***The Flesh is Hostile to God
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We have come to Romans 7:5-6, where the apostle Paul ties up his explanation of God's judicial solution for the inherent human propensity to evil. There is inherent in every human being a propensity to evil. We refer to it as "the sin nature." Verses 5-6 now conclude this section that we have been in for some time, where Paul has been explaining how God, as the moral judge of the universe, has provided a solution for this tyranny in the soul of every human being, in the form of this propensity to evil, which was inherited from Adam in the form of a contaminated human nature.

Verse 5 deals with life under the control and direction of the flesh nature. Verse 6 deals with life under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 is life under the curse of God's moral law. Verse 6 is life free from that condemnation. So, verses 5-6, in a way, are another one of those dramatic summaries that the apostle Paul has brought us to: verse 5, our old life; and, verse 6, our new life.

**The Flesh**

So, right now we're looking at verse 5. We've already looked at the first part of that verse, which says, "For when we were in the flesh." And we stopped to examine what Paul meant specifically by the word "flesh." He uses it to refer to man's inherent propensity to moral evil; moral corruption; and, a nature of sin. The flesh, we have found, in looking at the 27 verses where Paul uses this word "flesh" in terms of this moral propensity to evil – the flesh is characterized by self-centered, sensual gratification. The flesh pursues animal level desires, and it pursues that no matter what the consequences are to anyone else.

One thing has come through as we've looked at the word "flesh," as Paul has used it in this respect, is that it is self-centered. It is what I want, and come hell or high water, I will not be denied what I want. It is my right, and I'm going to pursue it, and it is what I'm going to indulge, no matter who it hurts, including myself. And the desires are primarily of a sensual, animal level. The flesh gratifies itself in two ways: through acts of sins, which are violations of God's moral code; and, through human good.

The flesh in man, we have found, is hostile to God and to His divine viewpoint. The flesh is characterized by wanting to be independent of God. For that reason, it is hostile to God and what God thinks. The flesh quality is, of course, closely associated with the physical body through which it expresses itself. That is one reason that the word "flesh" is used to describe this inward propensity to evil, because this quality of evil is closely associated with the physical body. That's how it expresses itself.

So, the flesh, or the propensity to evil, contaminates man's whole moral nature. Christians are positionally released from the authority and the control of the flesh, but they are not released from its presence and its potential influence. That's why Paul used the phrase: "You *were* in the flesh. You are no longer under its domination, but you are not freed from its presence. That is one of the stupidest mistakes that Christians have made from time to time in Christian history – of thinking that they have been actually released from the presence of sin. You and I are never released from the presence of this propensity to evil, but we can be released from its domination. God says, "You are released." Now we can also be released in experience.

What Paul has shown us thus far is how God judicially has released us. You are no longer its domination. That's our positional sanctification. Now he's going to tell us how we can have experiential sanctification. We can be released. In our experience.

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A synonym for the word "flesh" is, of course, the word "carnal." We have this demonstrated to us a little later in Romans 8:5-8, where Paul says, "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. For to be carnally minded (or fleshly minded) is death. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind (the flesh mind) is enmity (hostile against God), for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The flesh is hostile to God. It is hostile to God's thinking. It is hostile to everything that God stands for, and it is certainly hostile to God's moral regulations.

**Jesus Christ as our First Husband**

So, while under the condemnation of God's moral law of absolute righteousness, a person is also under the control of the flesh. They go together. When you are under the condemnation of God's moral law, and when you are under His wrath, you are also under the control and the domination of the flesh. Faith in Jesus Christ as Savior joins a believer in marriage retroactively to Jesus Christ on the cross as He bore the wrath of God under the curse of God's moral law. When you trust in Christ as Savior, you are retroactively united to Jesus Christ in His position, under the wrath of God, and under the condemnation of the law. You are united to Him in a relationship which the Bible describes as marriage to the first husband. The death of Christ on the cross, under the condemnation of the law (the moral law of God, and the wrath of God) releases you as a person from your relationship to Jesus Christ under wrath. The husband is dead; the wife dies with Him; and, you, as a woman (in this comparison and this analogy) is released.

