay this sin to the murderers' charges, and saw the man fall asleep peacefully!

Knowing what he said would anger and certainly would rile this crowd, Stephen selflessly preached the truth, no matter what their reaction and the cost to him. Stephen knew what they had done to Jesus for preaching the truth.

He most likely knew how they would react to what he was telling them, but he spoke the truth no matter what.

If we had more preachers like Stephen today that would be more interested in telling the truth, no matter the reaction, our churches would be much different. The country would not be the same.

If we had more Christians that would also adopt a similar attitude and would say what needs to be said, rather than what is safe to say, Christianity would certainly have more influence in this world than it has. The truth can set a world free from the bondage of sin and godlessness.