



The Flesh

Keeping our old sin nature from temptation

Ephesians 2:1-3 – And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also **we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**

Who is Paul speaking to?

Those who have been saved by Christ.

What did Christ do?

He made us alive by giving us life, both physical and spiritual.

How did Paul describe our condition before we were saved?

Dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, conducting ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath.

What does it mean that we were dead in trespasses and sins?

We were spiritually dead, separated from God.

Why were we dead in trespasses and sins?

Because spiritual death is the consequence for remaining in the sin condition we were born into...

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
(Rom 3:23) – AND - *the wages of sin is death* (Rom 6:23)

Since we were born a sinner, does this mean we are not to blame for our being a sinner?

We were made in the image of God and thus have been blessed with the ability to chose. While we are not to blame for the condition we were born into, we are to blame for choosing to remain in that condition since we have the power to change.

What does it mean that we once walked according to the course of this world?

The course of this world is to be burned up. God will re-create heaven and earth. The course of this world is in

denial that God's judgment is coming. We were once in league with those who denied the truth about God and effectively chose to oppose Him and His will.

Since God will burn up this world, does this mean that everything in this world is bad?

No, when God created it, it was "*very good*," Genesis 1:31. But man's sin corrupted God's creation. There are still many good aspects to God's creation and these serve as a foreshadowing of the glorious new creation which is to come which will be free from the corruption of sin.

Who is the prince of the power of the air?

Satan

Why is Satan called the prince of the power of the air?

When I think of powerful air, I think of tornadoes and hurricanes. These are destructive forces that serve the interests of Satan who is called the destroyer (Rev 9:11 Greek Apollyon).

- The reason we have stormy weather is a consequence of the fall of man which was inspired by Satan.

The Bible refers to the earth's atmosphere as being the first heaven, the second heaven being the celestial realm, and the third heaven being the spiritual realm where God the Father resides. Satan currently has access both to heaven and earth, the first heaven represents that Satan goes and comes between heaven and earth.

Job 1:6-7 - Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Satan is not omnipotent, or omnipresent but he is the prince of powers, he has a lot of help from his fellow fallen angels that are demons. These fallen angels have power which occult practices tap into. All the occult and "new age" religions which see God as a force is really taping into the power of the air, Satan and his minions.

How is it that we once walked according to the prince of the power of the air?

Satan is the leader of all who oppose God and so when we were walking according to the course of this world, we were wittingly or unwittingly following the devil.

Who are the sons of disobedience?

All unsaved people.

Why the unsaved called the sons of disobedience?

Because since they followed Satan in their disobedience, they are more like him than God. As Jesus told the Pharisees:

John 8:44 – “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Contrast that with those who have received Christ as their Savior:

John 1:12 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

What is the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience?

It is that spirit of antichrist that is of the world that opposes God and His will. This is the only spirit people have who don't know the Lord...

I Jn 4:3 - and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

What did we once conduct our selves in?

Lusts of the flesh and of the mind.

What are lusts?

Desires for what we don't have

What is the flesh?

- We usually associate it with the body but it is better to think of it as that part of us that is in the world that will perish with the world when it is recreated. Not only does it refer to our mortal bodies but it also is our old sin nature which biases the decisions we make.
- It is that part of us that opposed to God.

What are the lusts of the flesh?

Lusts are unhealthy desire driven by our old sin nature.

Consider...

I Jn 2:15-17 - Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Notice how the lust of the flesh is associated with things in the world which are passing away.

What are the distinctions between the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?

- The lust of the flesh is the desire of the old sin nature.
- The lust of the eyes is what stimulates the desire of the old sin nature. Note that the Taliban treat the symptom of the problem rather than the root cause by requiring women to wear burkas... the problem is sin.
- The pride of life is the attitude that you are doing just fine on your own apart from God – that you got where you are by yourself with no thought of God.

Are lusts of the flesh and eyes sin or does it merely lead to sin if we allow it?

It is sin to allow yourself to linger on a sinful desire. Sinful thoughts can lead to a worse sin if thoughts are put into action (conducting yourself according to your lusts).

How do we conduct ourselves in the lusts of the flesh?