**Jesus Christ as our Second Husband**

Now you may be joined to a new husband, which is what immediately happens under the work of the Holy Spirit. You are united positionally with Christ as the new husband who is now in a resurrected position, which means total freedom from condemnation of God's moral law, and total freedom from God's wrath. Release from the husband under the curse of the law also releases the believer from God's moral law, and all of its condemnation. Release from God's law means release from sovereign authority of the flesh controlling your life. You are no longer in the flesh positionally. That is the great truth the Paul has pointed out here.

**Passion**

OK, all of that is in the first few words of Romans 7:5. Now we go on: "When we were in this condition of domination under the flesh (under these self-centered, animal, sensual, self-gratification condition, the sinful impulses which were by the law." Let's look at this expression, "the sinful impulses." The word "impulses" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the word "pathema." "Pathema" is a noun, and it refers to desires, good or bad, with no implication which one. It simply refers to desires, good or bad, which control the person. But in the New Testament, God the Holy Spirit makes a restrictive use of the word "pathema," and he always uses it in a bad sense. So, we know that any time we see the word "pathema," it is evil. That's the only way the Holy Spirit uses this word in the New Testament.

Consequently, we're talking about an ungoverned evil – something of a passive nature that just lies there, and it's ungoverned. You cannot control it. So, we translate it by the word "passion," and connoting bad passion. Again, our English word "passion" does not necessarily mean bad. You can say. "I have a passion for this; I have a passion for ice cream; or, I have a passion for football." That doesn't mean it's evil. But here we are using the word "passion" as the word "pathema" is used in New Testament, which means that it is evil.

**Sin**

Then, with it, he uses the word "sin." And this is the word "hamartia.” "Hamartia" is the word for evil in terms of missing the mark of God's standard of absolute righteousness. This word refers to individual acts of sin, or individual acts of evil. Actually, we should translate these two words as "sinful passions" or "the passions of the sins," because this actually is plural in the Greek: the passions of the sins; and, the various lusts of the various evil desires of the various acts of sin and of evil of which we are capable.

**All Human Beings have Sinful Desires**

No human being is free from these sinful desires. We have a corruption of nature, which we have inherited from Adam. Modern psychologists and psychiatrists have often resisted that idea – that we, as human beings, have a corruption of nature. They say, "No, that isn't true. Man is not inherently bad. Man's problem is the lack of good qualities. And if we can just instill good qualities in people, there won't be any trouble." But that is not true. It is not merely a lack of good qualities which you can cultivate that will resolve the problem that we have in the human race that expresses itself in all of these various evils. It is an actual personal contamination of nature that we're up against. It's a positive and an uncontrollable compulsion to moral evil.

I don't care how many times God says, "Thou shalt not," it will not neutralize this inherent evil desire that contaminates our nature. God can say, "Thou shalt not" all He wants, and you still will do it. You know it; I know it; and, the world knows it. So, there is something about us that's obviously corrupted, and it's obviously beyond our control. And no matter how we would determine that we are not going to express this kind of corruption, we still do. The moral corruption of man's nature results in the perversion of all the natural appetites of the body. And that's why the body becomes the agency of expression of this moral degeneracy. There's nothing wrong with these normal appetites of the body. But once this propensity to evil came into Adam, and thus into his progeny, every normal appetite of the body became perverted.

These normal and legitimate appetites of the human body are reduced by this quality (that Paul calls "the flesh") to animal sensuality. And the goal of the flesh is not the glory of God, but self-gratification. So, these sinful desires (these sinful passions – these "pathema hamartia" – these passions of sins) are expressed as a direct result of the fact that we have a corrupted nature.

I want to remind you (when I say that they express themselves through the body) that you have a brain. Most of you do. And that brain is part of your body. And that mind functions out of that brain. And that mind is also contaminated by the flesh – by this moral perversion.

