

4. Know Your Enemy: The Sinful Nature!

So far we have looked at two spiritual enemies: *satan*, our often overlooked adversary who seeks to 'devour' us, and *the World* he uses to sideline us. These two work from *without*. We will now look at a *third spiritual enemy* that works from *within*.

If it were not for this *third enemy*, our first two enemies would not have the impact they do. In a very real way, because this third enemy works from within, it is the most difficult to overcome, for it is devious! *But from where did it originate?*

The Origin of Our Sinful Nature

Romans 5:12

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world,
and death through sin,
and so death spread to all men,
because all sinned--*

Who is this 'one man' spoken of in this verse and why? _____

How does this verse explain the predicament of Mankind?

In his Psalm of Confession, King David explains why he sinned.

Ps 51:5

*"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me."*

How does David explain the reason he sinned? _____

Does this excuse us from sinning? Why or why not? _____

The Fall of Adam

The Bible tells us that when God originally created the first Man and Woman, He did so in His *own image* (Genesis 1:27). They were made in *sinless perfection*, with a *Nature* made to please and enjoy God *forever* ... until *satan*, in the form of a serpent, *tempted* them to sin with the false promise of achieving *Godhood*.

One of the consequences of the Fall was the *corruption of man's Nature*, from *Godly to Sinful*. Whereas our original Nature naturally pleased God, our corrupted or Sinful Nature made it natural to rebel against God.

Romans 5:12 (Observations)

Circle how 'sin' entered the world.

Circle what else entered with sin.

Circle where death spread.

Circle how many sinned.

And after the *original Nature* was corrupted, that *damaged Nature* was passed on to every succeeding generation. Its *depravity* was soon evident just one generation later when Adam's first born son, *Cain*, murdered his second born (Genesis 4:8). Like a *congenital disease*, sin's corruption spread through *all Mankind*.

King David's Confession

After sinning grievously against *Bathsheba* and her husband, *Uriah the Hittite*, *David* composed Psalm 51 as penance. In it, he pinpoints the cause of his weakness and crime.

Psalm 51:5 (Observations)

Circle how David says he was born.

Circle how he says he was conceived.

In this verse, *King David* reveals the *problem* with us all. We are all '*conceived*' in sin and born *sinners*. In other words, we are not only sinners *because* we sin, but we sin *because* we are *born* as *sinners*! **It is who we are!** Sinning is part of our very *Nature*, a *Nature* which *cannot* be changed by a set of laws, or principles or man made systems. It takes a *miracle* to change us, **a miracle** that only *God Himself* can effect *in our hearts!*

The Nature of Our Sinful Nature

Our Sinful Nature naturally sins! But it not only naturally sins, it actually **wants** to **sin**! It is a *wild beast* we keep in check within us. But know this. If people *knew* they could *get away with all kinds of sins and crimes*, society would soon sink into *anarchy* and *depravity*. It is only *societal pressure* and *law enforcement* that keeps us from societal breakdown and allows us to live in peace with each other. The **Prophet Jeremiah** described our horrible condition.

Jeremiah 17:9

**"The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?"**

How does our heart deceive us? _____

The words "desperately sick" means "incurably wicked". Knowing this, how can humanity ever bring about world peace on its own?

The Apostle Paul lists some of the '*deeds*' of the **Sinful Nature**, here called the '*flesh*'.

Galatians 5:19-21

- 19** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are:
immorality, impurity, sensuality,
20 *idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy,*
outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
21 *envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these,*
of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you,
that those who practice such things
will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Why do you think Paul lists these 'deeds' for the Galatians?

What would you add to the list today? _____

The Lord knew that most people would consider themselves *good* and would never *outwardly* break the law. So He challenged them with the "*spirit of the Law*". Though we may not have outwardly murdered someone, we may have *in our hearts* (*Matthew 5:22*). The same is true with sexual immorality (*Matthew 5:28*). We may not sin outwardly, but have we sinned **in our hearts?**

Jeremiah 17:9 (Observations)

Circle in what *the heart is more than all else*.

Circle what Jeremiah says it is.
Underline Jeremiah's rhetorical question.

Jeremiah 17:9 is one of the most vivid descriptions of the **Sinful Nature** corrupting the heart. It is not only *sick*, it is *really sick*. In fact, Jeremiah says it is so *sick*, no one can really understand it.

In the early 1930's, a radio drama entitled "**The Shadow Knows**" would begin with eerie music over which a sonorous voice would announce ... "**Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows...**" followed by evil laughter. How often have we read news accounts of a serial killer with neighbors testifying, "*He was such a nice guy.*" **Who knows ... for 'sooth'!**

Galatians 5:19-21 (Observations)

v19

Circle what the '*deeds of the flesh*' are.

v19-21

Note each *deed*, using a **dictionary** if necessary.

Underline what will result for those who '*practice such things*'.

The Apostle Paul says that the '*deeds of the flesh*' are '*evident*', or *obvious*. The idea is that *they are clearly seen*. We are all *aware* of them because we see them every day. These behavior are not learned but manifest naturally from our **Sinful Nature**. It is often the *proper behavior* that can be *unnatural* and necessary to be *learned*. **Every parent knows this!**

This is proof of the *fallen state* of all humans. *Sinful behavior* and *evil thoughts* come so *naturally* to us, even when we *wish not* to do them!

