

## THE DANGER OF UNCLEAN SPIRITS PART FIVE

I'm going to continue with this series on the danger of unclean spirits. Last week we looked at how these spirits can use people to deceive us and keep us from obeying God. The two avenues we haven't looked at yet are circumstances and the flesh. Actually we've touched on the avenue of circumstances when looking at the other areas. Circumstances are really be part of the *people* avenue because many of the circumstances these spirits use or create to tempt us and get us off track are done through people. All kinds of circumstances can be used or created by unclean spirits in order to deceive or hinder us. If we can accept this reality, then God can begin to show us the difference between events and circumstances that are just a routine part of every day life in the flesh, and events and circumstances that are devices and wiles of the enemy.

Also, we have to keep in mind that God interacts with us in many of the *same* ways Satan does. The Holy Spirit will gives us *His* thoughts, and *His* desires, and *His* feelings throughout the day in order to guide us. The Spirit will use or create circumstances in our lives that are designed to help us do God's will, instead of hindering us from doing His will. The Spirit uses other people to encourage us in the Lord and help us find His will and do it. All the avenues Satan uses to deceive us, God uses to guide us—except one. The Lord doesn't use the "flesh" to guide us; and that's the avenue we are gong to look at tonight.

Unclean spirits use our flesh nature against us very efficiently. If you are a Christian, your flesh is like a "fifth column" in your life. It's an internal *accomplice* of an external enemy. Together, the flesh and unclean spirits team up to defeat us and make our lives useless to God's kingdom. Spirits use the flesh against us by stirring it up, even when we are trying to *deny* it. How much more do you think they are capable of using it against us when we aren't even trying to deny it? Every work or lust of the flesh can not only be stirred up and used against us by these spirits, they can also become a place where demonic strongholds are formed. A strong hold is the next stage after a foot hold has been established.

The first stage is when we listen to their thoughts, desires, or feelings and *act* upon them. Once we have *obeyed* an unclean spirit, we have given him a "place" in our lives. The next stage is when we give in to that same thought or desire or feeling, repeatedly. This creates a foot hold in our lives. At this point, our wills are becoming weak. If we are even trying to resist the thing that spirit is using to entrap us, the resistance is getting weaker. As we keep yielding to the spirit, the will becomes so weak it can no longer resist it and it establishes a strong hold. It's at this point that deliverance often becomes necessary because that's when we "have" a demon. The spirit is no longer tempting and harassing us from the outside. It now resides on the inside. But even then, deliverance is not a cure all, anymore than death to self is a cure all. It's not enough to cast that spirit out. The *will* of the person must be strengthened and they must die in that area so the Spirit of God can reign there. In other words, the person himself (or herself) must be *changed* in that area.

*When the **unclean spirit** is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, **he findeth it swept and garnished.** Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; **and they enter in, and dwell there:** and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

*Luke 11:23-26*

It's important that we understand the fact that being a Christian *does not* preclude enemy activity in our lives. Since much of Jesus' ministry involved casting unclean spirits out of His own people, and since much of the uncleanness that lingers in us is either caused by, or stirred up by unclean spirits, it's foolish to avoid the issue. Instead of hiding our heads in the sand, we should be asking God to illuminate our understanding so we can more fully cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He cleanses us.

Jesus' teaching in the above passage reveals that when spirits are cast out of people, they can and they *will* try to return. Therefore, deliverance *per say* isn't enough. Whenever we cast a spirit out of someone, under normal circumstances, additional work must be done or the deliverance simply won't last. There were a few occasions when Jesus cast a spirit out of someone and specifically commanded that spirit to *never* return. But I believe this is the exception rather than the rule because: (1) the normal condition is what Jesus is putting forth in *this* teaching, which is that spirits will always try to return; and (2) it's our free will choices that gives these spirits a place in our lives. When an unclean spirit has established a stronghold in someone, there must be a change in that person's life in order to stop the spirit from returning.