So, Paul says, "When we were in this condition of domination and under the control of this quality called 'the flesh' (this natural propensity to evil – this animal sensuality), the sinful impulses (the sinful passions) which were by the law." And the word "which were" is actually just one word in Greek. It is what we call the definite article: the word "the." It looks like this in Greek: "ho," and it refers back to "passions." And actually what it is saying is (we have to translate this as) "which were aroused:" "These sinful passions which were aroused" is what is encased in this one little word "ho" ("the"): "Which were aroused by." And the word "by" is "dia." "Dia" is a preposition, and it is a word which indicates "agency."

So, we would translate it as: "Which were aroused by means of" what? What is it that arouses within you and me the desire for evil passions? The Greek Bible says it's the "nomos" (the law). It is the law – God's moral rules of absolute righteousness, however they're expressed – whether they're expressed as the Ten Commandments in the Mosaic Law, or whether they are expressed as a standard of conduct that some institution puts forth that reflects the moral standards or the Word of God. The word "law" is a general word for a code of rules that reflects God's standard of righteousness. The last thing on earth you and I would think of saying is that God's standards of absolute righteousness (God's guidelines to us as to how we should act for blessing) causes us to do evil things.

Now you might say your husband causes you do evil things; your boyfriend causes you to do evil things; your girlfriend causes you to do evil things; your wife causes you to do evil things; and, certainly your children cause you to do evil things. Everybody knows that. But you wouldn't say that the law causes you to do evil things, especially not the Mosaic Law. Paul says, "Wrong – especially the Mosaic Law. That's the worst one of the lot," because God created that one, and that one is the absolute perfect expression of what God's standard is – what God's character is. It reflects imperfectly. And that perfect reflection of God's character, in the form of the Mosaic Law, was one of the worst specific codes for drawing out sinful passions from within man.

**The Flesh is Hostile to God**

Paul's point is simply this. He has already told us that the flesh is enmity against God. And enmity means hostility. The flesh is hostile to God. And anything that God has to say, and anything that God stands for, this quality of moral evil within us is hostile toward it. So, the moment that God's standard of morality is expressed, it infuriates the flesh. It just makes it so mad.

This is easily seen in children. When children want to do something, and they are self-willed children (strong-willed children), whose wills have not been brought under control, and you tell them, "No, they cannot do that," then it infuriates them. It makes that kid as mad as a hornet's nest, because you have told him he can't do something that he wants to do. He maybe didn't even want to do it at the time. It was only after you told him he couldn't do that he says, "Hmm, now I want to do that." That is exactly what Paul is talking about here.

You have this cookie jar at home. You've just filled it with beautiful chocolate chip cookies. And you're going to go to the grocery store, and you tell your little angel that he is not to eat any of those cookies. Well, he just had a big lunch. He didn't want any cookies. He didn't even think about it. But the minute you told him, "I've got to go out here to the grocery store. I'll be right back. And I don't want you to touch those cookies. We're having those for a party tonight." You leave, and he looks at those cookies, and everything within him says, "I gotta have a cookie. I'm stuffed to the gills, but she told me I couldn't have a cookie. It's my right to have those cookies. I help my mother. I watched that little boy on television. When he helps his mother, she calls him over and says, 'Charlie, would you help me eat the chocolate chip cookies?' She rewards him. It's my right to have those cookies." And when you come home, he has a streak of chocolate across his upper lip where someday he will have a mustache. And the first thing he says, "I didn't eat any cookies." He compounds his corruption with lying as well. And if you hadn't told him not to eat the cookies, he probably wouldn't even have thought about it, and wanted to touch them.

That is exactly what is the point that Paul is making. This flesh within us is so hostile to God. It has such an inborn hatred of God that when God speaks, that flesh rises up and says, "Who do you think you are, God, to tell me what to do? And I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to do it." And we, as human beings, have often done this ourselves. The minute somebody tells us we can't do something, and we don't think they have a right, we say, "Who do you think you are – telling me I can do this or I can't do that?" And then we do what they tell us we can't do, just to show them that they have no right to speak to us, and who do they think they are?

