***The Flesh – the Evil Propensity
RO84-01***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 7:1-6 on the subject of "The Jurisdiction of the Law."

**Salvation for Adam and Eve**

After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, one of the first expressions of the grace of God was the promise to them to qualify them again to live in heaven with Him forever. That was the significance of the promise that you have in Genesis 3:15. God recognized their problem. God recognized the impossibility of resolving that problem, and God provided the promise that He would qualify them Himself – that they would again be in a status where they could live with Him. This future salvation was to be received by faith in God's promise as a grace gift apart from all human good works.

The original sacrificial system there, therefore, which was revealed to Adam and Eve, was a portrayal of this divine plan of vicarious atonement through blood sacrifice. This was God's plan for resolving the moral dilemma of mankind.

**Man's Resistance against God's Grace**

Immediately, there was evidence in the human race that there was great resistance to this grace plan for saving lost humanity.

**Cain**

Cain immediately rejected the concept of blood sacrifice – in effect, thereby, rejecting the idea of grace salvation. Instead of God's recognized plan of grace salvation, Cain substituted his agricultural products – a non-blood sacrifice in the sacrificial system.

**Nimrod**

Nimrod organized the Tower of Babel self-sufficient society, which was in rebellion against God's authority, and against the principle of grace. The Tower of Babel was one of the first human attempts of man solving man's problem. And it was based upon the concept that if the people of the world could be organized as a unit, so that they would function as a unit, so that they would not be in conflict with one another, and if the people of the world could be brought together under some central authority who could make decisions to keep everybody working in harmony, mankind could solve its problems of every kind, and they could, in effect, find a millennial kingdom on this earth apart from God. Well, of course, that principle still functions among us today. The Tower of Babel concept has been passed down through one group after another in human history.

Well, the natural man throughout history has, consequently, rationalized ways in which he could attain divine favor by his own human efforts. And if this didn't work, he simply did as Russia does – tries to reason God out of existence.

**Man is Humiliated by Grace Salvation**

Grace salvation is a great humiliation, we must admit, to the human ego. The concept of being saved by grace is a very great humiliation. It is a humiliation because it proclaims man's total depravity and man's complete inability to please God in any way in what he does. So, the concept of grace salvation is hated by man because it is a personal humiliation to a man who views himself with an arrogance that does not befit what he actually is.

Well, law-keeping, consequently, is the way the people by nature think that they can attain eternal life in heaven: "If I can just keep a certain set of rules that God wants me to keep, then I will please Him. Then I will be blessed." But as we pointed out, nobody lives up to his own standards, his own set of rules for right conduct, let alone God's standard of absolute righteousness. Anyone who is under the demand of living up to a certain kind of law system, such as the Mosaic Law system, is automatically under the wrath of God because he breaks the standard. Consequently, trying to approach God through keeping rules of right conduct is hopeless because you always break the rules, and you always come under divine judgment.

**Marriage**

So, the apostle Paul, in order to show us that grace is the only way, even though people hate grace, and grace is viewed as a humiliation to man, the apostle Paul uses the illustration of marriage to prove that the believer is not under a system of laws now to gain divine favor. And he does this by showing that the law of marriage says that once you're married, a wife (and he uses the wife as an example) cannot be released from that marriage until the husband dies. A Christian in his pre-salvation days was, in effect, married to Jesus Christ while Jesus Christ was in the role of being under the curse of the wrath of God because of the broken standards of God's morality – the absolute standard of righteousness as expressed in the Mosaic Law. Jesus Christ came under that Law to bear the condemnation of the violation of the law of absolute righteousness.

So, the Christian was related to Jesus Christ in that respect. Therefore, the believer was under that same wrath and condemnation. Well, Jesus Christ died on the cross, and, in effect, our first husband died, and that terminated our relationship to the wrath of God as those who are under the moral law of God.

Now, with that marriage out of the way, the believer is united to Jesus Christ in a different way. Jesus Christ is our new husband, now as the resurrected One who is forever free from the wrath and condemnation of God. And, of course, a wife is everything that her husband is, and she possesses everything that her husband possesses. All the benefits that he has become her benefits.

