

The Cross in My Life - Part 4

by Derek Prince

The flesh is an enemy of God that must be dealt with through the cross, and we must choose between being in the world or being in the church, but not both.

Duration: 28:09

Scripture: Romans 8:7

Topics: "Crucifying The Flesh", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

This sermon delves into the opposition between the fleshly nature and the will of God, emphasizing the need to deal with the flesh in order to please God. It explores the struggles individuals face in overcoming their fleshly desires and the importance of crucifying the flesh to live in alignment with God's will. The sermon also highlights the dangers of being entangled with the world and the necessity of choosing to align with God's will to experience true deliverance.

Transcript

The Way of God You see, this nature that we're talking about is in direct opposition to the will and the way of God. Romans chapter 8, verses 7 and 8, Paul says the carnal mind--now the word carnal is the same as fleshly, it's just a different word derived from a Latin root. The fleshly mind is enmity against God.

For it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Those who are controlled by their fleshly nature cannot please God.

There is no way you can do it. You can try as hard as you will, you can be as religious as you please, but you cannot do it. And then in Galatians again, 5 and 17, Paul brings out the same thought.

Galatians 5, 17, For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, capital S, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to another. Your natural fleshly desires are contrary to the way and the will of the Spirit of God. So that you do not do the things that you wish.

Maybe that's a revelation to some of you. You set out with all sorts of good intentions, you consecrate yourself, you go forward at the altar of the church, you pray a nice prayer, you say that's it. And about a month later you say, How could I ever have got so far away from what I intended to be and do? The answer is the flesh lusts against the Spirit.

You have in you an enemy of God, and that enemy has to be dealt with. You cannot lead the Christian life successfully until the flesh has been dealt with in you. Paul had that problem.

Perhaps that will encourage you. It's not a problem just a few people have, it's universal. You need to read Romans chapter 7 right through sometime and see Paul's personal struggles against the flesh.

My observation is the most dedicated Christians and the ones whom God intends to use the most are the ones that have the main struggles. You see, Pentecostals used to have the attitude, I think it's strange, I've been a Pentecostal for forty-eight years. The attitude used to be you get saved, baptized in water, baptized in the Spirit, speak in tongues and you have no more problems.

How many of you know it doesn't work that way? Wish it did. I know it doesn't. Why? Because it didn't work with me.

And furthermore, I pastored Pentecostals long enough to find out it isn't like that. The reason is the flesh. It's an enemy.

It's an enemy of God. Anyhow, listen to what Paul says about his own experience in Romans 7.15. For what I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice.

But what I hate, that I do. None of you have ever had that experience. Paul was unique, was he or was he? No, it's true of all of us.

None of us can point a finger at somebody else and say, There you are, that's you. We need to look in the mirror and say, There you are, that's me. But Paul explains the reason.

The reason is the fleshly nature in each one of us. It is not subject to God's law, nor can be. I would basically say religion, as opposed to salvation, is a system of trying to make the flesh behave.

Makes it religious, but it doesn't enable it to please God. A lot of religious people are just suppressing the flesh. They're making it conform outwardly but the inward attitude isn't there.

In Galatians 5, you notice most of this comes from Galatians. What was the problem of the Galatians? Carnality and legalism. So you see, Paul is dealing with both.

And he says in Galatians 5.19. Now the works of the flesh are evident. There's a slight difference in the text. Some say one thing, some another, but the difference is not significant.

The works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, drunkenness, revelries, and the like. Now if you analyze the works of the flesh, they fall into four categories, which I'll briefly mention. First of all, sexual immorality.

That is, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness. Now most people think that's what the works of the flesh are. They don't think that there's any other area that needs to be dealt with.

But actually, that's by no means the greatest problem. The next area is the occult. Idolatry and sorcery, or the old King James's witchcraft.

That's a work of the flesh. But when the flesh indulges in it, it becomes demonic, you understand. But the initial motivation for idolatry and witchcraft is the fleshly nature.

Witchcraft is humanity's way of controlling people and getting them to do what you want. Any attempt to control others is the beginning of witchcraft. And when you go much further along that, it becomes demonic.

So that's the second category. Now the third category, which is much the largest, is all wrong attitudes and relationships. And it lists here, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy.

Now those are all different descriptions of wrong attitudes and wrong relationships. It's much the largest area of the flesh. So those are just as much sins of the flesh as adultery or fornication.

But you see, basically speaking, religious people condone those, whereas they're strictly against sexual immorality. And then the final is what I call sensual self-indulgence. Drunkenness, revelries, and the like.

But they're all different expressions of our fleshly nature. They all have to be dealt with. First Corinthians chapter 3, Paul pinpoints the cause of divisions in the church.

First Corinthians chapter 3. If you were asked to say in one phrase, what is the cause of all division in the body of Christ, would you have an answer? I believe the answer is very clear. It's the flesh. All divisions go back to the carnal nature.

