

“I’m Fighting Whom?”

Devoted to God

Galatians 5:16-17

Pastor Jeffrey Stivason

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Jeff: Well thank you. I appreciate that very much. You know, Sig was talking about the grandeur of the creation, and rightfully so. And I got introduced to some of the simplicity of God’s benevolent care toward his children.

The other day my wife lost her keys and it was after dark. And so we got out our flashlights and tried to retrace our steps on the outside of the house. That was difficult because she had taken the dogs out. So we were all over the yard and we didn’t find them. So we moved into the house, and then we moved into the various rooms that she hadn’t gone in.

And so my wife was upstairs and I was downstairs, and I said, “I’ve had enough. I’m going to the Lord.” I bent down on my knees beside my son’s bed and I said a brief prayer. “Lord, You know where these keys are.” (*Laughter*) “Would You help us find these keys?”

And upstairs my wife said, “Found them!” (*Laughter*) I mean it was just great! The simple things, just the simple things! Well, before we go to prayer, let’s be led into it. (*Music*)

Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to gather together. And we realize that it is a privilege to pray not only together, but individually, and we’re thankful for that. And we recognize the importance of prayer. The Lord Himself asked if He would find faith when He returns. And that was a question in the context of prayer and His coming. Father, we recognize that You long for Your people to be in communion with You. So we bow together and thank You for the privilege and pray, knowing that we are heard.

So Father, this morning we ask for a few things. We ask that You’ll hear our prayers for healing on behalf of Noah. Father, we are thankful for Mike’s good news. And we pray that he would be cancer-free not only now, but for the rest of his life. Father, we pray for Tom and for Harry, and we ask for them as well. We pray, Father, that Your hand of mercy would be upon them.

Father now, as we gather together and as we open Your word together, we pray that You’ll bless us, that You’ll strengthen us by Your grace, that Your hand will be upon us, and that Father, having been reminded of the grandeur and the majesty of Your creation, Lord, help us to see the majesty of Your word. For we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well, just to sort of help you men who may just be joining us, or perhaps it’s not that you’re just joining us, but you’ve been here and you’ve missed a couple of times, it might be helpful for me to say this to you. And that is that we are looking at the book by Sinclair Ferguson. We’re not sort of running through the chapter as he has written it. We’re hoping to use the chapter as the background for our study. But one of the things that you’ve probably noticed as you’ve worked through Sinclair Ferguson’s book and as we’re working through the classes together, is this, a very simple thing. We’re not looking

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at sanctification as a step-by-step process, as though we were to take this step, and then once that’s completed, this step and then the third step. No, sanctification, as I said to you a couple of times before, is more like a mixing bowl. There are ingredients in the bowl. And any time we pull something out, like if we’re mixing up a bowl of chocolate chip batter and we pull out a chocolate chip, we’ve got batter stuck to it. And that’s what we’re doing as we look at each of these individual lessons. We are pulling something out of the batter, something out of our understanding of sanctification as it’s given to us in Scripture.

But when we do that, we are pulling it out with other things. And so there are things that we go over every now and again. But we can’t help but go over them because they’re included in the process, and we’ll never get away with just looking at something singular. We’ll have to look at it as it is altogether in this process of sanctification.

So you’re not missing anything. In fact, some of the things that you may have missed you will get in different classes. So I just wanted to let you know that and to encourage you in that.

Well today we’re going to look at a particular aspect of sanctification, and we’re going to look at it. And I’ve entitled this,—and you probably saw it on your outline—“Who’s the Enemy?” , or something like that. Today we’re going to be looking at the conflict, the battle with the enemy that we have.

So we’re going to be looking at four points. We’re going to be looking at an introduction, introducing us again to some concepts that we’ll need to understand as we go into this. Then we’ll look at the conflict, then the help, and then the principles.

And I have taken them, I want you to know. These principles are five principles that Dr. Ferguson gives at the end of this chapter. And I thought that it might be helpful to throw them up on the board, because when Dr. Ferguson talks about *how to*—in other words, . How to engage the conflict,—this is what he has in mind. And what I want you to see is this. What I want you to see is that this is a blending together of all that we’ve talked about before. He never gets away from the things that we talked about, to the things that we’re going to be looking at today, to the things that he’ll pull in the future. And so just keep that in mind as we go forward.