So, the believer in Jesus Christ shares the resurrected status of Jesus Christ, which is free from the law system of approaching God by human merit. Consequently, the Christian is free from divine wrath in every respect. And we pointed out that Paul used this analogy because it also teaches us that the only way a Christian can ever again come under a law system is to have a new husband – a husband who is under that system. And the only way a Christian can be related to a new husband is for the present husband, Jesus Christ, the resurrected One, to die again. And Romans 6:9-10 and Hebrews 10:10 have told us very clearly that Christ died once, and He cannot die again.

So, this is why the Bible makes it very clear to us that once you are born-again; once you have become a Christian; once you are saved; and, once you are related to this new husband, Jesus Christ in His resurrection status, that's it. You can never die again because He cannot die again. You can never be lost again because you cannot be separated from the resurrected husband. And that's what you have to be to be lost again. You have to be separated from the resurrected Jesus Christ. The only way you can be separated from him is for him to die again.

**Security of the Believer**

So, the new marriage is permanent and salvation is eternally secure to a believer no matter what the believer does. And that's the shock. That's what people resist. You are related to the new husband, the resurrected Christ, under the grace of God, with a salvation which is eternally secure. It is permanent because that husband will never die. You will never lose that status of salvation no matter what you do.

Now, some wives can act in the very "unwifely" way, and a very unscriptural way. They can be many bad things. And I won't use all the bad words that describe what wives can be, but they can be exactly that. But they are still wives until her husband dies, no matter how bad they may be, and how unfaithful they may be, or how irrational they may be, or anything else – they cannot be separated from that union until their husband dies.

**Fruit-Bearing**

The great divine purpose of this new marriage of grace is fruit-bearing – fruit bearing in the form of divine good production in Christian service. And that, of course, means storing treasures in heaven.

So, we now begin with the verse five which immediately brings us to a very critical word – the first time the apostle Paul has used it in this book, and one that we're going to have to stop on for the rest of this session to get straightened out, and to get very clear on, because from here on out, this word keeps popping up. And if you miss it now, you're going to miss what Romans has to say.

**When we were in the Flesh**

In verse 5 Paul begins by saying, "For when we were in the flesh." The word "for" looks like this in your Greek Bible: "gar." It's a conjunction, and it introduces the explanation for the statement which was made in verse 4 about a new marriage to produce fruit unto God. The form of marriage under the system of keeping rules of good conduct produced an evil progeny. Now, Paul says, "This marriage was designed that you should bring forth divine good fruit to God. And he picks up that thought in verse 5 with this word "for."

The next word "when" looks like this hoped "hote." "Hote" is a Greek particle. It's a temporal particle. It refers to time, and it refers specifically to our pre-salvation days: "For when," back in the days before you were saved, something was true. The verb is "eimi." This is the verb for expressing one's status – the verb "to be." It's in the imperfect tense. Imperfect in the Greek means that it's something that happened in the past. But it happens again and again and again in the past. Here was a repeated thing that took place in the past in our pre-grace salvation days. It's in the active voice, which means that this was the actual practice of the Christian. We were doing this. It's indicative – a statement of fact.

**The Flesh**

"For when (back in our grace salvation days) we had the status of being in." The word "in" looks like this in Greek: "en." It's the preposition indicating location. And here it indicates "control of:" "When we were, in our pre-salvation days, under the control." And then he names what the control was: "under the "sarx." That's the word for "flesh:" "When we were under the control of the flesh." The word here refers to natural self-centeredness and sensual animal desires that are inherent in mankind. This is a natural self-centeredness, and an inclination to animal sensual desires which is inherent in mankind.

**A Propensity for Moral Evil – The Sin Nature**

It's a propensity for moral evil, which we inherited from Adam. This evil propensity controls a person, and it produces evil fruit resulting in death. The Greek language has it as "*the* flesh," in order to make it a very specific idea. It's specifying the total natural depravity, or what we refer to very often as the sin nature of man.

