

# DEATH TO THE DEEDS OF THE BODY

(Romans 8:8-13)

## INTRODUCTION

*Donald Ballar, in a Reader's Digest, wrote of this story of an instructor of student truck drivers. The instructor gave this scenario to his class. "You are in an 18-wheeler with a heavy load, barreling down a mountainous two-lane highway. Ed, your co-driver, is asleep. There are six trucks behind you, and as you come over the top of a hill, one of the trucks behind you pulls out into the left lane to pass. As he comes along side you, you see several trucks coming from the opposite direction moving towards you. One of the trucks coming at you is in your lane because it is passing an oncoming truck. There are five trucks behind and one beside you. There are several trucks in front of you and the two out front have both lanes blocked. The question is, 'What will you do?'*

*'The answer is simple' a student called out. 'I would wake up Ed.' 'Why would you do that?' asked the instructor. The student replied with, 'Because, Ed ain't never seen a truck wreck like this before!'*

I would propose to you that Christians need not wait for a potential wreck with the flesh before they try to prevent a tragedy from happening. God's Word has preventative measures that will keep the child of God from having a tragic accident with his most aggressive enemy, "The Flesh."

Some view the Christian life as a life of ease and trouble-free, but in reality it is warfare. The Christian life is not just following the 'meek and mild' Jesus, but it is putting on the armor of God and fighting against our common enemy. The Bible speaks of three great enemies of our souls: the world, the flesh and the devil.

John tells us about the world in I John 2:15, **"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."** We fight the world by loving God more than the ways of the world.

Paul tells us how to fight the devil in Ephesians 6:11, **"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."** We fight the devil by truth and resistance.

In this passage this morning Paul tells us how to fight the flesh, how to overcome the flesh by the Holy Spirit. We are to **"put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit."**

This is what I want to preach on this morning – putting to death the deeds of the body. Let’s talk about it.

## **KNOW YOUR ENEMY**

*” Before a battle can be won, there must be the recognition of an enemy.”*  
Paul is dealing with the flesh in our Romans’ passage, so let’s talk about how to recognize the flesh. What is the flesh? How do you recognize the flesh?

The flesh is not our physical body, but it is related to our physical body. The flesh is our fallen human nature refusing to be constrained by God’s control in our life. The flesh is the desires, the aspirations, the motivations, the deeds of the body done in defiance of God’s law. It is the “natural man” as Paul calls it in I Corinthians 2. It is the “carnal man” as he calls it in I Corinthians 3. It is the part of man that the principle of indwelling sin controls as described in Romans 7. This is the flesh and its deeds must be put to death.

How do you recognize the flesh?

As a Christian we recognize the flesh by the conflict we experience when we do the things we know that we shouldn’t or when we don’t do the things we know we should. Paul described this conflict on chapter 7:15-21. This conflict is also highlighted in Galatians 5:17:

**(Gal 5:17 NKJV) 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.**

The flesh is one of your most formidable foes in living the Christian life. It is your own desires, aspirations, motivations, and deeds done which are clearly in conflict with how God wants you to live. You recognize the flesh by the inner conflict you have with doing God’s will.

## **THE FLESH CAN BE OVERCOME**

But we can overcome the flesh. We can have victory over our flesh. That victory comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Christian is to make much of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father given as a gift to those who believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is your secret weapon against the flesh. Someone has rightly said:

*“The man in Christ is not in the flesh, but it is in him, and the problem of salvation is not how to transmute the flesh into something good, but how*

*live with this devilish thing every day without being overcome by it. The presence of the Spirit solves the problem.” (James m. Stifler)*

The presence of the Holy Spirit makes a person, not in the flesh but in the Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life makes the person a spiritual person as Paul would say in I Corinthians.

All believers have the Holy Spirit. Listen to Paul’s argument in verses 9:

**{9} But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**

You have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, if you belong to Jesus Christ! It is not a matter that some Christians have the Spirit and others don’t. It is a matter of if you belong to Jesus you have the Spirit of Christ. To belong to Jesus Christ is to be his sheep. You know if you are his sheep if you hear His voice and follow Him.

**(John 10:27-28 NKJV) "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. {28} "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."**

God has given each one of us the gift of the Holy Spirit, now we must learn how to walk in the Spirit, to walk after the Spirit, to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit . Another good quote from someone is, “Living in the flesh is deadly, but being in the Spirit is a gift, although not without an obligation.”

What is our obligation?