Well this is our passage for today. So let’s just take a minute to pause and look at it, and I’ll read it to you. It’s Galatians 5:16-17, and this is what it says.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

Well with that text in mind, let’s just get started. And let’s get started with our very first point. But I want to stop and I just want to ask you. Do you have any questions at all? I meant to pause and take some questions before each class and I haven’t done that. Do you have any questions now that you’d like to start with? I’ve noticed that you’re a group that sort of likes to get warmed up. So I’m not surprised; it’s okay. *(Laughter)* If you’ve noticed, that’s strategic. I offer questions now and not later. No, just kidding. *(Laughter)* Learn your audience, isn’t that what they say? That’s right, okay.

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All right. So what I want us to talk about is *remembering our resources*. And I want to talk about *a right-side-up gospel*. This to me is one of the most fundamentally important things about the gospel itself and sanctification in particular.

This has to do with what we’ve talked about before. It has to do with *indicatives* and *imperatives*. In other words, when we think about indicatives, we’re thinking about what it is that God has done for us. When we think about imperatives, we’re thinking about what God commands us to do as a result of what He has done for us. In other words, what we do flows out of who we now are in Jesus Christ.

That is so important. And it’s so important because it reminds us that the resources for the Christian life are not in ourselves.

Participant: Amen. Right.

Jeff: They’re in Christ. Now I want you to think about this. I thought about doing this. I didn’t do it. I need to do it for you at some point. But I’ll create the image in your head.

I want you to think about a triangle. And at the bottom of the triangle, at its base, I want you to think about indicatives. Now I want you to think about imperatives at the top of the triangle. That is the only way to understand the Christian life.

Now why do I make such a big deal out of this?

Participant: Can you repeat that? What’s at the bottom and what’s at the top?

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. At the bottom, write *indicatives*, because, foundationally, the Christian life is what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. At the top, at the very point, is *imperatives*. Those are the imperatives at the top.

Now the reason I use the triangle is this. Try to take that triangle and turn it upside down. Stand it on its point. It can’t be done. And let me tell you why I’m making such a big deal out of this. It’s because people err in one of two directions. People will err on the side of *antinomianism* or on the side of *legalism*.

In other words, this is what they’ll do. Let’s take legalism. In other words, what they’ll do is that they’ll say, “Well, I can only be right with God if I please God.”

Think about Johnny for a minute. Think about Johnny. Johnny’s dad tells him, “Johnny, I want you to clean your room.”

Johnny says, “Okay, Dad. I’ll clean my room.”

His dad goes off to work. And Johnny says to himself, “I need to clean my room because I need to earn Dad’s love. If Dad comes home and doesn’t find my room clean, then he’s not going to love me.” That is legalism.

But then there’s another danger, and that’s antinomianism—anti- (*against*, and *nomos* (law) Against the law.

Let’s do Johnny again. Johnny’s dad says, “Johnny, clean your room.”

Johnny says, “Okay, Dad.”

Johnny’s dad walks out the door and he says, “I’m not cleaning that room! Dad loves me. He’s gonna love me whether I clean that room or not!”

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff claps his hands in triumph for effect.

Jeff: “Where are the video games?” You know, that sort of thing? (*Laughter*) That’s antinomianism.

Participant: Very good.

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Jeff: Against the law; that’s not right! The only way that we can construe this is *union with Christ*. How does that look in this scenario?

The father says, “Johnny, I want you to clean your room.”

“Okay, Dad.”

The father leaves. Johnny says, “I know my dad loves me whether I get that room clean or not. But I love my dad because of all that he has done for me. So I’m going to go clean that room.”

You see, that’s union with Christ. What we do is firmly situated on what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. This is so important. We need to remember to draw our resources from this.

Now I’ll give you an example of this whole idea of indicatives and imperatives, this whole idea of what God has done and that therefore this is who you are. This is from Galatians and I think it’s 5:8. If you have your Bible open you can check me on that. And if I’m wrong, just don’t tell me. (*Laughter*) But it starts inside the verse a bit, and it says, “*Now you are light in the Lord.*” That’s the indicative. You are light! Why? Because of what God has done for you.

Participant: Ephesians 5:8.

Jeff: Is it Ephesians 5:8?

Second Participant: Not Galatians.