Now, we have to stop and analyze this word "flesh" now that Paul has introduced it into this book, and get an idea of what Paul means by this word. Obviously, we cannot understand what God the Holy Spirit is saying in the Bible unless we understand the words that He has used to communicate His thinking. And He has communicated His thinking in words that we can understand. It just takes a little research, and a little thinking, and a little trouble to put it together.

The word "flesh" is used 147 times in the New Testament. The apostle Paul uses it 91 times, and he uses it mostly in Romans and Galatians. So, you can see by this ratio that this is a very big word with the apostle Paul. So, the first thing we need to do is to get a very specific idea of how Paul uses this word. He uses it in his 91 times in a variety of ways. I'm going to give you a long list of Scriptures here that you may record and pursue on your own.

**The Physical Body**

First of all, he uses the word "flesh" simply to refer to the physical body. 38 times he uses it in this way, and I'll read these off, and you may record them. . . . In the book of Romans, he uses the word "flesh" in reference to the physical body in Romans 1:3, Romans 2:28, Romans 6:19, Romans 9:3, Romans 9:5, Romans 9:8, Romans 11:14.

In the book of 1 Corinthians, he uses it in this way in 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1 Corinthians 6:16, 1 Corinthians 6:28, and 1 Corinthians 5:39. And he uses it four times in 1 Corinthians 15:50.

Then in 2 Corinthians, he uses it in 2 Corinthians 4:11, 2 Corinthians 5:16 (two times), 2 Corinthians 7:1, and 2 Corinthians 12:7.

In Galatians, he uses it in Galatians 2:20, Galatians 4:13, Galatians 4:14.

In the book of Ephesians, he uses it in Ephesians 2:11 (two times), Ephesians 2:15, Ephesians 5:29, Ephesians 5:30, and Ephesians 5:31.

In the book of Philippians, he uses it in Philippians 1:22 and Philippians 1:24.

In the book of Colossians, he uses it in Colossians 1:22, Colossians 1:24, Colossians 2:1, Colossians 2:5, and Colossians 2:13.

In the book of Ephesians, he uses it in Ephesians 3:22.

In the book of 1 Timothy, he uses it in 1 Timothy 3:16.

In the book of Philemon, he uses it in Philemon 16.

Now all of these verses use the word "flesh," this same Greek word "sarx," and it simply refers to the physical body. Now, you can look this up on your own. Read any one of those, and you'll see that it actually refers to simply the physical structure. And there is no evil connotation. Notice that there is no evil connotation when he uses it in reference to the physical body. There's no suggestion in any of these verses that there is something vile about your body; that there is something evil about your physical body; or, that there is something inherently depraved about your physical body. There is no suggestion at all of that nature. So, the word "flesh" can be used without any derogatory implications.

**Humanity**

There's a second way the Paul uses the word "flesh." 26 times he uses it to simply refer to humanness, or to refer to one's humanity – not to the physical flesh, but just to the fact of being a human being. And he uses the word "flesh" in this respect. He has this in Romans 3:20, Romans 4:1, and Romans 8:3 (three times in that verse).

He uses it in this way in 1 Corinthians 1:26, 1 Corinthians 1:29, and 1 Corinthians 10:18.

In the book of 2 Corinthians, he uses this in 2 Corinthians 1:17, 2 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 10:2, 2 Corinthians 10:3 (twice), and 2 Corinthians 11:18.

In the book of Galatians he uses the word "flesh" for humanness in Galatians 1:16, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:3, Galatians 6:12, and Galatians 6:13.

In the book of Ephesians, he uses it in Ephesians 2:11, Ephesians 6:5, and Ephesians 6:12.

In the book of Philippians, he uses it in Philippians 3:3 and Philippians 3:4 (twice).

In the book of Colossians, he uses it in Colossians 2:23. He is using the word here in these verse for simply humanity – the humanness of a person.

**Inherent Evil in the Sin Nature**

Then there's a third way, that we particularly want to zero in on in this session, that Paul uses the word "flesh," and that is in reference to inherent evil in human nature. 27 times he uses it in this way: in Romans 7:5, Romans 7:18, Romans 7:25, Romans 8:4, Romans 8:5 (two times), Romans 8:6, Romans 8:7, Romans 8:8, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:12, Romans 8:13, and Romans 13:14.

