

The Wife and the Handmaid

Our Greatest Enemy

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4).

If you ask the average Christian, “What is the worst enemy of the Christian life?” the most common answer will be Satan. I do not want to diminish the fact that Satan is a strong adversary to the Church and the individual Christian, but he is not your greatest enemy. In these verses, Paul reveals your worst enemy. Your worst enemy is *you!* Each day you live, you carry your worst enemy around with you. Satan can momentarily be in a separate location from you. It is possible that, for the moment, there are no demons trying to influence your life. It is also possible to remove yourself from the influence of the world (television, movies, magazines, etc.) and be unaffected by it. But you can *never* escape yourself.

The enemy within is called *the FLESH*. It is called *the flesh* because it is located in the body. This nature is described in Romans 6:6 as “the body of sin”. It is found later in verses 12 and 13 where Paul told us not to “*let sin reign in your mortal body, neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness.*” Romans 7:8, 23, 24, Colossians 3:4, and James 4:1 also tell us that the nature of the flesh is located in our physical body.

We have possessed this nature since we were born into the earth and will not lose it until we die, or the rapture of the Church occurs. Our body does not change at the new birth; it travels with us from our old life into the new. Paul discovered this in the previous three chapters of Romans, chapters five through seven. Paul’s desire was to serve the Lord, but he found a problem present; his flesh tried to block his spiritual progress.

Paul's Dilemma

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:21-23)

Paul was just admitting that he was human, like you and me. He was being honest by telling us there were days he faced difficulty in his walk with God. Along with his desire to serve God was a desire to solve his own problems. He realized he had a problem, but did not realize he had an answer until he came to chapter eight.

A Higher Law

We may have the nature of the flesh, but we also have the Holy Spirit living in us. Paul lets us in on a revelation: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death (the nature of the flesh). The flesh is our enemy, but we have a greater ally or comrade in the Holy Spirit. By trusting in the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, we are freed from the power and control of the flesh.

The Holy Spirit does not remove the nature of the flesh, but overrides its hold on our life. The flesh still exists, but it is powerless to control our life when we are under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

An airplane does not eliminate gravity, but can override it. With the combined law of thrust and lift, the airplane rises above the law of gravity and flies through the air. Gravity has not been eliminated. If you turn off the airplane engine, you will discover the law of gravity is still at work. The airplane will begin to come down.

The same is true with the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. When we walk by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit we do not eliminate the power of the nature of the flesh, we override it. The greater power has set us free from the lesser power. If we stop walking in the Spirit, we are overtaken again by the power of the flesh, the law of sin and death.

The Great Pretender

The flesh tries to imitate the Spirit. The nature of the flesh will tell you it can produce answers for you just as the Holy Spirit can. Yet, it is impossible for the flesh to produce spiritual answers. Your need of peace, joy, and love are all spiritual problems. They can only be solved by the production of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Jesus told Nicodemus that the new birth had to come from the Holy Spirit. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6). Flesh can only produce flesh and Spirit can only produce spirit. Jesus repeated the law set forth in Genesis that everything produces after its own kind (Genesis 1:12). Since the flesh is temporary and will die one day, it can only produce answers that will die also. Because the Spirit is eternal, it produces answers that are eternal. This is why Paul said, *“...to be carnally (fleshly) minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6).

The flesh may produce an answer that looks like an answer from the Spirit, but the result is only temporary, it will die.

Lost in Space

Do you remember the television series, *Lost in Space*? I watched it as a young person many years ago. One episode stayed with me through the years, which helps us to understand what Paul is teaching.

Dr. Smith left his water canteen by a large flower one day and went back to the spaceship. He later remembered where he had left it and when he went back to find it, there were two canteens. He realized the flower had some kind of reproductive power, so he left his phaser gun beside the flower. Sure enough, when he came back a few hours later, there were two phaser guns! He brought the flower back to the spaceship and began to put many items beside it. Day after day, each item from the ship placed next to the plant would be reproduced.