## **PUTTING TO DEATH THE DEEDS OF THE BODY**

The obligation is clear according to verse 13:

**{13} For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

You are put to death the deeds of the body. Now this is not talking about mutilating the physical body like some have done. I had a friend who was at one time a missionary to the Philippians and he witnessed the practice of ‘self-flogging’ during Holy Week. As described by a website:

***Self Flogging** or Self Flagellation is ritually performed in the Philippines during Holy Week (on Good Friday, before Easter). Young men*

*would walk down the streets shirtless, whipping their own backs till blood is drawn and flesh is torn. Self flogging is performed to punish themselves for their own sins committed during the year. Whips used have glass or bamboo tips to ensure each stroke draws blood.*

This is not what is meant by ‘putting to death the deeds of the body.’ Physical self-flogging will not drive out the flesh, nor make you more holy. Only the indwelling Holy Spirit can make you more holy and only by the Spirit can you put to death the deeds of the body.

The ‘deeds of the body’ are those deeds which are the product of following the impulses, the aspirations, the desires of our fallen nature which are contrary to God’s desires for us. You put to death those deeds by cutting off the desire before it becomes a deed. You do this by changing your focus. Interestingly enough James describes this process

**(James 1:14-15 NKJV) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. {15} Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

You put to death the deeds of the body by following the desires of the Spirit rather than the desires of your flesh. You allow the Spirit to have control of your actions, not the flesh. You are then “led by the Spirit” as Paul will say in 8:14.

To give an old well-used illustration let me tell you about the native American who learned the secret of how to walk in the Spirit.

*An American Indian was giving his testimony in a gathering of Christian members of his tribe. He told of his conversion and of how in the beginning he felt as though he would never sin again. He was so happy in knowing his Savior. But, he explained, as time went on he became conscious of an inward conflict, which he described somewhat as follows:*

*“It seems my brothers, that I have two dogs fighting in my heart: one is a very good dog, a beautiful white dog, and he is always watching out for my best interests. The other is a very bad dog, a black dog, which is always trying to destroy the things that I want to see built up. These dogs give me a lot of trouble because they are always quarreling and fighting with each other.”*

*One of his hearers looked up and asked, “Which one wins?” The other instantly replied, “Whichever one I say ‘Sic ‘im’ to.”*

You put to death the deeds of the body by telling the Holy Spirit to “sic ‘im” when you begin having the urge to do something contrary to God’s will, which you know in your heart you don’t want to do.

## **MORE INSIGHTS ON THE SPIRIT**

This Romans’ passage has other insights and emphasis of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Verse 10 speaks of the Spirit being our life.

**(Rom 8:10 NKJV) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**

Our bodies are dead because of sin. That is our physical bodies will die. We all know this. Death is the results of sin. Death of our bodies was not God’s original design. We were meant to live forever. But death entered into the world through sin.

But God’s overcame that curse by giving us the Holy Spirit, who brings us life. “The Spirit is life because of righteousness.” The Holy Spirit gives us life through the righteousness of Christ. The Spirit does this in two ways. The Spirit gives us life inwardly through the new birth and the Spirit will give life to our bodies through the resurrection. This is the teaching of verse 11:

**(Rom 8:11 NKJV) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

Since the Spirit is life itself for us, then we are not indebted to the flesh to live according to the flesh, but we are indebted to the Spirit to live according to the Spirit.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our problem is that we can still be distracted from living according to the Spirit. Someone has illustrated it this way:

*The purifying work of the Holy Spirit is like the mother who was getting her four year old boy ready for church. She gave him a bath and got him all dressed up. She set him in front of the TV while she got herself ready and told him to keep his eyes focused on the TV.*

*The little boy became distracted by something outside and he went out to investigate it. In the process he fell down in the mud and wiped off his hands on the front of his pants. He scratches his nose and brushed the hair out of his eyes. In just a few seconds he found himself covered in mud from the top of his head to his toes.*

*Thinking nothing of his condition the dirty little boy went back and sat in front of the TV. Needless to say, mom was hurt and disappointed over the condition of her little boy. She informed him of his dirty condition and chastised him for his self-centeredness and for acting on his own accord. After his apology, mother forgave him and then got him cleaned up for church.*

It is the same with the child of God. Even though his previous sins were washed cleaned by the blood of Christ, his sinful nature has a tendency to distract him from what he is supposed to be doing. Thus, he finds himself soiled once again.

So our obligation is to keep our minds on the things of the Spirit and not on the things of the flesh. When we see that we are tempted to carry out the deeds of the flesh, we are to put to death those deeds by putting our focus on the things of the Spirit.

The Christian life is to be a Spirit-filled life, a Spirit-focused life.

Amen? Amen!