In the book of Galatians, he uses it in this respect in Galatians 4:23, Galatians 4:29, Galatians 5:13, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:17 (twice in that verse), Galatians 5:19, Galatians 5:24, and Galatians 6:8 (two times).

In the book of Ephesians, he uses it in Ephesians 2:2 (two times).

In the book of Colossians, he uses it in Colossians 2:11 and Colossians 2:18.

These verses, 27 of them, all use the word "flesh" in terms of this inherent moral depravity of the human nature. Just to give you an idea very specifically of how to interpret the word flesh, we're going to look at these verses in specific detail. One of the problems we have is to think about the idea of the flesh as something that is detached from you. Here you are as a human being. And we think of the word "flesh" in terms of its moral depravity as some kind of a glob that's inside of you, like a tumor that has developed, and that what we want to do is to take this thing and get it out. So, we want some kind of spiritual surgery to remove the flesh.

Now, because people have thought about the flesh in that way, that has led to the idea of sinless perfection, in part. They have the idea that they can take this blob of depravity and simply remove it. But the trouble is that you are a blob of depravity. You don't just have a blob in you, but you are the blob. And the only way we're going to get rid of the blob is to just rub you out completely. Then we have removed the blob of depravity. What specifically Paul means by the flesh evolves as you read these verses.

So, let's take your Bibles, and let's look at Romans 7:5 verse (the verse we're looking at today) and let's just note a few things about these 27 verses that use the word "flesh" in reference to this inherent depravity. What I'm getting at here is we sometimes use the words "sin nature," and that's not bad. And it isn't "old" sin nature which we got from our old man Adam. But the problem is that we also talk about a new nature. And the idea comes that there's a sort of a dichotomy. We've got these two things. On the one side, there's a there's a blob of wonderful shiny new nature within us, and the dark blob of evil nature. That is not the way it works. You have just one nature.

What we're coming into here, following Romans 7:6, is how to take this nature and transform it into the image of Christ. You as a person are cleaning this up, coming in experiential sanctification, coming where all of this darkness is removed from you – all of the callousness of sin on your soul is removed from you. That is holiness. That is becoming compatible to God's integrity. And that is what Paul is going to explain to us. He is never going to explain to us how to get the genetically located sin nature out of you, but how to put it under control of the Spirit of God, and how you are transformed to where you act according to the principles of God's absolute standard of righteousness.

In Romans 7:5, he says, "But when we were in the flesh, the sinful impulses, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto rebellion." The flesh here cannot mean the physical body, because the Romans obviously still had their physical bodies. He's talking about when we were (past tense), implying that they are no longer in the flesh; that is, that they are no longer under the control and domination of this thing he calls "the flesh." But there was a time when this was true of them. This is something apart from the human body here. This is something that operates through the human body, which is why the word "flesh" is used, because there is such a close compatibility between this inherent evil and its functioning through the physical body that the word "flesh" is an appropriate word to describe it. But this word indicates that here is something that we were dominate by, as Christians in the past. But it doesn't sit on top of us in that kind of an authoritative way anymore.

Romans 7:18: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing, for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Notice that the apostle Paul, in this verse, is speaking of himself as a whole person. He uses the words "I" and "me." He is not speaking as if something of a tumor-like depravity was attached to him. He *is* this thing of evil, and the flesh is viewed as being totally within the being of the apostle Paul. The flesh is seen as part of Paul's nature here: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." Obviously he could not say that about the physical body. There are plenty of good things about the physical body. There's nothing that's really bad about the physical body, as a matter of fact. He's talking about something that is his being that is totally bad.

The next verse is Romans 7:25. We just were going through this list of verses here that we gave you earlier. Romans 7:25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." The mind of the soul here is on positive relation to God's will, and it serves divine concepts, consequently. The flesh, in Paul's writing, however, serves the evil of human viewpoint. So, he thanks God through Jesus Christ our Lord, that with the mind, on positive volition to God's divine viewpoint, he serves the law of God, the moral standard of God. But with this thing called the flesh, he serves a different law – the law of evil; the law of human good; and, the law of actual acts of sins.