Well, what do you think is doing that? Where is that coming from? That is not God the Holy Spirit speaking to you. That is this quality of the flesh: self-centered, sensual animal gratification. And the will, being hostile to God, will not resist the sinful passions that God says we are to desist from.

So, isn't this interesting? When God comes along with an expression of His divine holiness (His integrity), the flesh responds with sinful passions. That's what Paul the saying. God comes along with an expression of His divine holiness, and the response is not holiness in man. The response is sinful passions, to show God that He can't push us around.

This is the principle which is actually stated in Romans 7:8, which we'll get to a little later, but where Paul says: "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment." But sin; the evil propensity' the corrupt nature; and, the sin nature, taking occasion by the commandment (by a stated regulation of God's moral law – a "thou shalt not" from God: "Wrought in me all manner of coveting. For apart from the law, sin is dead."

Go back to Romans 7:7: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid? Nay, I had not known sin." I had not known the functioning of this natural corruption: "But by the law, for I had not known coveting except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" And then he goes on to say, "Because God said, 'Thou shalt not covet,' then I learned how the sin nature functions, because all of this nature within me rose up and said, 'I will covet. I don't care what you say.'"

So, this is the nature of this corruption. God's integrity does not create this sinful passion, but it simply arouses the rebellion. God's integrity arouses the rebellion of this sinful passion.

**Laws do not Prevent Violations**

So, it is false doctrine to say that the Mosaic Law kills or controls sinful passions of the flesh in a person. That's what people who want to be legalists try to tell us – that if we have these rules and regulations, and if we try to live up to the Ten Commandments and so on, that then we will be restricted from doing these sinful and evil things. That is wrong. Those codes only make us want to do those things the more. That was never the purpose of the law. The law was to point one to right conduct, and to state the penalty for its violation. The law was never intended to prevent a violation. And you and I know that laws do not prevent violations. Laws only specify what will be punished, and what the penalty will be. But laws themselves do not prevent violations.

In 1 Timothy 1:9-10, Paul says, "Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient; for the ungodly and for sinners; for the unholy and profane; for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers; for manslayers; for fornicators; for them that defile themselves with mankind; for kidnappers; for liars; for perjured persons; and, if there be any other kind that is contrary to sound doctrine." Paul says, "The law is designed to identify sin to the people who are guilty of these sins." That's what it's for. It's to identify that you are out of line with God's standard.

Then add to that Romans 13:3-4, which says, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will you then not be afraid of the power (that is, the police power)? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise of the same, for he is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid, for he bears not the sword (the capacity to punish) in vain, for he is the minister of God, and avenger to execute wrath upon him that does with evil."

Now what is that saying? That again is not saying that legal authority is going to prevent people from doing these things that are moral violations. It only says that moral authority will see that you're punished for it. Law specifies the evil, and the punishment that will come. Legal authorities enforce that. It is wrong to think that there are any rules, or any tender appeals to rules, that will cause a person to desist from indulging these sinful passions. A spirit of understanding or a tender appeal is not enough. Take a son or a daughter who has drifted off into evil ways. I don't care how tender the appeals are from friends and parents. If that person is obsessed with indulging the sinful passions of the flesh, those appeals will make no difference. They will not listen to their parents. They will not listen to any tender handed approach. They will be bound and determined to do that evil which they have set themselves upon.

So, the first point Paul makes here is this: In the old days, when we were unbelievers under the domination of the flesh, there were certain sinful impulses which were coming through our physical structure and through our minds. And these were being bestirred within us by the law of God, which was telling us that we should not do these things. So, teaching a code of morality does not reform the flesh, nor does it restrain the sinful passions. The law of God is given to bring the hideousness of evil into clear focus.

In Romans 7:13, Paul makes this clear when he says, "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But the sin nature, that it might appear sin (that it might appear evil), working death in me by that which is good (God's moral standard), that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." So, God, in tenderness, says, "Here's what you ought to be, and this is how you will be blessed." And then we rebel against that. That makes it very hideous. That is a kindness which is being slapped in the face, and that is hideous, and that is the flesh.