Notice that Jesus said the spirit came back and found his former home "swept and garnished". It was *clean* because the *unclean* spirit had been forced out. But it was also *empty*. So when it came back, it had no trouble re-entering the same area. Why couldn't the same power that drove the spirit out, keep it out? Why didn't God just automatically fill the area that housed that spirit with the life of Christ after it was cast out? Is the enemy's persistence stronger than God's power? There can be only one reason—that area had not been *delivered over to death* once the spirit was gone. It was not being crucified, so God's life could not fill it. If there is no change in the person's *personality*, the unclean spirit is not only able to return and take up residence again, it can take seven more spirits, even more wicked than himself, along with him.

Demon spirits are foreign entities. They were never intended to be part of us. Since they are intruders, they can be over-powered and driven out. But *we* cannot be driven out. We must die. We must surrender every aspect of our self-life to God. There are many things in our lives which "give place" to the enemy. There are things in our personalities—desires, goals, habits, ways of seeing and doing things—which give unclean spirits access to us. All these things must go to the cross. If we choose to hang on to some aspect of our self-life, God will respect our choice. But in so doing, we are providing these spirits a place to operate and possibly dwell.

This is why the message of death to self is so important. We are not fighting Satan alone. We are up against a *team*, and our self-life is part of the opposing team. When we save our self-life we are saving the devil's principle ally. Any area of that self-life we refuse to crucify becomes a *potential* weapon in his hand. Once we understand this truth, we begin to see our flesh in a whole new light. We realize that it's necessary to adopt the same ruthless attitude toward's our flesh that we have adopted towards the demonic kingdom. In order to defeat these spirits, we must *also* defeat many aspects of our own selves.

As I have said on many occasions, redemption is all about cleansing and perfecting us in the realm of the soul. Our spirits were redeemed and re-created when we were born again. Our bodies will be redeemed and re-created in the twinkling of an eye, at the resurrection. What is being redeemed and re-created now, in this life, is the soul. The soul is what makes you—you. The soul is what makes you an individual person. And right here I need to take a minute and clarify something that is very important, but which is often min-understood. Just the other week, I heard a Bible teacher say that the soul is part of our flesh nature. Not only is such a statement patently false, it's a very dangerous statement because it creates a distorted view of redemption in our minds.

Before we are saved, the soul is *married* to the flesh nature and is inseparable *from* the flesh nature. However, the soul is not, and never has been “part of the flesh”. The flesh is doomed for destruction. It cannot be saved or reformed in any degree. It must *cease* to exist. Therefore, it’s destined for complete annihilation. This is not true of the soul. The soul is what makes you—you. The soul is destined to be brought back into the image of God, just like it was originally, and that change is to take place in *this* life, not after we die and go to heaven.

This is what the Scripture is talking about when it says we are being “changed from glory to glory, into that same image” (*II. Cor. 3:18*). What’s being changed is you; your soul; your personality. It’s not talking about “Christ in you”. Christ in you *already* bears the image of God. When the Scripture talks about us being changed, it’s talking about our personalities, which is our *souls*. Our spirits have already been changed into His image—that’s why the Holy Spirit live in our spirits. Our bodies will be changed into His image at the resurrection. What’s being changed into the image of God from glory to glory is the *soul*. Step by step, the soul is being separated from, and delivered from, the flesh nature and all the unclean spirits that freely move through that nature.

If your soul was part of your flesh it would eventually be destroyed along with your flesh. Sorry Mr. Bible teacher—you’re wrong. God isn’t in the soul-*destroying* business. He’s in the soul-*restoring* business! If you believe the soul is “part of the flesh”, then it’s no wonder you think Christians will never actually be righteous, and that only “Christ in them” will ever be righteous. If you believe the soul is “part of the flesh”, then what you are saying is that eventually *the person* will be destroyed because *they* are part of the flesh. Your soul is you! If your soul is destroyed—which is exactly what will happen if the soul is part of the flesh—then *you* will be destroyed right along with it and the only thing that will be walking around inside *your* body will be “Christ”!