Jeff: Galatians 5:8?

Participant: It’s not Galatians.

Jeff: What is it?

Participant: Ephesians.

Jeff: Ephesians 5:8. Okay. Is it in the Bible? Okay. (*Laughter*) *Indicative*—you are light in the Lord. That’s the indicative. “*Walk as children of the light.*” That’s the imperative.

You know, it goes back to what I’ve said to you before about the zygote growing into what it already is. It’s growing into that fully developed human being that it already is because it already possesses all forty-six chromosomes. It’s never going to get more. It’s never going to lose any. It’s always going to grow into what it is.

Now let’s talk about *definitive sanctification* for a minute. And now when we talk about definitive sanctification—and we’re ramping up for the lesson today—when we talk about definitive sanctification, we need to think about a sphere change. And what I mean by that is that we need to think about God rescuing us from one sphere, and that would be the kingdom of the devil. That would be the reign of sin. He has rescued us from that, and He has put us down into His own kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of His love. Definitively, the power of sin over our lives has been broken.

Now we’re going to talk about the *presence* of sin today, and that’s what really leads us into what we’re going to do this morning. So let’s think about that. That’s introductory. Let’s think about the conflict just for a minute. And I’m going to jump ahead.

What are the Christian’s three enemies?

Participant: The world, the flesh and the devil.

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Jeff: Oh, you guys are well trained. *(Laughter)* The world, the flesh and the devil. We need to talk today about the flesh.

What is the flesh? Well there are various ways to understand the flesh. Here’s how I understand the flesh, because I think it’s the Biblical way to understand the flesh. Isn’t that always good? *(Laughter)* You always want to understand the Bible the Biblical way. *(Laughter)*

Gerhardus Voss says that flesh is a synonym for sin. And Sinclair Ferguson makes this interesting point in the text. He talks about the two different ways that Paul talks about the flesh.

He says, *“Thus Paul cannot only speak about the flesh being in us, but about our being in the flesh.”* Now that is a sphere. We are in the midst of the flesh. It is what we are. But it doesn’t have power over us. That power has been broken. But it is a presence in our lives. We need to understand that.

Participant: We’re in Christ; we’re not in sin.

Jeff: Well, Paul talks about us being in the flesh.

Participant: Right.

Jeff: So we’ve got to deal with the presence of sin in our lives in some way. So we talk about being embodied in this fleshly body, which is—

Participant: But that’s not how God sees us.

Jeff: Well again, let’s pull a couple of things out here. Okay, let’s think about this. We want to be careful not to run too hard in one direction. How does God see us? God sees us in union with Jesus Christ, which means that He sees us as perfectly righteous.

But I had a friend of mine who is a pastor who wrote a book denying the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.

Participant: Oh!

Jeff: Now wait a minute! It’s because he said that imputation is God putting on glasses so He doesn’t see the reality that is in me. I still struggle with sin. And the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is like saying that God does not know reality. He only knows fiction.

Now we would not agree with that. But we would say exactly what you’re saying. In Christ I am righteous and He sees me as such. But God also knows that I am becoming what it is that I am in Christ.

So He knows that I struggle in the flesh. He knows that I struggle, and He knows that this body of mine, which is the source of my struggle, is going to be renewed. I’m going to put it down in death, but when He returns He’s going to renew my body. I’m going to be body and soul again, you know?

So that’s one thing I want to separate out. Do you want to follow up?

Participant: No.

Jeff: Okay. Did you want to—

Participant: I was just going to say that the verse that always speaks to me on that is the one in Romans that says that our flesh is at enmity with God.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Even after we come to the Lord.

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Jeff: Yes.

Participant: That part of us is still hateful.

Jeff: We don’t do what we want to do. Now let me just say this to you. And that’s a great point; I’m glad you brought it up.

In the church today there is this false understanding that we will put this body down to take it up no longer. And you say to me, “I’ve never heard that.” All you have to do is turn on Christian music. You turn on Christian music and you hear this sort of teaching—that this body is temporary. I’ve heard lyrics. This body is temporary. We’ll be cut away from it. It won’t be ours anymore.

Guess what! The Westminster Larger Catechism says that “*our bodies rest in their graves as in their beds.*” This is the body we’re going to get back.