**In our Members**

Then Paul goes on to talk about the production of the flesh. This thing, these sinful impulses bestirred by God's restraining guidelines, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. The word "did work" is "energeo." "Energeo" means "to operate" or "to function." It's in the imperfect tense, which means it happens in the past, but repeatedly. The emphasis is upon the fact that this came again and again and again in the past. It's middle voice, which means that the sinful passions acted upon the unbeliever. You were struck back with these things. And it's indicative – of statement of fact. These sinful impulses, bestirred by the law, worked (functioned) within us in the past repeatedly. The word "in" is the preposition "en," indicating location – "in our (that is, we Christians') members.

We've had this word before: "melos." The word "melos" is a noun. Here it refers to the parts of the human body, including the brain, with its mentality. "Melos" has already been defined for us in Romans 6:12-13, where Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Neither yield you your members (the parts of your body) as instruments of unrighteousness unto the sin nature. But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members of your body as instruments of righteousness unto God."

So, Paul has already defined this word "melos," back here in Romans 6:12-13, as parts of the human body. The flesh expresses its sinful passions through the human body. The sinful passions of the mind, however, I again must point out to you, are a primary expression. The problem is that people, for some reason, do not consider them as being serious. And this is a sign of spiritual maturity, I'll tell you for sure. You need to come to the point where you recognize that evil can be of two types: that it is mental; and, that it is overt – it is internal; and, it is external. And these with God are on an equal plane. One is not higher than the other. Mental sin is just as heinous with God as overt sin. But that is not the way we think.

**Overt Adultery**

For example, take the case of sexual immorality – the case of fornication – the case of adultery. If it happens externally, people are horribly shocked. It is a terrible thing, and it is a very clear-cut violation of God's moral code. And it is certainly something that is one of these sinful passions that the flesh is constantly bestirring and promoting within us. And it wants to be expressed through the members of the physical body. An overt adultery is shocking, especially if it's somebody that you know, and somebody you didn't expect this. It's quite a shock. And there can often be a great a sense of indignation.

**Mental Adultery**

However, that same person, I'll wager, has been just as guilty in the sight of God on more than one occasion with a personal case of adultery that never expressed itself overtly. Maybe it is because he never had an opportunity to do it, but he was guilty of it mentally.

Now Jesus made this very clear. Matthew 5:28 says, "But I say unto you that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (in his mind). The heart is the mind. Now, where in that verse do you see that it says that if it's only mental adultery, God rates it as five points on a scale of ten; but, if it's overt adultery, then it's a full ten points bad? It's only five points bad if you think it, but it's ten points bad if you do it. Now this takes some spiritual maturity, doesn't it? You need to start training yourself up and saying, "Let's start thinking, not like Roman Catholics do, in terms of venial and mortal sins. Venial sins are just a five-point scale, but mortal sins are a full ten points." There's no such thing in the Word of God. And you and I shouldn't just be shocked by an overt case of sexual immorality. But we should also be just as shocked when we discover ourselves playing the same game in our minds. That's the point.

This evil propensity within you bestirs that. So, don't go playing high and mighty when some poor creature, in or out of the family of God, stumbles over his inward propensity to evil, and the flesh, for whatever reasons, was permitted, in some individual's case, to secure a dominant position of influence, so that the sinful passions ran wild, and without the control that Christians can exert over them. Don't get so high and mighty, and don't get so shocked over the matter, as though it was something that one simply cannot expect. If you think that, then you don't understand this sin nature.

**Christian Stability**

If you're going to be shocked over (which indeed is ground for being shocked), at least be consistent, as a mature believer, to be just as shocked over what you're discovering yourself doing in your own mental processes, and saying, "Yep, I can understand that. I do the same thing internally myself, that I see someone else has gone one step further and done overtly. Now that is Christian stability; that is Christian understanding; and, that is Christian not justifying of evil, but understanding how it functions, and recognizing and practicing Paul' principle of: "Let him who thinks that he stands to take heed lest he fall."

