Stop Feeding the Old Man

Ephesians 4:21-23, Gal 5:17, Romans 7:18-20, 2 Cor. 5:17

9/24/23

As a Christian, do you ever feel like Dr. Jeckel and Mr. Hyde? It’s no secret that we all were born with a carnal nature. It does not matter how sanctified you think you have become; that "old nature" hasn’t moved out. In fact, it’s our daily task to keep him buried and "put under" the bible says. As children of God, we are called to crucify and degrade our old nature, and even if we’re semi-successful in doing that, he still tries to climb out of the ground and take back his place.

Who is in charge in your life this morning? The old man or the new man? The answer is going to be the one that you feed the most. Unfortunately, there are good number of Christians who have a hard time starving out the old man and are keeping him around.

* Eph. 4:21-23

*21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.*

* *Gal 5:17*

*The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.*

Just because we have been saved by Christ doesn’t mean we don’t struggle with sin. In fact, the reality is, we find ourselves living by a superior standard of life; a life we discussed about a few weeks back by living “Set Apart” from the world and its standards. But though our new spirit has been set apart by God, our minds continue to have the pattern of the old way of thinking.

On the other side, our “flesh” has no desire to surrender. It has no desire to give up and die. That “Old Man” wants to live and always be in control like it used to be prior to your new life. That “old man” has wants to be 1st and accepts the easy terms of sin.

Thus, the biggest battle you will fight as a Christian is one of keeping the Old Man down. Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:24 *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”* Denying of your flesh is hard. If you’ve truly lived for God more than 30 seconds, you are fully aware of the struggle inside of you. None of us want to deny ourselves. That is why there is a struggle. We were born into sin, so naturally our flesh, our self, the old man, desires and want to sin. This doesn’t stop just because you found the Cross.

So, even though our spirit is secure in Christ, we still experience a battle in our mind, will and emotions. Though we may truly want to leave the old patterns of living and embrace the new life in Christ, the “old man” or flesh, constantly wants to have its own way and shows up at the table to try and sit at the head of it like nothing ever changed. Today I want to help us “Quit Feeding the Old Man.”

Romans 7:18-20 describes Paul’s struggle with sin.

* Romans 7:18-20

*18 And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. 19 I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. 20 But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

Now, instead of this depressing us, this should actually encourage us because, “the great Apostle” Paul faced the same daily battles in his mind, will and emotions that you and I face. He dealt daily with the “old man” named flesh, and he was still used to write two-thirds of the New Testament!

Galatians lists some of the results of living a life geared toward fulfilling the flesh.

* Galatians 5:19-21

*9 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

In his book “Lifetime Guarantee” Dr. Billy Graham describes the flesh in this way:

*“Flesh refers to the old patterns by which we have attempted to get all our needs supplied instead of seeking Christ first and trusting Him to meet all our needs.”*

* It’s unfortunate, but some Christians still live “after the flesh” attempting to meet their needs through their old ways of living.

I want to remind you this morning that Satan plays for keeps. Sin has consequences. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. If you allow your flesh to rule you, you will reap corruption.

* Galatians 6:8 “*Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.”*

Sowing to the flesh or “feeding the old man” is giving the flesh exactly what it wants. Sowing to the Spirit is giving the Spirit what it wants. Where are you sowing? Who are you feeding? The flesh or the Spirit?

Sin brings death. It kills marriages, relationships, homes, and families. But thank God there is good news: Jesus came, and he promised us not only forgiveness for sin, but he promised us freedom from sin and the “old man”. I want to give you 3 strategies to help you quit feeding the old man.

**1 Accept Who You Are in Jesus by Identifying with Him.**

2 Cor. 5:17 - *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

This scripture tells us we have a new identity. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. There is power in what you believe about yourself. God knows this. This is a very important concept for you to grasp this morning. What you believe about yourself will affect the way you think, the way you act, & the character you carry.

The Bible tells us that sin enslaves us. If you don’t believe it enslaves you, just try by your own will power to change a habit. Sin does enslave.

* Romans 6:16

*“Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.”*

Before you gave your life to Jesus. You were a slave to sin. Satan had his chains around you. He was dragging you around, abusing you, you were sins slave. Your “flesh” roamed around telling you what it wanted, what to do, and how to do it. But when Jesus came along, he took you out the kingdom of slavery and made you a citizen of a heavenly kingdom. You are free. You now have the power to choose to live in holiness and in righteousness before God. God wants you to know this morning your identity is with Jesus not yourself!

You have been set free & you should no longer be a slave to sin and flesh. But you will only accept that freedom as you recognize your unity and identity with Christ. The more you immerse your life in unity with Christ –the more He can show you how to walk out of slavery and overcome those moments self says it’s still in charge. In fact, you are more than free. The bible uses the strongest language possible in declaring your freedom. It says that you are dead to sin.

