

TEMPTATION FROM INSIDE

Jesus said that “ **from within, out of the heart of men**, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things come from within**, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:21-23)

James, in his epistle echoes

“ Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth

these words when he writes:

The scriptures are consistent in their identification of the source of the problem. From within, out of our heart (or mind) proceeds evil. Man is tempted from his own lust, working in his mind. When he does not control his natural desires, they lead to sin, and then if not forgiven through Christ, the result is death.

Jesus was tempted

Jesus, who was born of a woman, had the same desires

within him. He was “ in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hb 4:15)

We read just how human Jesus was in Hebrews 5: “Who **in the days of his flesh**, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with **strong crying and tears** unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience** by the things which he suffered.” (v 7-8)

A merciful High Priest

We can be thankful that Jesus

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:

was allowed to experience our struggle with the same tendency toward sin:

The Real Enemy

It has been wisely stated: “**I have met the enemy and he is me**”. These words certainly reflect the truth about our nature. The sin that is in our flesh is very deceitful and therefore it is self-destructive.

Remember, God is well aware

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“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)

The Heart (mind)

The prophet Jeremiah was inspired to write that the heart of a man is **deceitful and desperately wicked**.

The scriptures use the term heart to describe the center of our intellect or **mind**. It is actually in our mind that we determine our response to the influences in our world.

The nature of man?

To describe our mind as “desperately wicked” is contrary to the common opinion that man is basically good, and that outside influences are responsible for his failure to live without sin.

The Bible however, promotes the truth concerning our nature. In the beginning, Adam disobeyed God and introduced sin and death.

As descendents of Adam and Eve, we are born with an inherited tendency to sin. Our minds are naturally inclined towards carnal thoughts and resulting actions.

It is only through the light of the Word of God that we learn about the blessings available to those who try to overcome these natural desires.

Jesus overcame sin

Jesus demonstrated that a natural

man, with God’s help, could live without sinning. He overcame the sinful tendencies in his own flesh as an example for us.



Through his sacrifice, he destroyed the sin in his own nature, and made it possible for those who are baptized into his name, to have their sins forgiven.

Recognition a key

As we attempt to follow Christ, it is essential that we recognize and acknowledge our handicap. When we understand that **the real enemy is within us**, then our potential for an effective defense against sin will be greatly improved.

Beware the deceit

Jeremiah has warned us how tricky and deceitful our carnal mind is. Jesus used the Words of God, written on his heart, to help him resist. We can apply this same advice, as recorded in the Psalms, to give us strength against sin.

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin



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LOCAL CONTACT:

Send all Correspondence to:
“Things Concerning”
27 Delphian Rd
Springfield, VT 05156

Hope and Comfort from the Scriptures

THE APOSTLE PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT SIN IN THE FLESH:

The Apostle Paul in his writings to the Romans provides us with an incredible description of how our deceitful nature works within us and provokes us to sin.

This discourse is almost poetic, and if the truth it portrays were not so destructive, the words would be a song.

Read these verses carefully and think about your own conduct:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. **For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.**

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: **But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.**

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:14-25)

The comfort in his answer

If we were to leave the story at this point, there would be despair. We are wretched men, because we sin when we really want to do good.

Paul does not leave us without hope. With a few simple words he



reveals the answer to our problem with sin. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? **"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

The Lamb of God

We also should thank God for providing his son Jesus, as **"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."**

God's plan for the forgiveness of sin is our hope and our comfort in the despair that we face from the deceitfulness of the sin in our flesh.

From the very beginning, promises were made about the savior that would come to atone for sin. One of the key promises was made to Abraham, who was told: "In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." This "seed" was Christ, who through his sacrifice and resurrection opened the way for victory over sin and death.

Blessed is the man

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom 4:8)

The Jews were given the first opportunity. They were told: "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to **bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.**" (Acts 3:26)

This blessing is our hope. It has now been made available to **all kindreds of the earth, through faith in Christ Jesus.**

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Faith provides us with the strength to resist sin. Jesus, as our mediator, has also given us the comfort in knowing that sin can be forgiven and that grace is available.

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," (Mark 7:21)

THE PROBLEM IS WITHIN

Jesus taught: "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.(Mark 7:15-16)

When his disciples asked him to explain this parable, he told them that a man was not defiled by the natural process of consuming food, part of which left his body in the form of waste.

He then went on to explain:

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (verse 21-23)

Works of the Flesh

The list of evils that Christ has described are also referred to as the "works of the flesh." Paul in his writings to the Galatians, said that "they which do such things

(as these works of the flesh) shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5)

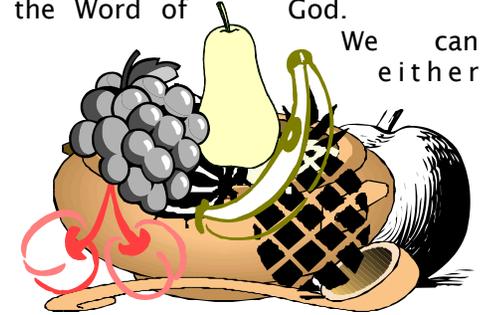
Carnal or Spiritual?

The Apostle told the Roman believers: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those

who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. **The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;** the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8 NIV)

We have a choice. We can live in response to the desires of the natural man, or we can live by the spirit of Christ, which we learn from the Word of God.

We can either



allow our mind to be controlled by natural instinct, or we can develop a spiritual mind. The result of our decision will either lead us to death, or to life and peace.

Fruit of the Spirit

The contrast is clear. From within the natural man comes evil thoughts and all of the works of the flesh. In contrast, the spiritual man has developed his mind in response to God's Word. This man produces spiritual fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace,**