

Sinful Nature at War With God

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being selective in what we watch and listen to, and of feeding our spirit instead of our flesh, in order to maintain our loyalty to Christ and overcome the enemy's attacks.

Scripture: Proverbs 23:7, Luke 11:34, 2 Corinthians 10:3, Galatians 5:17, Philipians 4:8, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 4:4

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Sin Nature"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the internal battle between our sinful nature and the Spirit, highlighting the constant conflict within us that affects our choices. He uses the analogy of two dogs fighting within us, one evil and one good, illustrating the importance of feeding the right desires to overcome sin. Idleman warns against feeding wrong desires through entertainment, emphasizing the need to be selective in what we watch, listen to, and how we spend our time to avoid falling into temptation. He stresses the significance of shaping our thoughts with Godly content to lead to righteous actions and habits, ultimately encouraging listeners to focus on God's Word and maintain loyalty to Christ in the ongoing spiritual warfare.

Transcript

Galatians 5:17 says that the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what our sinful nature desires, and that these two forces are constantly fighting against each other. As a result, our choices are rarely free from this conflict. Don't be alarmed. The fact that there is a fight confirms the value of our commitment. A paraphrase of, *The Battle Within*, illustrates this truth: A young man, determined to find help for his troubled life, walked to a neighboring church. He told the pastor that his life was meaningless and in constant turmoil. He wanted to make better choices, but couldn't.

He described the conflict: "It's as if I have two dogs constantly battling within me. One dog is evil, while the other is good. The battles are long and difficult; they drain me emotionally and mentally." Without a moment's thought, the pastor asked, "Which dog wins the battles?" Hesitantly, the young man admitted, "The evil dog." The pastor looked at him and said, "That's the one you feed the most. You need to starve that dog to death!"

The pastor realized, as should we, that the source of our strength comes from the food that we choose. What we feed grows, and what grows becomes the dominating force within our lives. Sin never stands still--it either grows or withers depending on whether you feed or starve it. Which dog wins the battle in your mind? Entertainment plays a huge role in this.

The door of temptation swings both ways--you can enter or exit. That's why we need to be very selective in what we watch and listen to, and how we spend our time. Why would we willingly walk into the enemy's camp? Why would we feed wrong desires and thoughts? Feeding the flesh does nothing but bring war against the spirit.

If we could clearly see where sin was leading, most of us would reconsider our options. The enemy blinds us to the consequences of sin and entices us with its pleasures. If one could see that one, "harmless" little sexual sin would lead to adultery, divorce, separation from children, depression and despair, he or she would probably change the behavior in a heartbeat. We're often too smart to take large, deliberate plunges off the cliff, but we can be enticed to take one step at a time, one compromise at a time, one sin at a time--until it's too late!

Proverbs 23:7 says, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. And Jesus said that the lamp of the body is the eye. When your eye is good your body will be full of light. When your eye is bad your body will be full of darkness. (Refer to Luke 11:34.) Our thoughts become words, our words become actions, our actions become habits. Who is shaping your thoughts? A daily diet of violence, lust, anger, and depression will fuel those very things in your life. This isn't rock science: are you viewing Twilight or reading God's Light (His Word)? Are you watching American Horror Story or praying and fasting for America? Are you watching True Detective on HBO, or watching shows that are true, noble, and upright (cf. Philippians 4:8)?

One of the reasons why men and women struggle with lust, anger, fear, jealousy, and depression is because they feed those emotions continually throughout the day. It's difficult to avoid these dangerous emotions while continually watching movies and TV programs that promote them. As a matter of fact, many cases of sexual violence can be traced directly back to pornography. What we embrace eventually embraces us.

Let me leave you with this question, If the enemy goes to and fro like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), and the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9); who finds you--the adversary, or God? Are you loyal to God by obeying His Word, or do you often stray from the Shepherd and become easy prey?

Don't let this discourage you, "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The key is to maintain your loyalty to Christ. Additionally, Paul advises us in Philippians 4:8 to fix our thoughts on things that are true and honorable and right. To think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5--italics mine). Paul understood, as should we, that the battlefield is the mind...good thoughts will eventually produce good actions. Begin here...begin today. Fall forward into God's arms of restoration and forgiveness.

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