This confusion over the difference between the soul and the flesh is common. So let me give you an illustration to understand what God is really doing in you and me. I’m sure you have all seen a *wooden* floor. When I say “wooden” floor I don’t mean a floor covered with “plywood”. I mean a floor that has been laid with rows and rows of beautiful wooden boards or slats. Sometimes those kinds of floors contain hundreds of thin boards of cherry or some other beautiful kind of wood. When you look at one of those floors, it’s all smooth and shiny and perfectly level. There are no warps or dips or holes or ragged edges or unseemly cracks in it. Well, image that kind of a floor being your soul before sin entered it and trashed it.

Now image a floor just like that one, as far as the kind of wood and the number of slats used to lay it. But imagine that every one of those boards had been damaged and they had all kinds of warps in them; they had big knots in them; they had been discolored; they had holes in them; the edges of many of them had been mangled and so forth. Imagine what that floor would look like if the carpenters used those *deformed* boards to lay that floor. When it was done and you looked at it, you would see a floor that was very uneven, with dip and humps everywhere. You would see a floor with big cracks in it, due to the warping and mangling of the sides of the boards. You would see a floor that had clashing shades because of the discoloration. That floor would be just as unappealing to the eye as the other floor would be appealing to the eye.

The *first* floor is the human soul as God created it. The *second* floor is the human soul after Adam sinned. The flesh nature—which is actually nothing more than the nature of Satan himself—was transferred into the soul and turned the beautiful floor that God laid, into a floor that is ugly and grotesque. God’s answer to this dilemma is *not* to come in, rip out all the boards, and burn them. He is *recreating* every single board, piece by piece, so that in the end, it will be the same floor, but also a very different floor. You are not destined to be *replaced* by Christ, people. You are destined to have Christ formed *IN* you; in *your* personality; in *your* character.

The warped and damaged boards of the ugly floor represent areas in our lives that have *not* been crucified. Some of these areas we may be aware of, while others we are probably blind to. Some are there because of the environment we grew up in. Some are there because of *choices* we've made during our lives. Others we were born with—we had no choice. These areas may be desires that work in us and motivate us, which we can't lay down. They may be desires that we do not even realize exist yet. They may be attitudes or certain ways we have grown accustomed to viewing things.

They can be any number of emotional hang-ups or scars or pockets of bitterness and hatred. They can be patterns of thought. They can be all kinds of lusts—lust for power or dominance; lust for the good things in life; lust for food or sex or any number of physical pleasures. They could be spots of rebellion or disagreement with the Spirit. They can be reactions to what we have experienced as little children. They can be any number of spiritual, mental, emotional or physical problems that have been passed down through the family line. They can be areas of pride or vanity. They can be different fads that pride makes us susceptible to, such as a preoccupation with physical fitness, or with eating health foods, or with owning the latest fashion clothes.

Those boards can even be attributes of our personalities that we see as noble, or wise, or beautiful, and therefore have a hard time laying down. Whatever they are—and there are too many to enumerate—they serve as places unclean spirits can manipulate. They are nooks and crannies in the *soul* where unclean spirits can work and take up residence if possible. Of course, not every one of these areas will have a spirit moving there or dwelling there. But every one of them is a *potential* area of demonic influence and activity.

For example, a person who was raised in a home where constant bickering and violent arguments are the norm might be *predisposed* to violence himself. He may have a short fuse. This is a warp in the the human soul and it was instilled in that person's personality as a result of growing up in a home where fighting and bickering are constantly taking place. That warped board is part of the floor. It's a defiled aspect of the person's soul. Therefore, it *cannot* be cast out. However, an unclean spirit of violence or rage can latch onto that warp in the individual's character and start manifesting *its own* violent nature through it because it matches perfectly that particular pre-disposition. The result is, now the person has a two-fold problem.

Under normal circumstances he may be able to control his anger. But when the spirit of rage starts moving through that particular warp in his soul, his anger becomes *uncontrollable*. Unless he understands what is going on he will assume that *he* is just getting worse and worse; that his temper is just getting out of control. But in reality, his temper is being brought under the control of *another* temper which is even worse than his own. This kind of thing happens in many different areas of the soul which has been warped and damaged. Like in the second floor I described, every warp, every knot, every discoloration, every crack, every mangled edge is a possible place for demon activity and manifestation. Each problem we have in the flesh can be aggravated and made even worse by spirits that have the *same kind of nature*. Whenever this happens the problem is not just the flesh.