But within a few days, every duplicate item began to fall apart. When examined, they were found not to be genuine, but flowers that merely looked like the real canteens or phaser guns. They finally figured it out; a flower can only produce a flower.

The flesh can only produce flesh. It may look like joy, but it is only temporary happiness. It may appear to be love, but it is only temporary affection or lust. It may appear to be patience, but it is only tolerance. Real joy, love, and patience are spiritual products and can only come from the Holy Spirit inside of us. The eternal Holy Spirit produces eternal answers.

Sarah and Hagar

Galatians 4:22-24 gives us perhaps, the best example. *“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory.”*

Paul called this story an *allegory* or an *analogy*. Although Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar have been dead for thousands of years, their story is still an example to us today of learning to walk in the Spirit.

Abraham brought Hagar back with him from Egypt when he tried to run away to that country to escape the famine in Canaan. Instead of trusting in God and the promises given, Abraham tried to solve his own problems and created a worse one. He almost did not make it out of Egypt after he lied to the Pharaoh about his wife Sarah. He told the king she was his sister and was available for the king to take into his harem. God had to give the king a dream and warn him about Sarah. When Abraham left Egypt, he took a maiden with him to take care of his home.

Quite a period of time passed and it looked like the promise of God was not going to pass for Abraham and Sarah to have a son. Abraham had been restored by God's power and could have a child, but Sarah was still barren. Hagar walked through the house each day and the temptation arose in Abraham and Sarah for the son to

come through Hagar. After all, a son is a son! Yet, they had forgotten God's promise that in Isaac, their seed would be called. Through Sarah and Isaac, all nations would be blessed.

When Abraham had a son through the bondmaid, all hell broke loose in the home! Abraham definitely had a son, but not the son of promise. This son may have looked like any other boy, but he was not God's spiritual answer. The flesh could only imitate the promise of the Spirit. Ishmael produced a natural race of people, the Arabs. They will one day be gone. Isaac, who eventually came through Sarah, produced a spiritual race of believers in the earth through his eventual offspring, *the SEED*, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's compare Sarah and Hagar:

1. *Sarah was from Canaan. Hagar was from Egypt.* Sarah represents the recreated spirit inside of us. Hagar represents the flesh, which came over from our old life.
2. *Both women lived in the same tent with Abraham.* Both had rights to remain in the home with Abraham. The flesh cannot be evicted until the Lord comes for the Church or the believer dies. Although we will have our spirit forever, as long as we are in the earth, we have both the spirit and the flesh abiding in our lives.
3. *Sarah was the wife. Hagar was the servant, the maid.* Abraham had a covenant relationship with Sarah, but not with Hagar. He was married to one and the master of the other. Although both had rights to be in the home, their relationship with Abraham was different.
4. *When the slave was placed on the level of the wife, all the problems began.* Imagine me telling my wife one day, "I slept with the maid last night." After I got up from the floor, and my swollen eyes opened, we might try to work out our problem. Imagine me telling my wife one month later, "the maid is pregnant with my child". All of this would be in

order. Both women had a right to live in the same tent with Abraham, but both were not on the same level of relationship. So it is with your flesh. When you make decisions for your life through your flesh and disregard your spirit and the leading of God, you raise the flesh to the same level as the Spirit. You do not have a covenant relationship with your flesh as you do with your spirit.

5. *Ishmael was a substitute for Isaac.* Isaac was born of promise by Sarah, Abraham's wife, God's choice. Ishmael began a race known as the Arabs. Even though they are still around today, they are only a natural race. Isaac's seed included the Lord Jesus and all those who have accepted the Lord as Savior. This is a spiritual race that will last throughout all eternity. If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are Abraham's seed and blessed through Isaac. *"In Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (Genesis 21:12).

Bob Yandian

© 2001 by Bob Yandian Ministries. Reproduction of written text in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. All Rights Reserved.