The next verse was Romans 8:4: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Those who live according to the influence of the inherent evil within them cannot meet the standard of absolute righteousness. If you live by means of this inherent evil, you cannot achieve absolute righteousness. But those who walk by the guidance of the Holy Spirit fulfill the principles of absolute righteousness. Now that is a shocking statement, I think, because that is talking about you and me right here where we live – that on the one hand, we could walk according to this inherent depravity, and we will achieve nothing but human viewpoint evil. On the other hand, we can walk in contrast to that inherent evil, to the control of the Holy Spirit, and of all things, actually be producing absolute righteousness. The term absolute righteousness we tend to transfer out there someplace in the future. But that is not what the apostle is speaking of here. He's talking about absolute righteousness as a normative pattern of our life now: not always; not regularly; and, interrupted by breaks, but at least some of the time, and hopefully most of the time.

Romans 8:5 uses the word "flesh" twice: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh. But they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit." This verse indicates that those who are controlled by the flesh seek what the flesh desires. And the opposite is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, and to seek what the Spirit desires. So, there's your contrast. There is an inherent natural depravity in man that seeks evil. There is, in contrast to that, a higher power of God the Holy Spirit, seeking God's will. And that is one of the places where we tend to get the concept of what we call a new nature and an old nature, which is not a good way of thinking about it, because it divides what you are as a person. It makes it seem that you are two different things, but you are not two different things. You are just one person. And you are in a certain status of spirituality, or you are in a certain status of carnality. And that is determined by whether this thing called the flesh is dominating, or whether the person or the Spirit of God is dominating.

Romans 8:6 says, "For to be carnally minded (fleshly mind) is death, but to be spiritually mind is life and peace. The translation here is really "the minding of the flesh:" "For the minding of the flesh is death." The minding of the flesh is a mental attitude. Now what kind of minding does the flesh do? Well, here you begin to get one of your first clues of what the meaning of this word is in Paul thinking, because the minding of the flesh refers to an animal level of relationship.

**Animals**

What do animals do? Animals are centered on sensual, self-centered gratification. That is the normative pattern of an animal. An animal lives entirely to satiate his senses. That's all an animal does. Even when your dog comes up, wagging his tail and smiling at you, he has an emotional need for your good will. He is coming to you for a sensual need. What does he need? He needs to feel your hand on his head, patting him. He needs to hear your words, encouraging him. He has an emotional need to be accepted, and that's what he's out to do.

Somebody left the gate open at the yard the other day, and my little dog, Yenta, went wandering around. I don't know what need she had that she was pursuing out in the neighborhood, but she tore off down the street, and Mrs. Wallace came by in her car and saw her and recognized her. And she stopped the car, and called to her, and told her to: "Get in this car." And Yenta put her tail between her legs, and she recognized Joyce right away, and she went up to get Joyce's goodwill. And instead she got a frown and a rebuke, and her tail went between her legs, and she crawled up in that car, and just sat there with her head down, pouting, because her sensual need had been denied, whatever it was, by getting caught wandering around the neighborhood.

That's what the flesh is. The flesh is this animal, sensual self-gratification. Those are the best words to describe this. And when Paul uses that in these 27 verses, that is exactly what he's referring to. That has, of course, obviously, certain consequences.

So, the minding of the flesh is a mental attitude which is set on animal, sensual gratification, and Paul says, "That results in death."

In contrast to that, he says, "The minding of the spirit is a mental attitude set on seeking spiritual satisfaction, and that results in life and peace.

Then Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind (the fleshly mind) is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Minding of the flesh is hostility toward God. So, here you have another indication of what the word "flesh" means. It means "hostility" toward God. The flesh, as a matter of fact, cannot be subject to the divine viewpoint of God. So, no matter what the flesh tries to do, it is hostile to God, and it is human viewpoint, and it is rejected by God.