A two-fold problem demands a two-fold solution. Both the unclean spirit and the warp that provides him an opportunity to manifest must be dealt with. Since these spirits are intruders, they can be *forced* out. However, that warp in our soul, which has been produced by the flesh, is not a spirit. That warp is you and me. We can't cast ourselves out. We have to die. All the segments of our soul which have been warped and defiled by the flesh must be changed and made new. That's the only way to ensure that a spirit that matches those warps can no longer *freely* operate in those areas. And the only way to do this is to crucify that thing, whatever it is. There must be a change in the soul. There must be a change in the human personality.

This was the problem in the illustration Jesus gave. The spirit had been cast out of the man but the warp in the soul that allowed that spirit to move and work had not been dealt with. If the man would have allowed God to nail that particular thing to the Cross, the life of Christ would have filled that area and his personality would have been *changed*. When the unclean spirit tried to return, he would have not only found that part of the man's character swept and garnished, but also changed and filled with *another* kind of character.

This is why genuine deliverance ministries don't just go around casting spirits out of people. They know the person has to *change* or the spirits will come right back. Thus, they take whatever time is necessary to instruct the one who needs deliverance in the things that will help them *maintain* their freedom once they have been delivered. When you get right down to it, all true deliverance ends up being "self" deliverance. By that I mean, if a deliverance is going to last, the person who is being delivered must learn how to keep themselves free.

Self deliverance is the thing God has taught us and that's the kind of deliverance *we* focus on when people come to us for help. There have been times when just sharing the truth with a person has been enough to set them free because they themselves take up the battle. They allow God to show them how to deliver themselves out of the hand of the enemy. In the end, this is the way it must be for everybody. The responsibility for deliverance must ultimately rest on the individual. They have to learn how to recognize the spirit that's trying to bind them; they have to start fully engaging their wills *against* that spirit; and they have to learn how to call on the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus in the heat of the battle so they can gain the victory over it once and for all.

The battle against these spirits and our own flesh—and indeed the whole process of salvation in general—has very much to do with the *will*. People have no idea how important their wills are. If it weren't for our wills, we would all be totally possessed and insane by the time we were 20 years old. It's our will that keeps these unclean spirits from invading us en masse and taking *complete* control of us.

Why do you think it's possible for some people who are *unsaved* to live moral lives, while other people who are *unsaved* sink into all the depravity their fallen nature is capable of and end up demon possessed and in insane asylums? And why are there *unsaved* people in all kinds of stages in between these two extremes? Why aren't all the unsaved people in this world demon possessed? I mean, hey, the unsaved belong to Satan, don't they? They are living under his dominion and control, right? The Spirit of God does not lead or guide or help the unsaved; so why aren't they all demon possessed?

The reason is, even in their unsaved state, people have a will, and the strength or weakness of their wills determines how much of their souls demons can actually possess. Every moral standard or principle that is instilled in a *child* when they are growing up, strengthens their will against wickedness, and *that* strengthens them against invading spirits. This is true whether they are saved or not. The more *morality* that is instilled in a child as they grow up, the more will power they will have against wickedness; and the more will power they have against wickedness, the more power they will have to *resist* unclean spirits.

Of course, they won't have any idea they are resisting evil spirits when they resist things that are wicked, but it doesn't matter. That's precisely what they will be doing. Again, all this takes place *regardless* of whether or not a person has been born again. It's all a matter of how strong a person's will is. It's a matter of how much wickedness a person has the power to resist. We know that nobody who is unsaved can resist *all* sin. But they can certainly resist *some* sin. If they couldn't resist some sin, you can be sure every unsaved person on this planet would already be totally possessed and insane. Listen my friends, Satan and his demons don't ever "cut people

breaks”. They never have mercy on anyone. They take every inch of a person’s will and mind and emotions that they can possibly get. Any part of the human personality they don’t totally possess in an individual is only because there is a *will* that is refusing to give it to them. If you want to see just how important the human will is in resisting spirits, even in the unsaved, look at the story of the Gadarene demoniac:

*And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him **out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit**, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and **cutting himself with stones**. . .*

*. . . Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: **and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea**, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.*

*Mark 5:1-5 & 11-13*

Notice what kind of demons had invaded the man in this story. They were spirits of self-mutilation and self-destruction. They were also spirits of death because they wanted to be near dead bodies (the tombs). The will of that man, even in the state he was in, was still active enough to stop those demons from causing him to kill himself. You can be sure the demons in that guy knew Jesus was coming, long before the man himself did; and they knew Jesus could free him. I can assure you that if they could have forced that guy to kill himself before Jesus got to him, they would have done so. Something in that man was still struggling to survive, even though the spirits had gotten the better of him. His will had not completely given up. That’s why he could run to Jesus when he saw Him. Those demons couldn’t stop him. That guy was unsaved and basically possessed, yet he had enough *will* to want to be free; and because something in him still wanted to be set free, Jesus set Him free!

Then we read how those same spirits begged the Lord to send them into a heard of pigs instead of into “the deep”. Thus we see that a spirit would rather inhabit an animal than inhabit nothing at all. They are constantly seeking a living, breathing “host” to inhabit so they can manifest whatever *nature* they are, through that host. But you see, these were spirits of self-mutilation and self-destruction; so when they entered the pigs, the pigs immediately destroyed themselves! I know most people think the pigs ran off the cliff because of the “shock” of having demons enter them. They say the pigs just didn’t know how to handle a sudden invasion of demons like that and they got scared and confused and ran off a cliff. But I don’t believe that’s what happened at all. Those pigs had *no will* to resist those spirits and they were spirits of *self destruction*. Therefore, when the spirits entered them, they immediately destroyed themselves.

The man those spirits had been indwelling for all those months would have surely done the same thing the pigs did (when they originally entered him) if he wouldn’t have had a *will* that was still active. So you can see how important our wills are in the battle against sin in general, and against these spirits in particular.

A difference in *wills* is a big reason some Christians grow faster than others. You can place two people who are much alike in mental capabilities under the teaching of the same pastor and one will grow faster than the other. The one who grows faster will be the one who has a *stronger* will because he will use that will more than the other person does against the wickedness in the culture and in himself. The one who's will is stronger against wickedness will be able to put things to death in *his* own life easier than the other person will.

Exercising our wills against wickedness is a *vital* part of winning the battle—whether it be the evil of the world, the evil of our own flesh, or the evil of unclean spirits. There is a teaching going around that says we shouldn't engage our wills against sin because doing so constitutes “will worship” and is an attempt to establish our own righteousness. Brethren, I tell you in the name of Jesus Christ, that is a giant religious delusion! It comes straight from the lips of Satan. Unclean spirits love it when people's wills are weak against wickedness because that makes it all the easier for them to invade and possess people.

Why do you think the public schools in America indoctrinate kids from 5 years old and up into sex education, including homosexuality? It's because that kind of filth produces a high tolerance for wickedness in those kids. It's like hooking your kid on *pornography* on purpose! In fact, everything your child is taught in public school is *designed* to corrupt them morally so they have *no* will to resist wickedness.

Moreover, everything in our culture is geared toward this same goal. The music is lustful and Satanic. It glorifies every evil thing you can possibly imagine—and your kids pump that filth into their brains 24/7. The clothes they buy are designed to produce sexual lust. Movies, books, magazines, TV—everything around them in this culture is designed to produce *weak* wills when it comes to resisting evil, but *iron* wills when it comes to rebellion and sin. Everything they are taught and experience is designed to produce a will that *cannot* resist sin, but instead, seeks out every kind of sin imaginable. By the time they graduate from High School they are *reprobates*.

A weak will is the devil's playground. If anyone who is hearing my voice has been influenced by ministers who says engaging your will against sin equals will worship, or that it equals an attempt to establish your own righteousness, you need to renounce that lie and the seducing spirit that goes along with it because that whole idea surely comes from seducing spirits. It's a “doctrine of devils” and devils accompany it wherever it's taught. God wants every person to have a strong will against wickedness because without it you'll *never* defeat the evil in this world, the evil in yourself, or the wiles of your adversary.