And until that's dealt with, we'll always have division in the body. First Corinthians chapter 3, verses 3 and 4, Paul is writing to the Corinthian Christians. He says, You are still carnal.

How does he know? For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal, and behaving like mere men? The mere fact that there's divisions and strife is sufficient evidence that we're carnal. You see that? Then Paul says, How do I know it? Well, some of you say, I am of Paul, and others, I am of Apollos. As long as you are divided by following human leaders rather than Christ, you're carnal.

You see, I've heard theologians from the old-time denomination say the Corinthian Christians were carnal because they spoke so much in tongues. That is not what Paul says. He says you're carnal because you're following human leaders rather than following Christ.

He didn't say it's all right to be following Paul, but not all right to be following Apollos. He said whoever you follow. So you see, people who say I am of Luther, or I am of Wesley, or I am of Calvin, if they make that their first commitment, come under this category.

A lot of people think theology is the cause of division. It's not. It's carnality.

Of course a lot of theology is used carnally. But the root cause of division in the body of Christ is the flesh. And the only solution is the cross.

We need to deal with that, each one in our own situation. Now, in Romans 6, verse 6, a passage that we continually go back to, Paul states that God has provided the solution. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

So that's God's provision, execution. But God has made the provision, we must apply it. You understand? Christ has done His part, we have to add ours.

There's a passage in 1 Peter which has spoken to me so powerfully. 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind. In other words, be prepared for the same thing.

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. Now that's a rather surprising statement.

He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. For a long while I wondered about that because I thought to myself, well, Jesus suffered on our behalf, so why do we have to suffer? But I think God made it clear to me. Jesus has made the provision, we have to apply it.

Our old man was crucified, that's happened. But Galatians 5.24 says those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh. Who does it there? Not God, but we.

And crucifixion, any way you look at it, is painful. So what do we have to do? We have to crucify our fleshly nature. We have to take those evil, rebellious desires and attitudes and we have to nail them to the cross.

One nail through my right hand, one nail through my left hand, one nail through my feet. I have to do that. That's not done for me.

It's painful, but it's the way out of sin. He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Now let me give you an example because otherwise it's difficult for you to understand.

The example I usually take is this fine young Christian lady of about twenty years old who is a committed Christian. She's a member of a good fellowship. She has a pastor who's a godly man who really cares for her soul.

But she becomes emotionally involved with a man who is not a committed Christian. He'll go to church just to get her. But he really has never made a commitment in his life.

And her godly pastor says, don't get involved with him, he's not really a committed Christian, it won't work out. Now she's got two options. Each of them is painful.

She can accept her pastor's advice and nail her feelings and desires to the cross. I love him, that's not the most important thing. I want to be married, that's not the most important thing.

I'm afraid of being lonely, that's not the most important thing. Every one of those attitudes has to be nailed to the cross. That's painful.

But it doesn't last for long. After a little while there's a glorious freedom. And if we want a happy ending to the story, in due course the right man comes along and she really gets married and is happy.

That's the happy side. Now suppose that she doesn't do what she ought to do. Suppose that she doesn't crucify her attitudes and her desires and her emotions.

She goes ahead and marries him. All right, fifteen years later after she's had three children he walks out with another woman and she has to pick up the pieces of her life and handle a family without a head.

That's far more painful and it lasts far longer.

Hopefully, at the end of it all, she learns her lesson. She says, I was self-willed, self-pleasing. I gave way to my flesh.

I didn't accept the cross. I was giving this example to a group some little while back and a lady who was right in the front row, right in front of me said, You've told my story exactly when I'm finished. She had just been divorced and her husband had left her with six children.

Now I'm not saying all divorce springs from that course, but a lot of unhappy marriages of Christians are the result of not crucifying the flesh. So what are you going to do? Are you going to take God's solution, which is painful. Let's not be sentimental about it.

It's painful to deny your strongest desires and wishes and feelings. Or are you going to refuse the cross and suffer the consequences, which will be in the long run much more painful. That's the decision we have to make.

I must move on to the fifth and final deliverance. Galatians 6, verse 14. Galatians 6, verse 14.

God forbid that I should glory or boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Come on you theologians, what's the deliverance from there? It didn't say it very firmly. From what? The world.

That's right. Are you happy about that? Or does it cause you mixed emotions? Let's define the world first. Worldly is one of those terms that Christians use to criticize other Christians.

That's not God's purpose. I mean, I've been through all that. I don't want to go through it again, you know, all the seventeen rules of what you must not do in order not to be worldly.

And I would say basically the people who make those rules are very worldly people, but that's just by the way. What do we mean by the world? I'll give you my definition. The world is a social order or a system of life which refuses the righteous government of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus is God's appointed governor. He's qualified. He's met the conditions.

He's the only one God will appoint as ruler of the human race. But the world is a system, an attitude, that refuses the righteous government of Jesus. Worldly people can be religious, they can be nice, they can be respectable.

But when you challenge them with unreserved submission to the lordship of Jesus, that attitude comes out. That's the world. Now let's look at a few things that the New Testament tells us about the world.