You know, my son’s in a wheelchair with no use of his lower limbs. I always tell him; I always encourage him. “Son, you’re going to have this body again, but not like this thing. If you’re in Christ, you’re going to stand before Him one day so that you can kneel before him,” right? And that’s the idea.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: We’ll have this body. It will be ours. It is ours.

The enemy. Do you remember “Pogo?”

Participant: Oh yes.

Jeff: I don’t. (*Laughter*) But I remember the saying. This was a comic created for Earth Day. Let me tell you what it says. It has Pogo and apparently his sidekick walking through this beautiful forest, this swamp. It looks beautiful. And his sidekick says, “Ah, Pogo! The beauty of the forest primeval gets me in the heart.”

And Pogo says, “It gets me in the feet, porcupine.”

Then they’re sitting there, looking on all this trash in the woods. And Porcupine says, “It’s hard to walk on this stuff.”

And Pogo says, “Yes, son. We’ve met the enemy, and he is us.”

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: I never knew that came from a cartoon. “We’ve met the enemy, and he is us.”

Now that to me, I think, describes something of what we’re dealing with today. But we need to remember something. This is what we need to remember. We need to remember that we have always been the enemy, even before we were in Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: We were. We were an enemy to ourselves. Before we were in Christ, it was flesh against flesh.

Let me illustrate this just for a minute. Here’s another cartoon. I love “Calvin and Hobbes.” Here’s Calvin and Hobbes, and Calvin is talking to Hobbes and Hobbes has his fingers in his ears, sticking his tongue out at him.

Calvin says, “Boy, if it weren’t so close to Christmas, I’d pound you good.” (*Laughter*)

Hobbes says, “Yeah? I’d like to see you try.”

Calvin says, “Oh no you don’t! You’re not tempting me! I want every item on my Christmas list. So I’m being good no matter what the provocation.” (*Laughter*)

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Hobbes: “Here comes Susie Perkins.”

“Really? Quick! Help me find a pinecone I can throw at her!”

Calvin then, with grated teeth: No! I’m being good, good, good, good!”

Hobbes says, “You’ll never make it till Christmas. Give up and enjoy yourself.” *(Laughter)*

Ah, brothers, brothers, that’s us before being in Christ, isn’t it? Right? Think about it. I mean, before you were in Christ, the temptation would walk by you and you would say, “No!”, not because you loved Christ, but maybe because you loved somebody else, or maybe because you put a higher premium or a higher value on something else.

You said, “No, no; I can’t.” Or maybe it was to cheat at business. But you wanted a good reputation in business, and you knew that if you were caught that would thwart it. So you said, “No, no, no!” And you were fighting against yourself, you see. It’s flesh against flesh, prior to our union with Jesus Christ.

But the Christian’s conflict is different. The Christian life is flesh versus the Holy Spirit. And this is the ironic thing, the flesh versus the Spirit.

And it goes back to this whole idea. I’m in Christ and the Spirit possesses me. And He guides me and leads me and He does all these wonderful things for me and to me and in me.

And yet I’m still flesh! The enemy is still me! Now did you ever wonder why Paul sort of personifies the flesh and puts it apart from himself? He does that because he’s trying to help us see not that there’s something else in him, like this thing that possesses him. But he’s trying to say, “No. The flesh, the thing that I struggle against is me, the worst part of me. That I put out there and personify as the guilty party, the one who would have me do what I don’t want to do. But I am in Christ. And I want to do what He wants me to do.” You see, that’s the idea.

Let me put it like this. I grew up with this imagery and I want you to see it. I want you to feel it. But I’m going to emphasize the flip side after I tell you this. But I want you to see it.

So I grew up with the imagery that there are two dogs living inside of you. There’s a white dog living inside of you and there’s a black dog living inside of you. And the one you feed will grow.

Now what’s wrong with that picture?

Participant: It’s you. It’s all about you.

Jeff: Well think about it like this. Yes, it is all about me in that illustration. But here’s the problem with it. The problem with it is that the Scripture says that there is that white dog in you, that good in you that is implanted in you by the Spirit. But that black dog is dead.

Now you say to me, “Well then, why do I feel the presence of the black dog in me?” Well let me tell you something. If you had a rotting corpse in you, you’d feel it too. *(Laughter)* And that’s the idea, right? The old man is dead. And what we experience from him is presence, not power. And the presence that we experience from the old man is this rotting corpse in us.