*But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you.***

*Galatians 4:18-19*

Whenever we lay a portion of our own self-life down, the life of Christ which resides in our regenerated spirits, moves into that area of the soul and changes us. That is how we are changed from glory to glory. Paul said: “*I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you*”. He didn't say he was *travailing* until Christ is formed in “your body”. If he would have said that, then Christ would be replacing us. He said he was *travailing* until Christ is formed in “you”. Christ is going being formed *in* us; in our souls, in our personalities; not in our flesh; not in our bodies; but in us.

As we yield to the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit and lay down our self life, the life that resides in our spirit begins to penetrate our minds, our desires, and our emotions, bringing about a *transformation* of the entire personality. What's happening is, the Spirit is *recreating* each one of those damaged boards on that ugly floor. The more boards that are recreated, the less places unclean spirits have to *freely* move.

At this point, we need to take a few minutes and examine the meaning of the word “flesh” because there is still way too much confusion regarding the subject. We're talking about the flesh as *an avenue* through which unclean spirits freely move, and putting that flesh to death in order to reduce the level of influence they can have on us. But if our *definition* or understanding of “the flesh” is off base to begin with, then we will be defeated before we even start to fight.

Whenever people hear the term “flesh”, they usually think of the “lusts” of the flesh or the “works” of the flesh listed in Galatians six, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings. After listing those works, Paul said: “...*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*”. So if you are one who practices these works, then you really don't need to worry about the issue of demons because you're on your way to Hell, and it won't matter how many demons accompany you there! But that's beside the point. My point is, “the flesh” is a lot more than just the “works” listed in Galatians six.

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.***

*John 3:5-6*

Jesus said that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Thus, an eternal distinction is made between *the realm* of the flesh and *the realm* of the spirit. In other words, it's not just the evil “works” of the flesh that make up the flesh realm. It's mankind's entire *Adamic existence* that constitutes the flesh realm. The only things that are not part of the flesh *realm* are those things which have been born of the Spirit. Paul said much the same thing to the Corinthians:

***The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.***

*I. Corinthians 15:47-50*

The first man, Adam, is not only “of” the earth, he bears “the image” of the earthly man—which is the first creation man. The first creation man is everything people are *before* they are born of the Spirit. Some earthly men are evil and practice great wickedness. Some earthly men are very moral and do *not* practice great wickedness. Most unsaved people fall somewhere in between the very moral person and the very wicked person. Many earthly men have qualities that are noble and good, at least from a human standpoint.

Not every natural man is a murderer or a rapist. There is both *human* good and *human* evil in the first creation man. But whether the first creation man lives a good moral life or he becomes a filthy scum-bag, he is still part of the flesh realm. He is *not* spirit because he has not yet been “born of the Spirit”. Not only are his thoughts and desires the lusts of the flesh; not only are his works the works of the flesh; everything he does—whether it is humanly good or humanly evil—is of the flesh because it’s of the realm of the flesh. The first creation man belongs to the flesh realm, it’s that simple. This means that anyone—Christian or pagan, it doesn’t matter—who lives in the *first* creation is living in the *realm* of the flesh.

*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 is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

*Romans 8:5-7*

In this passage, Paul talks about those who are “after the flesh” and those who are “after the Spirit”. He talks about those who “mind the things of the flesh” and those who “mind the things of the Spirit”. Paul *isn’t* contrasting the saved with the unsaved. He’s not saying *Christians* are the ones who are “after the Spirit” and who “mind the things of the Spirit”; but it’s the *unsaved* who are “after the flesh” and who “mind the things of the flesh”. He’s talking about believers. Some believers are after the flesh and mind the things of the flesh. Some believers are after the Spirit and mind the things of the Spirit. So when Paul talks about minding the “*things*” of the flesh, he’s not necessarily talking about the “*works*” listed in Galatians chapter six.

The term “things of the flesh” is a lot more comprehensive. The things of the flesh are things of *this* life—this Adamic life. They may or may not be sin. They can just as easily be the things of the *natural* life. A minister I sometimes listen to breaks the *natural* life into five basic categories: eating, sleeping, working, playing and reproducing. This is the life of the natural man. This is the life of the Adamic man. This is the life of the man who is born of flesh and these are the things “the flesh” sets its mind on. And the fact is, we can do precisely the same thing as Christians. We can have our minds set on the things of this natural life, which is the flesh realm.