Do you know who's falling? The poor slob Christian who does not place a proper emphasis upon the seriousness of mental evil. That's the character that falls, because the devil knows how to manipulate that into overt expression.

The same thing is true with hatred and murder. If you were to have somebody that you knew; somebody that you esteemed; and, somebody that held a position of some responsibility or of moral influence, and you hear that this person has just murdered somebody – willful, cold-blooded, calculated, planned-ahead-of-time, and pulled-off murder. That's terrible. And you'd be horrified. Here's a leading member of the community, a person of influence, a person to be a moral example, and he has just planned and pulled off a murder. You're horrified.

However, 1 John 3:15 says, "Wait a minute. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer." Now, how many times have you hated somebody, and shown your hatred by the fact, for example, that you are not only overtly hostile to the person, but that you were cool, and you ignored them? I know why some of you don't talk to me sometime after the service. You can hate a person by openly letting them have it, or you can just isolate them, and freeze them out. But it's hatred, and you can call it anything you want to. And it has a variety of expressions. It's accompanied by other patterns of evil, like envy and jealousy, and so on.

The evil that we're talking about is that serious. So, just because you're not running around doing these terrible things that we call terrible, in their overt state, don't miss for one moment what Paul is trying to warn you of. There are passions of evil impulses within us, and we have them in us as Christians as well as the unbeliever. But thank God we've got a step up to be able to handle it, unless you get sloppy. Then that nature will continue to handle you.

Another outstanding one that strikes home to a lot of people is in Colossians 3. For example, you could secretly discovered that a spiritual leader was a worshiper of an idol. You suddenly visited his home, and you discovered that he had a little Buddha, and he had a little candle that was burning. And you used to notice this odor sometimes. Now you finally realize that it's incense burning, and you suddenly realize that this person is an idol worship. And he's a preacher, or he's a Sunday school teacher, and he worships on Sundays. That's terrible. I can't believe that. I'm horrified.

However, Paul says, "Just a minute, good Christian." Colossians 3:5 says, at the end of the verse, "And covetousness (that's one of the things that should mortify your members there again in your physical body) is greed." Then he puts in parentheses an explanation of what covetousness is with God. It's idolatry. Now, covetousness is something up here that you have in the head. So, here we have idolatry overtly. You're horrified by that. But here you have got covetousness in the form of greed for material things, so that that's your God that you're worshiping. And you don't mind that. You don't mind a little greed. And you don't mind finding that people are greedy, and you pass it off. But you should be as shocked when you discover that a person is greedy for material things as you would be to discover that they're worshiping some idol god of some kind.

You are shocked because, if you are an informed Christian, you know that behind every idol image is a demonic spirit. When they worship a figure of Buddha, or of any kind, they are worshiping a demonic spirit. This was true of the Ephesians in Paul's day had the silver images of Diana, the great goddess of the Greek and Roman world. Behind Diana was a demon God who was performing things for those worshipers.

So, it is a very shocking thing indeed. And Paul points out that you cannot be at the Lord's table (at the communion table) as a believer, and at the table of demons. You cannot eat both, because when you do (when you worship at the idols table), you are worshiping a demon who is behind that idol. So, it is a shocking thing to worship a demon. It's a very bad thing. It's a great moral violation. But God says that it's on an equal plane with the mental violation of covetousness – greed.

The book of James tells us that that's how that works. James 1:14-15: "But every man (every person) is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust" (his own sinful passions, which the flesh is there constantly promoting within him, and its hostility to God's moral rules. A person is tempted when he is drawn away of these sinful passions that are within him. And he's enticed. He's saying, "Come on. Come over here. Why don't you try this?" "Then, when lusts have conceived." How do you conceive? The only way you can conceive is by indulging. You have to implant a seed to conceive, and therefore you indulge the evil. You go positive toward the evil: "And when it is conceived, it brings forth an overt act of sin." It brings forth sin. It means an overt act.