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I have an illustration that I’m going to share with you later. But let me share some things with you. These are some things from the early part of Dr. Ferguson’s chapter. He says this. Just to help us to get our minds around flesh and Spirit, he says, *“Flesh and Spirit are two aspects of the reality of living in the flesh and yet having the Holy Spirit in us.”*

And do you remember that he talks about his friend’s addiction to nicotine and trying to stop smoking? Now, just so you know,—and maybe you don’t agree with me; that’s okay!—I don’t think that smoking is sin in and of itself. But I do think that the addiction is. Think if you’re addicted to anything. Like Paul says, something has you where He doesn’t, right? So just in case you read that example, and you’re like “What?”, I think that’s Ferguson’s position.

So he’s talking about the addiction to smoking. And he says that this man had the addiction to smoking. He put it down. He broke the addiction. But every time he smelled smoke, he felt those same sort of stirrings in him. “Oh, I would like one!”, right?

And Ferguson goes on to say that we know there is a battle taking place. Why? Because he’s struggling. And that’s what he means when he says that this is two aspects of the Christian’s being.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: But then there are two ages, two epochs. And that has to do with what we talked about earlier, definitive sanctification. There is the *epoch of the flesh* and there is the *epoch of the Spirit*, and I have been transported from one epoch to the other. And because of that, his point was that there is a third point. Because of that, there’s a battle that takes place in me as a result of that.

Well that’s the conflict. Now let’s talk a little bit about the *Helper*, unless you have questions.

Participant: What was that last point you talked about—two aspects, two ages? I didn’t get that.

Jeff: Yes. The two ages are the two epochs. For instance, in definitive sanctification you have the kingdom of sin and Satan, and you have the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of God’s love. You can think about them in that sort of way, the two epochs being the present evil age—the kingdom of the flesh, the kingdom of Satan—or the coming kingdom, the age to come, however you want to describe it, that sort of thing. Sorry.

Participant: Do you mean two periods of life?

Jeff: Two different distinct ages in terms of the present evil age. That’s not just a state of life, but it’s the age in which we live—the present evil age—and the age to come. The age to come is in us by virtue of being united to Christ. So to put it in the way we’ve been talking about it, we live in the Spirit, but with a rotting corpse in us, the presence of sin which remains, that idea. Yes?

Participant: I’ve got a question about the flesh being a synonym for sin.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: Paul writes in Galatians. *“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

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Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Do you think he’s using the flesh as a synonym for sin here?

Jeff: I think he’s using the flesh there as a synonym for working out one’s salvation without the resources of the Spirit. I think that those people have gravitated toward legalism.

Participant: Well they’re trying to obey the law, because that’s the context, okay? But since *“the heart is deceitful above all things”*, they were deceiving themselves, believing that by trying to keep the law—

Jeff: They could achieve—

Participant: Even after they began by—

Jeff: Brother, the idea of the Johnnies is not pre-Christian. I would say this to you. I think that here is the problem with the church. And I know it because I think this is autobiographical. I think the problem with the church is that we live with the view that we say this. We say, “God loves me. I know He loves me.” At least we’re willing to say it with our lips.

But here’s what we think God actually is. We usually think that God is a Father who is going, “Come here, son! Come on! Come on over here!”

But here’s what He’s got behind His back. And when we get close enough, He’s going to give us a good rap on the head. You know how I know that? Because we say to ourselves, “I wonder if this is happening to me because of my sins in the past.” (*Muffled laughter*)

Now listen! If you’re feeling guilty about your sins of the past, woe be it unto me to try to make you feel less guilty when I should be trying to make you go and repent for something that you may still feel guilty about. Go and repent. If you haven’t engaged in true repentance, go and repent.

Participant: Right.

Jeff: Go and do that. But after you repent, don’t keep on believing that you can earn something before God by your obedience. And that’s what I think Paul is dealing with there. Yes?

Participant: A question. When you talk about the two ages,--

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Maybe I’m missing something. The flesh versus the Spirit. Don’t we have the flesh in us along with the Spirit until we physically die? The flesh is going to be with us until we physically die. So the two ages are now and after we’re dead, so to speak.

