

OVERCOMING THE THREE ENEMIES OF THE FAMILY

Part 2—The Flesh and The Devil

Galatians 5:13-16—“*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*”

I. OVERCOMING THE FLESH IN YOUR FAMILY

1. What is the *Flesh*?

- The New Testament uses the term *flesh* (Greek—sarx) primarily in two ways.
 1. To refer to the physical body or earthly existence. (1 Corinthians 15:39; 2 Corinthians 4:11)
 2. To refer to the “programming” of the body as orientated away from God through either licentiousness or legalism. (Romans 8:13,14; Galatians 5:13)
- “Existence apart from God—the part of our being that is choosing and operating apart from God and the allowing of our fleshly desires to rule our lives. The flesh is self-reliant rather than God-dependent. The flesh is focused on self instead of being focused on others. It is focused on what self desires instead of what Christ desires.”

Characteristics of the *Flesh*

Galatians 5:17-21—“*For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: **sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.***”

Galatians 3:1-3—“*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?***”

Satan’s Goals

- To keep you walking in the flesh.
- To have you reason in the flesh.
- To get you to respond in the flesh.

2. Understanding that the flesh is not the real me.

Romans 7:12-20—“*So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*”

3. Victory over the flesh comes through exchanged life in Christ.

Romans 8:10-13—“*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*”

Ephesians 4:20-24—“*But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*”

The exchanged life concentrates on the reality of a new identity through being in Christ. This relationship in Christ can drastically transform us as we grasp it in our experience.

- We substitute Christ’s life for the self life—“... *put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*” (Colossians 3:10).
- We are identified with Christ in his crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension—“*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).
- We are free from the law of sin and of death through the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—“*for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death*” (Romans 8:2).
- We must acknowledge these truths by faith and present ourselves to God as people who are alive from the dead (Romans 8: 6-13).
- The basis of our salvation is also the basis of our sanctification (Galatians 3:1-3). Just as we are justified by grace through faith, so we are sanctified by grace through faith. Good works are not attained by our own fleshly efforts; they flow from the power of the Spirit of Christ who indwells us (Galatians 5:16-25).

- Brokenness and unconditional surrender are part of the process of appropriating Christ’s life—“*But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
- Only Christ Himself can live the Christian life, and He does this in us and through us—“*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:1-8).

II. OVERCOMING THE DEVIL IN YOUR FAMILY

Ephesians 6:10-12, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

“It is the image of God reflected in you that so enrages hell; it is at this at which the demons hurl their mightiest weapons.” –Puritan William Gurnall

1. **Satan’s Goals**—“*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*” (John 10:10).
 - **Steal**—Satan comes as a thief to feloniously take away your freedom in Christ; withdrawing it undetectably and gaining it gradually. He does this through temptation and us succumbing to a continued lifestyle of besetting sin.
 - **Kill**—Satan comes to unlawfully kill the heart of a human being with premeditated malice. He does this through rejection and the lies that come in the message of that wounding. (Wounds, Lies, Vows)
 - **Destroy**—To lay waste; to make desolate your life. Satan desires to influence you to walk in the flesh and continue to make sinful choices that will bring destruction to your life, marriage, family, and future generations.
2. **Spiritual Warfare Principles**
 - The sovereignty of God in our spiritual warfare worldview brings balance. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 “*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*

- Demons are spirits of influence for the Christian, not spirits of control. Dr. Timothy Warner in his book *Spiritual Warfare* comes to the conclusion, “*Spiritual possession clearly implies ownership and would seem to include the control of one’s eternal destiny. It would seem impossible to be owned and controlled by Satan and have a saving relationship with Christ at the same time. So if the question is, ‘Can a Christian be demon-possessed?’ the answer is clearly no.*” (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991)
- Satan wants you to make agreements with his lies. Satan is a liar (John 8:44). Any word or suggestion in your mind that tries to influence you and brings discouragement, condemnation, accusation, confusion, or counsel that is contrary to the Word of God is coming from the Enemy.
- Satan will be allowed by God to tempt you. 1 Thessalonians 3:5—“*For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.*”

3. Acknowledge How Satan Can Gain Influence in Your Family

- Pride—James 4:6
- Bitterness—Ephesians 4:26, 27
- Rebellion—1 Samuel 15:23
- Sexual Immorality—1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20
- Spiritual Counterfeits (False gospel, spirits, false Jesus)—2 Corinthians 11:3, 4
- Fear—2 Timothy 1:7
- Guilt—1 Timothy 1:18,19
- Unhealthy Relationships (Soul Ties)—1 Corinthians 5:9-12
- Idolatry—Exodus 20:4, 5

4. How to Overcome Spiritual Warfare Battles in Your Family

- Repentance—1 John 1:9; James 5:16
- Renunciation—Ephesians 5:11; Titus 2:12
- Armor of God—Ephesians 6:10-18
- Submit to God resist the devil and he will flee—James 4:7-10
- Resist steadfast in the faith—1 Peter 5:6-10
- Learn to suffer well—1 Peter 4:1,2; Romans 8:17

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- Do you evaluate how the choices you make today could impact your family ten or twenty years down the road?
- Have you understood that you have received a new heart in Christ?
- Do you think that you can know when you are living out of that new heart and are walking in the Spirit? Why or why not?
- Does your worldview include spiritual warfare for the believer?
- Are there areas in your life or family where Satan has gained an advantage?