Later in this same chapter of Romans, Paul would go on to say: “*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*” (Rom. 8:13). If we, as born again believers, live after the flesh we will die spiritually. But again, “living after the flesh” is not necessarily a reference to the “works” in Galatians six. Living after the flesh can be as simple as minding the things the natural man minds—eating, sleeping, working, playing and reproducing.

Of course there is nothing inherently evil about the natural things of this life—unless we over-indulge in them. Then they can become sin. Eating can become gluttony; reproducing can become lust and so forth. But in and of themselves, eating, sleeping, working, playing and reproducing are not sins. However, they *are* part of life of the flesh realm and the flesh is *death*. The flesh contains no spiritual life. It’s part of the first creation, the one which is (spiritually) dead and cursed. The point is, both good and bad flesh produce spiritual death. So it’s not good enough to just make sure we are not walking after the “evil” things of the flesh. There’s more to the flesh realm than the lusts of the flesh and the works of the flesh in Galatians six. We must make sure we are not walking after *any* of “the things of the flesh”. We must be sure we are not walking according to the flesh realm, or being carnally minded, which is minding the things of the flesh realm.

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

*Colossians 3:1-2*

The issue for us as Christians is this: What are we minding? What are we seeking? Where are our affections? If our *affections* are focused on the things of this life, guess what? Our affections are “set on” the things of the flesh. If our *minds* are always thinking about the things of this life, guess what? We are “minding” the things of the flesh. If the things we are seeking have only to do with this life, guess what? We are “seeking” the things of the flesh. We are “after the flesh” because we “mind the things of the flesh”. We are “carnally minded” and we will end up *spiritually* dead if we don’t change.

This is why, when Christians ask dumb questions like—“*Is it a sin to go roller skating*”? Or “*Is it a sin to watch football or baseball*”? Or “*Is it as sin to watch clean movies*”?—it reveals that they don’t know what being a Christian is all about. The issue isn’t whether or not these things are sins. The issue is: *Are they part of the New Creation*? If you can understand that they are not part of the New Creation, then *why* would you want to waste the time you have been given to learn how to come forth in that New Creation, on things that are part of the Old Creation? Why would you waste your time on things which can’t possibly help you come forth in Christ? Why would you partake of things that not only can’t give you any spiritual life, but which produce spiritual death in you? Why would you want to walk after the flesh realm?

The first reason so many Christians walk after the flesh is because they have no idea what the flesh is. They think the flesh is just the “works” mentioned in Galatians six. The second reason they walk after the flesh is because they’re not being taught that the *whole* Old Creation is the flesh because it’s part of the *flesh realm*. Neither are they being taught that the time to learn how to walk in the New Creation is now. Because of all the errors they have been taught, they don’t think they have to learn to walk in the New Creation today. They assume that they will just automatically start walking in New Creation life by grace, after they die.

They are told by deluded pastors that they can’t actually walk in the New Creation today, so they might as well enjoy their Old Creation life as much as possible—but without going overboard and sinning, of course—and that’s exactly what most of them do. They end up minding the things of this natural life; they end up seeking the things of this natural life; and they end up setting their affections on the things of this natural life. In other words, they end up minding, seeking, and setting their affection on “the things of the flesh” and the result is exactly what the Bible warned us it would be—they are *dying spiritually* by the truck-loads!

And don’t assume it’s just false teachers inside the Church System, like Joel Osteen, who are encouraging God’s people to live in the *first* creation. Many of those who have become religious teachers outside the system do the same thing, but they do it under the guise of maintaining their spiritual “liberty”. One Bible teacher distorts the meaning of Paul when he talks about not judging weak brethren with regards to food and holy days.