Jeff: Yes, the two ages. I think Ferguson takes this terminology from Biblical theology. But Biblical theology looks at the text in the New Testament. The two ages—the present evil age and the age to come—can be synonymous with the idea of being in the flesh, or being in the world, or being in that place under which the prince of the power of the air rules. So all of these kinds of concepts belong in the same realm. They’re overlapping to some extent.

Participant Thank you.

Jeff: Yes, you bet. All right, good questions.

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Okay. Now let’s look at the *Helper*. Here’s what I want to do. I don’t want to spend a lot of time on this. If you can remember what I’d said before about the two natures of Christ in one Person, and that there is not a hole that is poked between those natures so that the divine leaks into the human nature, such that the Lord is sustained against temptation because His human nature has been divinized,—if you can remember that, then you’re in good shape. If you can’t, sorry for that. *(Laughter)*

Now let me say it like this. In the ministry of Christ, one of the things that we note is this. We notice that the Holy Spirit took from the divine nature, and took the gifts and the graces and deposited them upon the human nature.

Now here’s the thing that we need to understand. We need to understand that this work of the Spirit in the ministry of Christ was—well, let me put it this way—it was an effect of who He is, the Son of God. It was an effect of who He is. And being an effect of who He is, He had the Spirit of God, not in degrees, but immeasurably, okay?

Now why do I say that? Well, because let me ask you a question. When we think about the Spirit’s work in us in sanctification, what language would you use? Would you use *imputation* or *infusion*?

Participant: Both.

Second Participant: Imputation.

Jeff: Think about it. The Spirit’s work in sanctification—what would you use?

Participant: Oh, sanctification! It’s infusion.

Jeff: That’s right. I knew that if I asked you a second time that you’d come up with the answer. *(Laughter)* All right. This is question 77 of the Larger Catechism. “*Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?*” This is so important, men. Listen. “*Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification*”,--that’s union with Christ.

Remember, that’s what I’ve been saying. You possess the forensic benefits and the renovative benefits in Christ. This is why I say to you that you cannot meet a brother who says, “Yeah, I’m a justified Christian, but I’m just living in the flesh right now. The Lord hasn’t given me that second blessing.” No, no, no, no! If you profess to have justification, you must have sanctification.

“*Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ. In sanctification His Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof.*”

Now what does that mean—“*infuseth grace and enableth the exercise thereof?*” I’ll tell you what that means. You do it when you raise children, okay?

Here’s how you do it. You say to your kids, “Turn off the lights when you leave the room.” And what do they do?

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff starts walking.

Jeff: They never touch the light switch at all! *(Laughter)* You say, “Turn off the lights.”

“Okay, Dad.”

Transcriber’s Note: He walks. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: “Am I talking to myself here? Hey, turn off the light!”

“Okay, I will. This time I really will.” *(Laughter)*

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Transcriber’s Note: He walks again. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. So now I’ve got to sit down. I’ve got to teach them. “Son, I want to show you the electric bill.” *(Laughter)* “Come on over here. Look at this bill. Take a look at it.”

“Oh, that’s really interesting.”

Okay. So now he gets one out of three times.

“Now, now, now! Son, now sit down beside me. Son, do you see that electric bill? You’re going to pay some of it.” *(Laughter)* “All right. You know that part-time job you have? Cough up a few dollars.” *(Laughter)*

Now what? “I’m turning it off,” right? *(Laughter)* Every time the light is on, “Dad, turn that light off!”, right? *(Laughter)*

That’s it! What are you doing? By example, by application, by teaching, you’re infusing into him the exercise of turning off the light.

Now you and I know that we are at a distinct disadvantage because when it comes to sanctification, the Lord gives us His Spirit who enables us to the exercise thereof. We just have to rely upon our parental “Aaaaaaagh!” to enable them. We can’t enable them. We can do the best we can to teach them, to instruct them, to apply it to them. We do our best in those things. But God not only teaches us, but He says, “I’m going to give you My Spirit to enable you to do these things,” such that, as you do them, these virtues are infused into you through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Now here is the question that I have for you. Again, I want you to think about the ministry of Jesus. Think about the ministry of Jesus, and think about what happened with Jesus. Jesus was given the power of the Spirit, that He might live an obedient life even to the point of death, death on a Roman cross. His life was taken up by obedience. Obedience to what?

Participant: His Father.