Now, it began in an internal mental appeal. And then when that internal mental appeal received a positive response from you, for whatever reason, then it blossomed forth into life, and then had external expression. Then, when it is finished: "It brings forth death," which is, of course, what Paul is teaching us too here – that the ultimate end of anything that the flesh produces is summed up in the word "death."

So, whether it's mental or overt, with God, it is just as evil, and the results are just as devastating, because every overt act starts with the mental. And it is high time that fundamentalists, and people who believe the Bible, and who are New Testament Christians have gotten this straight once and for all – that the things they ought to be horrified by are the things that they think, not the things that are external. The external is down at the end of the line. If you don't think it, you don't do it. It has to begin, as James says, by an appeal from within that you accept, and that you go positive toward, and then, given opportunity, you'll express it overtly.

So, put all this in perspective, as you are horrified, and rightly so, by the hideous production of this moral propensity to evil which is within us. Put it in its proper perspective, and start with the mind. That's where it all begins. And its overt expressions just happens to be something that everybody finds out about. What everybody finds out that someone else has done externally, no one finds out that you have done the same thing internally.

Earlier in the book of Romans, Paul has put it just that way to the religious person. You remember that the religious person, with his self-righteousness – Paul says, "Oh, you are against idolatry? Do you worship idols? Greed. You are against adultery? Are you guilty of adultery in the mind?" And Paul pushed them to the corner of admitting to themselves that they did not live up to their own standards.

**Bear Fruit**

The result of this very terrible, Paul goes on to say: "The law which bestirred these sinful impulses did function in our bodily members, including the mind, to bring forth fruit." This is one word in Greek: "bring forth fruit." The Greek word is "karpophoreo." "Karpophoreo" means to bear fruit. Here it refers to "a lifestyle" or "a conduct; or "a pattern of conduct." The flesh in mankind is producing a fruit, and that fruit is sins and human good. This verb is in the aorist tense. It means that at the point of responding to the sin natures desires, we produce this fruit. It's active, which means that a person chooses to produce this evil fruit. And we're talking about the unbeliever. He is helpless in this, but he has made this choice by rejecting the gospel. It is infinitive, and infinitive tells us that this is the result of these sinful passions.

**Death**

"These are producing fruit unto" ("eis"). That indicates result – the result of evil, and that is "thanatos" (death). This is the word for separation from life. All the production of the flesh is related to death. The Greek has "*the* death" – to personify death so as to view it as a master which is served. "*The* death" is in contrast to "*the* God," which is in verse 4: "That we should bring forth unto *the* God as the master." And verse 5 says, "That we should bring forth, under the power of sin nature, to *the* death." Death there is the other master. A life lived under the sinful passions of the flesh is a life of death. Death leads to what? Death leads to decay and ashes. When we bury a person, we say, "Dust-to-dust; ashes-to-ashes;" because we know what's going to happen to this person. Death is decay. That's true of the most sophisticated and the most influential people in the world. They are a heap of ashes if they're dominated by the flesh. That's very important. They're a heap of ashes.

The decisions of the leaders of the world, and of the leaders of society, and of the decision-makers, because they're dominated by the flesh, are a heap of ashes. And life in the flesh has the hideous destiny of death. And the decisions of power-makers, because they are men in the flesh, lead to death.

We are living in the world today which is on the verge of leading to the physical death of millions of people. A little over 30 or 35 years ago, we did it in World War II. We went through motions as the result of the decisions of men of the flesh. Men of the flesh were making decisions, and the decisions of the men of the flesh led to death. They led to the actual death of many, many people in World War II. Who knows how many sit here, who may find that these same decision-makers, functioning on the flesh, are again going to bring death to some of us in terms of physical death?

Everything that the flesh produces has upon it the kiss of death. Consequently, it is a hideous thing for any Christian to be engaged in. It is filled with frustration, with defeat, with sorrows, and tears. That's all that comes from the flesh and its productivity. The fruit that it bears is a bitter fruit. Death, of course, is viewed here in its broadest sense: spiritual; physical; and, eternal.

Next time, we'll take up the sunshine side of the story, which is where we are now: life in the Spirit in verse 6.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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