* Romans 6:11

“*So, you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.*

God wants you to know who you are in Him! Alive in Christ and dead to sin. The old man should be dead to us, and you are to be alive to God! The old man has lost his place at the head of the table of your life! So, start accepting your new identity in Jesus. FREE!

**2. Be Aware of Sinful Patterns**

In this battle towards holiness, you will become aware just how deceitful your own flesh can be. In fact, though it should be dead, we many times provide what the flesh needs so that it can satisfy itself. Like Paul, we tell ourselves we are trying to do what is right, then we continue in the same old sinful patterns that we have always lived in. We tell ourselves: I have this besetting sin, I have this pattern, I have this addiction, I have this weakness, and I just can’t get out of it. Can I be honest this morning? You’ll never diminish the old man if you keep providing everything it needs stay around.

As we’ve mentioned many times this morning, the fleshes only desire is to make sure is taken care of 1st and to satisfy its cravings, even if that means to sin. A lot of times we put our flesh right smack in the place where sin is going to draw us in. Instead of avoiding that TV show, that certain place, that website, that type of conversation, or that specific thought, we tiptoe back in, thinking we can keep our flesh at bay!

* For example, an alcoholic is foolish to believe that he/she can associate with people who are drinking, offering you drinks, or going to bars and clubs. It is foolish to think that you can just have one beer and it isn’t going to hurt you. A recovered or delivered alcoholic will tell you that they had to change the patterns of their life to stay away from it. Why? The flesh wants it and what the flesh wants, he takes if given the chance.

Here is the concept: Stop providing the flesh. Don’t go to the same places you used to go, don’t watch the things you used to watch, don’t hang with the people that used to cause you to do things you know you shouldn’t...If you struggle with a specific sin, and you know the old man has a little more “pull” in that area than normal, don’t put yourself in that place or position.

We need to understand that temptation and sin follow a very predictable path and pattern in our lives.

* James 1:14-15

*14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

We need to become “self-aware” of where and how I’m feeding the “old man”. Maybe you should journal to become self-aware. Write down the steps and patterns that happen when you fall into sin. And you will see that it is very predictable.

Truth is that we are going to stumble into sin. That’s just life...You can be going happily down life’s road and suddenly, a temptation is there. But many times, we provide ourselves the opportunity by our thoughts and actions.

We naturally flee from danger, correct? When the building we are in catches fire, we flee to a safer place. When a hurricane is about to make landfall, we flee the coast. Unfortunately, when many people see temptation coming, they do not flee. Rather than flee temptation, they dabble in it, and allow the flesh to embrace it. Could this be because most people do not recognize the danger inherent in temptation? We seem to be more concerned with physical dangers that threaten the body than we are with spiritual dangers that threaten the soul.

Romans 13:14 says, “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*”

Making provision for the flesh is the opposite of fleeing temptation. We make provision for our flesh when we accommodate the things that lead to sin and actually prepare for sinning.

* Those who make provision for the flesh are like an over-indulgent parent who winks at his child’s misbehavior and gratifies his every whim. When we allow ourselves to remain in tempting situations instead of fleeing them, we are foolishly placing confidence in the flesh. We believe the lie that our sinful flesh will somehow find the strength to resist at the last moment. Then we are shocked and ashamed when, instead of resisting, we give in.

In other words, don’t even think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. There is a little saying that I believe has a lot of truth.

* Sow a thought, reap an act.

Sow an act, reap a habit,

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap an eternity.

**3. Live as Jesus lived Practicing Spiritual Disciplines.**

We know that our Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus lived his life practicing spiritual disciplines.

We’ve looked at if I allow the “old man” to keep me away from Christ, & to stray from Him, by “feeding” him what he wants, then I find the power of the old man & sin has a greater appeal. It is in your personal relationship with Christ that freedom comes. So, the most important thing you can do on a daily basis is to keep to the basic spiritual disciplines.

Prayer & Fasting / Bible study / Fellowship with others / Service / Worship / Solitude / Silence

Closing:

When it comes to resisting the powerful demands of the “old man”, the Bible describes it as a kind of dying. That’s because our deceived, corrupt flesh believes our life will be happier if we gratify it. Denying the flesh and that feeling of satisfaction can feel like you’re dying to something life-giving.

But we must remember again every day what Romans 7:18 says...” *that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t.*

When we realize that there is nothing good in my old self, in my flesh, I can follow the Spirit’s direction, and chose to die to self. Knowing that God will provide strength and courage to me as I live surrendered to His will, I have the power to stop feeding the old man! We need to know that all we are dying to in self by not feeding the old man is death itself. That kind of dying is worth dying every day! For in such dying, we choose life!

Today, when your unruly flesh makes maddening demands on you, and tells you it’s still in charge & to feed him, tell him greater is He that is in the new me, than he that is in the old me & the seat he once held at head of the table has been revoked by another more worthy! Then watch him begin to lose the power he thought he had on you as “quit feeding that old man” and he becomes defeated and dies.