Second Participant: The law of God.

Jeff: Obedience to His Father, but—

Participant: The Law.

Jeff: Obedience to the Law. He offered obedience to His Father. And the thing that He was obeying was the Law, because it was His Father’s character. When we become Christians, does the standard change for us?

First Participant: No.

Second Participant: Yes.

Jeff: See, I’m going to get into something where we’re going to pull from a chapter ahead. But look at this. You say, “No.” But I’m pretty sure this is in Galatians 5.

Participant: Yes. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Verse 14. “*Love your neighbor and so fulfill the Law.*” But look at verse 18. “*If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*”

Now let’s just think about this. If we’re dead to sin in Christ, are we free from the law’s demands? Well of course we are, right? I don’t need to obey the Law in order to be righteous. Christ obeyed and I get my righteousness from Him.

“I’m Fighting Whom?”

So why do I need to fulfill the Law? Well, I’ll tell you why. Because the Law is what? The Law is the revelation of God’s holy and righteous character.

The Law is good. But when sinful passions are aroused by the Law, what happens? Well, I’ll tell you what happens. I love this. This guy by the name of James Frazier wrote a book in the 1600s just on Romans 6 and 7. And this is how he likens it, and this is my rendition today. This is how he likens what happens in us when the Law stirs sin up in us. He says that it’s like the sun shining on a dung pile.

Participant: Oh! (*Laughter*)

Jeff: That’s what Frazier says. When I used that with my congregation, all the women went, “Ooohhh!” And you know, that little third-grader in me was going, “Yes!” (*Laughter*)

Participant: Boy, you are Calvin, aren’t you? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: But you see the point. The idea would be the same as we’ve been talking about. When the sun of the Law begins to shine on the corpse in us, it begins to stink.

And then what begins to happen? I’ll tell you what begins to happen? The Spirit convicts us that we are sinning, and then enables us to put that sin to death. Now that’s a lifelong pursuit. But that’s the mechanics of it, when we think about the flesh as our enemy, and how we overcome it.

John Owen once said this. He said, “*If you’re not killing the flesh, the flesh will kill you.*” It’s as simple as that.

So let’s just think quickly about *the principles*. They’re in the back of the book, but here they are. This is the how to.

Ferguson says that we need to *recognize* the enmity there is between the flesh and the Spirit. We need to recognize it. Then we need to *remember* the new status we’ve been given in Christ.

What is he saying? Let me just pause. What is he saying? I’ll tell you what he’s saying. He’s saying that this is all a part of the renewing of the mind. That’s where we started, remember?

The Christian life is about the renewal of the mind. It’s fundamental to this. And it’s not just the power of positive thinking. We need to remember what we talked about a week or two ago. We need to understand that we need to think rightly about realities. That’s what he’s talking about.

Again, we need to *realize* the calling we’ve been given to live by the Spirit and not to gratify the flesh. That’s what we’ve been talking about today.

And we need to *respond* sensitively to the Spirit. I like this one because this is the idea that says what we just talked about. I’m convicted by the Spirit when the Law shines into my life, and I realize that there’s rotting flesh there, a dung pile in the corner of my life. He convicts me of that, and He enables me to put that out of my life. And we’ll talk about how you do that in another chapter.

And then *reap what you sow*. Here’s the fundamental principle, men. You’re going to reap what you sow. It’s a principle in Scripture. If you live to the Spirit, you’re going to reap that kind of fruit. If you live to the flesh, you’re going to reap that kind of fruit. It’s as simple as that.

“I’m Fighting Whom?”

You know, a lot of men say to me, “God seems to be so far away from me.” And I say to them, “He’s far away from you because you are far away from Him.” In James 4 He says, “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*” In other words, God hasn’t changed. The Lord Jesus Christ hasn’t moved. And the Holy Spirit is still in you. If you’re feeling as if there’s something wrong with that, the problem is with you and not with Him.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: And so you need to remember that you reap what you sow. So you need to ask yourself what you are reaping.

Well why don’t we pray? Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time that You’ve given to us. And Father, thank You for these valuable principles and for the way in which Dr. Ferguson articulates them. And Father, we just pray that You will bless us as we grow in grace, for we ask it in Jesus’ blessed name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right, men If you have any questions, I’m here. (*Applause*)