Allowing yourself to desire something to the point of losing control. Allowing yourself to be swayed by your emotions.

What does it mean that we once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh?

That we conducted our lives “*fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,*” that if it felt good for the moment, we did it.

What is wrong with doing what feels good for the moment?

Not everything that feels good for the moment is good for us in the long run. It is usually self-focused and lacks any eternal perspective.

Is there a distinction between fulfilling the desires of the flesh and fulfilling the desires of the mind?

The flesh is more what feels good, the mind is what we think would feel good without having experienced it.

What is wrath?

It is God's righteous indignation following His judgment that results in punishment.

What does it mean we were children of wrath?

God's righteous indignation will be poured out on Satan and those who followed him.

What does it mean we were by nature children of wrath?

We were born in a condition opposing God.

Why do we yield to temptation?

- That's the way we are, we were born with a sin nature.

- Because bad stuff looks good to us (our sense of what is good has been corrupted by sin).
- Because we want to be part of the world (it is too easy to align ourselves with what we can see rather than what we can not see).

Note: Wanting to be part of the world is where Israel (type of the believer) went wrong, wanting to be like the other nations and having a king... they are still trying to be like the other nations.

What is the lesson we as believers should learn from the biblical account of Israel's history?

Like Israel, we need to recognize that we are a special people set apart by God to serve Him and conduct ourselves accordingly.

Does our being born with a sin nature give us an excuse? Should we just say, "Hey that just the way I am, I can't help it?"

No way, God provided us with a solution.

How may we keep our flesh from interfering with God's blessings?

Recognize that God has already made us a new creation...
 2 Cor 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

God helps us discern what is right and wrong...
 Heb 5:14 - But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

God gives us the strength we need to stand up for what is right...
 Phil 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

What does Romans 13:14 have to say about how we should deal with lusts of the flesh?

Rom 13:14 - But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

- Turn to Jesus for help, strive to be like Him which means learn what He is like.
- Don't allow yourself to give in to any of our fleshly desires. The old adage, "give them an inch and they'll take a mile" applies here.

What are little indulgences that people tend to overlook as lusts of the flesh?

A second helping of cake, letting your mind linger on a sinful fantasy, watching a TV program that blasphemes God...

Why does giving in to little lusts cause problems for us?
 It establishes a pattern of giving into temptations which gets easier with time and can lead to greater indulgences.

What does Galatians 5:17 have to say about how we should deal with lusts of the flesh?

Gal 5:17 - For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Recognize that our old sin nature is still present in our mortal bodies even though we have been born again with a new nature. We need to be aware that these two natures war against each other with our old nature causing us to things our new Christ-like nature does not want to do.

How does recognizing this conflict within us help us to win the battle?

We know that if left on our own, we can be bullied into giving in so this should drive us to God for His help. God is able to deliver us from the influence of our old sin nature...

I Jn 4:4 - You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

What does 1 Peter 4:1-2 have to say about how we should deal with lusts of the flesh?

1 Pet 4:1-2 - Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

- Resisting temptation is a sacrifice. As Jesus made a sacrifice for us, our resisting temptation is recognizing what Jesus did for us and returning the favor in kind.
- We no longer have to live under bondage to the lusts of men but are now free to chose to live in the will of God. We now have the power to chose and we need to exercise that right.

What does 2 Peter 2:18-19 have to say about how we should deal with lusts of the flesh?

2 Pet 2:18-19 - For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

Recognize that the way of the world is attractive but it is a deception.

How does this passage describe your condition if you buy into the deception of being free apart from God?

As being in bondage to the person who deceived you. This is often the motivation of those who live a lie, to reinforce

the validity of their life-style by influencing others to follow them in it.

How does living a lie keep people in bondage?

You have no choice but to continue on the path you are on to attempt to validate your stance.

Where does true choice come from?

Knowing the truth and being able to apply this knowledge to your life.

God has made us in His image and given us the ability to chose. We are here being test as to how we will exercise that gift of choice. Will we chose to continue living a lie or chose to acknowledge the truth about our sin condition and the need for Him in our life? When we follow through by receiving Jesus into our lives as our Savior and Lord, we are truly free...

John 8:32 – “the truth shall make you free”