When you are an unbeliever, the only force motivating, guiding, and directing you is this thing Paul calls "the flesh." So, do why you cannot, by human works, achieve any merit with God? Because the flesh cannot do anything but what is hostile to God, and what is rejected by God.

Romans 8:8: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Those controlled by this inward, animal, sensual, moral depravity cannot please God. Not everyone is controlled by the flesh. That's why he says, "So then they that are," because Christians are in a different category.

Romans 8:9: "But you (Christians) are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Christians are not enslaved to the flesh because they are enslaved to the Holy Spirit. The flesh is not the human body in which these Christians were living. The evil of the flesh is something apart from the body itself as such. Anyone who lacks the Holy Spirit is unregenerated, and thus he is a slave of the flesh. So, Paul, in this verse, indicates that Christians who are in Christ, and thus indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are not under the slavery of the flesh. That does not mean they cannot respond to the flesh, but they are not enslaved to the flesh.

Romans 8:12 is the next verse: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." Christians are not obliged to live according to these sensual, animal desires of the flesh. Christians are obliged to live a totally different lifestyle.

Romans 8:13: "For If you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if you, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." The lifestyle of obeying the flesh results in death. The lifestyle of obeying the Holy Spirit results in life. That means putting to death the evil deeds that the flesh wants to work through the physical body. This cannot mean the normal legitimate needs of the human body, but the evil, sensual, animal desires that are expressed through the human body. So, the Christian is not obliged to indulge the flesh.

So, when someone says, "I can't help doing this bad thing because that's just the way," that is wrong. If you are an unbeliever, that's true. But it is not true if you are a Christian.

Romans 13:14: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts." The flesh is a propensity for evil in a person. The flesh has a pattern of lusts, and the lusts of this sin nature are expressed through the human body. The human body itself does not have the evil desires. It is simply expressed through them.

Then in Galatians 4:23, the word comes up again. Paul says, "But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was by promise. The flesh here means more than the physical birth process. The genitive account of this incident indicates to us how the birth was the result of a human viewpoint solution on the part of Sarah and Abraham to get an heir. The flesh here refers to a more perversity. So, Ishmael was born as a result of the moral perversity in Abraham and Sarah. And that's the problem that exists in the world today between the Arabs and the Jews.

Galatians 4:29: "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." The product of the flesh is antagonistic to the product of the Holy Spirit. This same hostility, of course, exists today.

Galatians 5:13: "For brethren, you have been called into liberty. Only don't use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Christians have been called to a life that is free from trying to gain divine blessings by human doing. Christians are not, however, to use freedom from rule as an excuse to indulge the propensity to evil. Instead of unloving self-gratification of the flesh, Christians are called to gratify the needs of others in the spirit of love. That's the difference. The flesh makes you treat a person in a self-centered way to indulge animal gratifications. But when you are a believer, you are instead to seek to gratify the legitimate needs in a spirit of love of others, and particularly of the household of faith.

In Galatians 5:16, Paul says, "This I say then: walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." The flesh has desires – fantastic, terrible desires which it wants indulged. Living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit frustrates the evil desires of the flesh in the Christian.

Galatians 5:17 uses the word "flesh" twice: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would." The flesh and the Holy Spirit have conflicting desires. They do not want the same thing. The Holy Spirit desires God-centered actions, and the flesh desires self-centered actions. The conflict within a believer explains the twofold desires in the Christian: toward human viewpoint; and. divine viewpoint.

Then Galatians 5:19 says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery; fornication;" and, so on. And it goes on to name 17 different, terrible evils that the flesh produces. And about half of these are mental attitude evils. So, the flesh includes evils of the mind as well as evils of the body.

Galatians 5:24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lust." The word "flesh" here obviously does not mean the human body. Christians have not crucified their human bodies. It refers to this innate evil quality which the physical body is used to express – the lust patterns of self-gratification. The word "flesh" indicates that there is a close tie between this evil and the body. Christians have crucified this propensity to evil. When did you do that? Well, you did that when you were placed in Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation.