*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest*

*another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

*Romans 14:1-6*

The “doubtful disputations” Paul is referring to in this teaching is very clearly said to be questions of food and holy days. These are specific issues regarding how a person *worships* God. Paul never meant us to take what he said here and try to turn it into spiritual principle that applies to anything and everything that isn’t specifically called “sin” in Scripture. In other words, if someone were to ask Paul if roller skating was acceptable, or if he considered it a sin, Paul wouldn’t refer that person to this passage. He wasn’t creating a special category for things that are not specifically forbidden, but which we can feel free to indulge in under the guise of maintaining our liberty. Remember, this is the same Paul who said: “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another*” (Gal. 5:13).

That is exactly what this Bible teacher is doing. He is using his liberty as an occasion for the flesh. And when he was called out regarding his hypocrisy, he cried “legalism” and gave an 45 minute discourse on how people are trying to “put him under law” and force him to conform to their religious standard. Then he used this passage to support his self justification. Based on what Paul said regarding foods and holy days, he said things that are not explicitly forbidden or called sin in the Bible—like playing cards, dancing or watching sports—fall under the “doubtful disputations” category. In his eagerness to justify his own flesh, he basically told his followers that unless the things they wanted to indulge in are explicitly forbidden by the Bible or called sin, every man is free to do what is right in his own eyes. That’s his idea of Christian liberty.

Therefore, when people ask him questions like: “is it a sin to go roller skating? Or is it a sin to watch football or baseball? Or is it as sin to watch clean movies—his answer will be: “*Receive not one another into doubtful disputations. If the Bible doesn’t forbid it or call it a sin, and if you feel like it’s ok to do it, then I certainly have no problem with it. I’m not going to judge what God is or isn’t allowing in your life*”. Well, an answer like that may sound very spiritual but it’s not. It’s flesh. If this Bible teacher really cared about the people he was teaching, he wouldn’t be telling them things like playing cards, dancing or watching sports fall fall under the category of “doubtful disputations” and therefore, nobody can really judge whether they are right or wrong. He would be telling them the truth! He would be telling them that even though these things may not be “sin”, they certainly aren’t spiritually profitable because they aren’t part of the New Creation (they are part of the *flesh* realm), and they have nothing to do with learning how to *walk* in that New Creation.

*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

*II. Corinthians 4:16-18*

Paul said we are to be looking at things which are not seen with the physical eyes, but at the things which can only be seen with the spiritual eyes. So the idea of “looking” at spiritual things (as opposed to natural things) can be added to the concepts of *seeking*, *minding*, and *setting our affections on* spiritual things. It is truly unfortunate that God’s people are being encouraged to live and walk in the first creation instead of what Paul said we should be doing. When we walk after the first creation we are walking after the *flesh* realm. That is and of itself is dangerous and spiritually deadly; but when you add the added problem of unclean spirits moving through the flesh, you have just magnified the problem.

When we understand that living in the *first* creation is the same as living in the flesh realm, and living in the flesh realm gives unclean spirits a place in our lives, we will begin to look at this *natural* life a little differently. Moreover, we will also begin to look at such things as playing cards, dancing, watching sports, and a hundred other things that people say are “neutral” differently too.

The flesh isn’t only bad things and evil works and lusts. The flesh includes this whole Adamic realm, and Jesus died on a Cross to deliver us from this realm of the flesh just as he died to deliver us from sin. Now you know why so many of today’s Christians who are not big sinners and who seem to be good people, never seem to grow or mature spiritually. They have been deceived into thinking that the flesh is just the sins of the flesh. They don’t understand that the flesh includes the whole Adamic creation. They don’t realize the flesh includes this *natural* life. So they walk after the things of the flesh without realizing it and they never grow up in Christ.

Paul said, if we live after the flesh we will die. He could have just as easily said, if we live after the natural things of this life—eating, sleeping, working, playing and reproducing—we will die because it the same thing. If we want to grow spiritually and be free from our own sin and the influence of unclean spirits, we must get our minds off of this natural life as much as possible. The natural life is part of the flesh realm, people! It’s part of the first creation. We have to set our affections on things ABOVE. We have to be looking at things that are UNSEEN. We have to start minding the things of the SPIRIT. If we don’t we will be *easy* pray for these spirits who are seeking to deceive us, hinders us, and eventually destroy us.