John chapter 15, verses 18 and 19. Two remarkable verses, because in these two verses Jesus uses the phrase the world six times in two brief verses. He says to His disciples, If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. What did Jesus do to us? He chose us out of the world.

You see, the word for church in New Testament Greek, ekklesia, from which we get the word ecclesiastical and so on, means literally a company of people called out. Called out from what? From the world. So you can either be in the world or you can be in the church, but you cannot be in both.

They're mutually exclusive. Now, let's see what John says about the attractiveness of the world, the glamour of the world. First John chapter 2, verses 15 through 17.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. I think that's kind of a question of age. If you're under twenty-five, the temptation is to love the world.

It seems so glamorous, it seems so exciting, it seems to have such a lot to offer. But all its glamour is tinsel. There's no reality to it.

If you're over twenty-five or over forty, your problem will not be so much loving the world as loving something in the world. Like a special kind of car, or a special kind of house, or special clothes, you understand? It's just something that draws you. Older people probably are a little bit disillusioned about the world, but there's still something in the world that holds on to them.

It may be something intellectual. It may be reading all sorts of books which you shouldn't be reading. You shouldn't be filling your mind with a lot of garbage, but because of your intellectual background there's still something that holds on to you.

I have a principle. I try never to fill my mind with garbage. If I think anything is unhealthy for my mind, at the moment that I sense it's unhealthy, I close my mind and shut it off.

I do not want to carry garbage in my mind. But a whole lot of Christians who wouldn't indulge in immorality or sensuality, indulge in a lot of intellectual garbage gathering. And that's the way the world still holds on to their lives.

Let's see what John goes on to say. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. You cannot love the world and God the Father at the same time.

You have to choose. 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. Everything in the world is not of God the Father.

That's this world system. John mentions three specific types of temptation. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.

In the original temptation in the Garden of Eden there were all three. The fruit on the tree was good for food, it was pleasant to the eyes, and it was to be desired to make one wise. That's the pride of life.

The pride of life is, I'm pretty clever, I can handle life on my own. I don't need God. That's all of the world.

It is not of the Father. You see, if I may say so, the essence of sin, originally, was not the desire to do evil because the temptation was good--be like God. No good and evil.

There's nothing wrong with that. The essence of sin is the desire to be independent of God. And that's the pride of life.

And as long as there's anything in us that resists depending on God, the pride of life has not been dealt with in us. And then John says, and the world is passing away, and the lust of it. It's all impermanent.

It's not going to last. Can you say amen to that? It's hard to believe that, isn't it? But it's true. But he who does the will of God abides forever.

That's an exciting statement. If I will renounce the things of the world and align my will totally with the will of God, I am as unshakable and undefeatable and unsinkable as the will of God. There's nothing that can defeat me.

Because there's nothing that can defeat the will of God. So there's the options. Stay embroiled with the world and suffer its miseries, or turn your back on the world, align yourself with the will of God and become unsinkable, undefeatable.

Now concerning the world, it's amazing how much the apostle John tells us about the world. He's the chief writer. In 1 John 5:19, John makes a sweeping statement.

We know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. Who is the wicked one? Satan. Now the Greek is even simpler.

It says the whole world lies in the wicked one. The whole world. It's under the sway of Satan.

And then in Revelation 12 and verse 9, we have this picture of the many facets of Satan. And it calls him the great dragon, the serpent of old, the devil, that's the slanderer, and Satan, the resister, who deceives the whole world. The whole world is under the deception of Satan.

Do you understand? Now in James chapter 4, verse 4, James says, Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the love of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be the friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. We cannot love God and the world simultaneously. John 14, Jesus said, The ruler of this world comes and has nothing in me.

You see, the question is, do we have a fifth column? Does Satan have a fifth column in us? You know the origin of the word fifth column? Well there was a war in Spain in 1936, a civil war, Spaniards fighting Spaniards. And there was a certain Spanish general who was ceding a Spanish city and another general said to him, What is your plan to capture this city? And he said, I have four columns advancing on the city, from the north, the south, the east and the west. Then he paused and said, But it's my fifth column that will take the city for me.

And the other general said, Where is your fifth column? And he replied, Inside the city. See the church is never defeated from without. Jesus was never defeated from without.

You and I will never be defeated from without. But if there's a fifth column inside us, that's how we'll be defeated. Let me end with a little parable about the ship and the sea.

Some of you have heard that before. A ship in the sea is all right. The sea in a ship is all wrong.

What's the application? The world in the church, I'm sorry, the church in the world is all right. The world in the church is all wrong. What happens when the sea gets into a ship? It sinks.

What happens when the world gets into the church? It sinks. The only remedy is the cross. Let me quickly recapitulate the five deliverances here in Galatians.

From this present evil age, from the law, from self, from the flesh, and from the world. I like to close with the words of Paul, God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world is crucified to me and I to the world.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/dEYq6S7mnLI.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/derek-prince/the-cross-in-my-life-part-4/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net