The Quandary of Our Dual Natures

The Apostle Paul spoke about the dual nature of the **Believer**: possessing **the Sinful Nature** of the *First Adam*, which is the person we used to be, and **the Divine Nature** of the *Second Adam*, **Christ Jesus**, who we are now. The Believer **died with Christ** and is **raised with Him** to a **New Life**. He/she is a **New Creation**, freed from the *Law of Sin* through *Christ's Death* and *made alive to God* through *Christ's Resurrection*. This **New Person**, the **Real Person**, is now imbued with the **Holy Spirit** and **wants** to please God ... **always!** If you are a *true Believer*, *born again* by God's Spirit, the **New You** which is the **Real You** wants to do God's Will, and in fact, will do no other! So *why do we continue to sin?* Learn from what the **Apostle** teaches.

Romans 7:18-23

- 18 "For I know that nothing good dwells in me,
that is, in my flesh;
for the willing is present in me,
but the doing of the good is not.
- 19 "For the good that I want,
I do not do,
but I practice the very evil that I do not want.
- 20 "But if I am doing the very thing I do not want,
I am no longer the one doing it,
but sin which dwells in me.
- 21 "I find then the principle that evil is present in me,
the one who wants to do good.
- 22 " For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
23 but I see a different law in the members of my body,
waging war against the law of my mind
and making me a prisoner of the law of sin
which is in my members.

What is an area of your life where you struggle to do the good you want to do. _____

What does Paul mean in verse 20? _____

Is Paul saying we are no longer responsible for sinning? Why or why not? _____

How does Paul view the Sinful Nature? _____

The Sinful Nature in the Believer

The moment any person believes in Christ as Savior and Lord, God performs a miracle in their lives. They are reborn spiritually as *New Creations* and made partakers of the *Divine Nature*. They become completely New Persons in Christ with New Natures that delight in pleasing and obeying God.

But what happens to the Sinful Nature? Unfortunately, a *remnant* continues to live on in our *Flesh*, and will continue to do so until our bodies are changed in the *'twinkling of an eye!'* (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

Romans 7:18-23 (Observations)

v18

Circle what dwells in 'me.'

Underline where it dwells.

Circle what is present in me.

Underline what is not present.

v19

Underline what we 'do not do.'

Underline what we practice.

v20

Underline Paul's conclusion when he does what he doesn't want to do.

Circle what is doing it instead.

v21

Underline the 'principle' Paul discovers.

Circle what is 'present' in him.

v22

Circle where Paul 'joyfully' agrees with God's law.

v23

Circle where Paul sees a different law.

Underline what it is doing.

Circle what it is making him.

Circle where the 'law of sin' resides.

The Sinful Nature not only continues to live in our bodies but exerts its will to incite sin in us! It is an evil entity that we cannot escape. In fact, unless and until we learn how to live as a *New Person in Christ*, the Sinful Nature is the default setting which will direct us toward well worn paths *forged* through a lifetime of sin.

The incredible thing is that God acknowledges that we are **New Persons in Christ** who truly desire to please Him, and knows that we really **do not** want to sin against Him any longer. We live under His *Grace* and *Forgiveness*, but we do not want to use this as an *excuse* to sin. Instead, we must learn to live *by Faith* in the *newness* of life by *God's Holy Spirit* who lives through our *New and Divine Nature!* (Romans 8:1-2)

Every Believer must eventually face the formidable enemy within. As we just learned, the **Sinful Nature** will often manifest itself even when we do not want it to. It *betrays* us, causing us to *give in* to satan and the *deception* of the World. But **God** has given us a way to victory, as the **Apostle Paul** instructs the *Galatian* Believers.

Galatians 5:16-18

16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit,
and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit,
and the Spirit against the flesh;
for these are in opposition to one another,
so that you may not do the things that you please.
18 "But if you are led by the Spirit,
you are not under the Law.

Paraphrase verse 16 in your own words? _____

According to verse 17, what is happening within the Believer?

The phrase 'walk by the Spirit' is a command in the present tense. What role do our wills play in making this command a reality?

Why are those who are led by the Spirit 'not under the Law'?

"But the worst enemy you can meet will always be yourself;"
Friedrich Nietzsche



Galatians 5:16-18 (Observations)

v16
Underline Paul's advice on how not to 'carry out the desire of the flesh.'
Circle by Whom we are to walk.
v17
Circle what sets itself against the Spirit.
Circle what sets itself against the flesh.
Underline why they are set against each other..
v18
Underline the result of being 'led by the Spirit.'

The key to living the Christian Life is understanding **who you are**. A quote attributed to both *C.S. Lewis* and *George MacDonald*, states:

**"You Don't Have a Soul,
You ARE a Soul
That Has a Body."**

Every person, Believer and Non Believer alike, is a **living Soul** possessing a **Body** for existence in the *physical world*. As we have learned, our bodies are *corrupted* with the *Sinful Nature*. However, the moment a person Believes in Christ, God brings forth our **Spirit**, which is imbued with the *Divine Nature*, and *endows* us for life in Heaven, the dwelling place of God!

But God doesn't want us to wait till we get to Heaven to live *Spiritually*. God expects us to live in the Spirit **now!**

Whereas living in our *Bodies* is second nature to us, having already gained lots of experience trusting in our senses, *living in the Spirit* is a completely new experience altogether. It requires greater *Faith* because the spiritual World is *unseen*, but no less real. Our **Primary Guide** is **God's Word** and **His Holy Spirit**. We must *transform our minds* with His **Word** that we may **prove** what His **Will** is, and the longer we pursue this, the *stronger* we will be in our *Faith* and in our *Ability* to live *Spiritually* in the *physical World*.

So, as a Living Soul, we must decide daily whether we will live through our *sinfully oriented Bodies* or through our *heavenly oriented Spirits!*

Application

Review this Lesson and Answer the Following:

1. Describe the Sinful Nature and how to achieve victory over it.

2. What Specific Things Will You Do to Apply What you Have Learned?