Then in Galatians 6:8, we have it used twice: "For he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." A person can indulge his own propensity to evil, and from it he reaps destruction. The opposite is indulging the indwelling Holy Spirit, and reaping eternal life. Negative or positive volition to the gospel is the first act of indulgence of one or the other. And notice the words "his own," stressing the personal nature of this inherent evil.

If you move over to the book of Ephesians, we have this word "flesh" used twice in Ephesians 2:3: "Among whom also we all had our manner of life in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, which were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "Time past" refers to pre-salvation life. Flesh has desires here which are evil, and it also has a will and thoughts which lead to evil. The total nature of man is an active, moral depravity under the wrath of God. The sin nature is not something separate, but it’s what we entirely are as human beings, and it cannot be removed.

Then move over to Colossians 2:11: "In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Physical circumcision symbolized the removal in salvation of the domination of this evil propensity within us. A believer's position in Christ removes him from the domination of his inherent propensity to evil.

**Arrogance**

Then Colossians 2:18. "Let no man beguile you of your reward, and a voluntary humility, and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which you have not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Here's an excellent example of what flesh is like – what characterizes the flesh. And that is that it has a mentality of arrogance. The flesh influences the mentality of the soul to be arrogant, and to be arrogant, particularly, in spiritual things. This is the origin of all the religious cults with their weird doctrines. It's the arrogance of the flesh mind.

Now let's tie this all together. We've looked at all 27 verses in which the apostle Paul uses the word "flesh," not referring to the physical body, and not referring to humanness. What does he mean in these 27 instances?

**Summary of "The Flesh" as Inherent Evil in the Sin Nature**

1. **Inherent Propensity to Moral Evil**

The word "flesh" denotes symbolically an inherent propensity to moral evil in mankind.

1. **Strong Affinity to Influence the Body and the Soul**

The inward propensity to moral evil is called the flesh because of its strong affinity to an influence over the human body, and the mentality of the soul which resides in the body.

1. **The Flesh is Separate from the Body and the Soul**

The flesh is not the human body or the mind of the soul, but it does influence thinking, and it does act through the body.

1. **The Flesh is in the Genetic Structure of the Body**

The flesh is in the genetic structure of the human body and cannot be removed either entirely or in part.

1. **The Flesh is a Disease**

The flesh is a disease which contaminates the entire being of man. It's not just something that can be removed in one spot. It's a disease that contaminates the whole being.

1. **The Old Sin Nature is not a Separate Entity of Evil**

The term "old sin nature" in referring to the flesh should not be viewed as suggesting a separate entity of evil in man. Be very careful when you say "the old sin nature," so that you do not think of a separate entity of evil.

1. **The Mind of the Flesh and the Mind of the Spirit**

The phrase "the mind of the flesh" and the phrase "the mind of the Spirit" are not two mentalities in a person, but two states or conditions of his one mind. The mind of the flesh is set on self-centered, sensual, animal gratifications through the mind and the body. The mind of the Spirit is set on spiritual satisfactions in the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. A person cannot be both of these at the same time.

1. **Selfish Animal Sensuality**

The basic characteristic of the flesh as inherent evil in man is selfish animal sensuality.

1. **The Whole Man in his Fallen State**

The word "flesh" is used by Paul to refer to the whole man in his fallen state. We talk about the total self in a morally spoiled condition. Man is born with a nature of perverted animal and selfish propensities. The flesh, therefore, describes a nature which pursues its own selfish ends in the self-sufficient independence from God.

So, Paul refers to the concept of the flesh, and for the first time introduces it in his opening line here in Romans 7:5. We're going to repeatedly come across this term when it does not refer to the physical body, which the context will show, and when it does not refer to humanity. For example, when it says, "Flesh and blood," you know that he's talking about humanity. But when it refers to this evil propensity within man, which is in our genetic structure, and thus contaminates our whole being, that is what he is talking about here now in the flesh. That is what he is trying to convey to us, that we are no longer slaves of. We're married to the man who has released us from that contamination and from that domination. And we have that experiential sanctification. The ultimate result is going to be ultimate sanctification when we will be in the Lord's presence, and the genetic corruption of the propensity to evil, or the sin nature, will be removed from us completely.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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