

e-devotional

A monthly devotional on the spiritual formation of Christian workers
July 04

Mandatory Disciplines: Obedience—dealing aggressively with the behavioral expressions of the flesh
Scripture: Various

The Use of Flesh (*sarx*): as a descriptor of inside sin and its power

Reference	Comment	NASB	NIV	NLT
Romans 7:5	Flesh is used here of the pre-conversion state in which behavior was manipulated by the law. The result was death or spiritual defeat and sin with the inside crushing effect of guilt	For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were <i>aroused</i> by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.	For when we were controlled by the sinful nature,* the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. * <i>sarx</i>	When we were controlled by our old nature,* sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds, resulting in death. *The NLT uses old/sinful nature for <i>sarx</i> .
Romans 7:18	Paul identifies the self (me) with the inside force of the “flesh” and states there is no “good thing” in him: i.e., no power to live a holy life even though there is a strong desire and will to do so.	For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good <i>is</i> not.	I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.	I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't.
Romans 7:24	If chapter seven is a description of pre-conversion struggles, as some contend, then the cry of “who shall deliver” is the call of desperation of a lost person to find a resolution to their struggle with sin. If the chapter describes the believer’s struggle with the flesh, the issue is one of sanctification, rather than regeneration. The cry is a believer’s longing to be set free from the dominance of sin in his or her life. In either case, the resolution is the Lord Jesus Christ.	Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?	What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?	Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?
Romans 7:25	The mind of the religious person seeks right behavior, but the flesh can only frustrate that quest as a slave of sin. Jesus alone can deliver a person from sin’s inside power. This was accomplished on the cross.	Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.	Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.	Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.
Romans 8:1-2	Here is a positive affirmation after the description of struggle. Note that the last phrase in the KJV, “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit” is not in the best manuscripts. FF Bruce: “If ‘condemnation’ were simply the converse of ‘justification’, Paul would be saying that those who are in Christ Jesus are justified; but that stage in the argument was reached in 3:21-4:25. The word <i>katakrima</i> here means ‘probably not	Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free* from the law of sin and of death. *First aorist active indicative (Galatians 5:1). ²	Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.	So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.

	<p>“condemnation”, but the punishment of following sentence’ (BAFG, p 413)—in other words, penal servitude. There is no reason for those who are ‘in Christ Jesus’ to go on doing penal servitude as though they had never been pardoned, never been released from the prison-house of sin. ‘In Christ Jesus’ (or ‘in Christ’) is Paul’s description of the new order into which men and women are introduced when they put their trust in Christ.”¹</p> <p>The reason there is no penal submission is because of the power of life in and through the Spirit. Jesus accomplished this with definitive action.</p>			
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Romans 8:3	<p>The pre-Christ era was dominated by the law as an expression of the holiness of God but did not provide for a transformation of the heart or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who alone is the power to live a holy life. The problem with the law was in the heart of humanity, the weakness of the flesh. The law did not change the heart. When Jesus came and lived a sinless life as a human being, he totally changed the possibilities of how a person can live in harmony with God and not the flesh.</p>	<p>For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God <i>did</i>: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and <i>as an offering</i> for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,</p>	<p>For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,</p>	<p>The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.</p>
Romans 8:4	<p>This verse answers why Christ came. He came so that the righteousness of the law might be lived out in those who are companions of the Spirit and not the flesh. This clearly indicates that the believer has a responsibility to focus his relationship on the Spirit and not the flesh. That is something we are to do, not something God does for us. We choose to be companions (walk)* with the Spirit or with the flesh.</p> <p><i>Paripate</i> □: “to tread all around, that is, walk at large (especially as proof of ability); figuratively to live, deport oneself, follow (as a companion or votary):—go, be occupied with, walk (about)” [Strong].</p>	<p>so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.</p>	<p>in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.</p>	<p>He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.</p>
Romans 8:5	<p>The person who lives according* to the flesh mentally entertains those behaviors, whereas the person who lives according to the Spirit entertains the things of the Spirit.</p> <p>*KJV “after” [Strong—<i>kata</i>: A primary particle; (preposition) down (in place or time), in varied relations (according to the case [genitive, dative or accusative] with which it is joined):—about, according as (to), after, against]. This again identifies personal responsibility to control our thought processes and mental focus.</p>	<p>For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.</p>
Romans 8:7	<p>A fundamental reality is that there is no compatibility between the flesh and the</p>	<p>because the mind set on the flesh is hostile</p>	<p>the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does</p>	<p>For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It</p>

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 151.

² A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1931), 372.

	Spirit. The two powers of mind and heart are irrevocably at war. It is a war that won't end until we are with the Lord and receive new bodies and pure hearts.	toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able <i>to do so</i> ,	not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.	never did obey God's laws, and it never will.
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Romans 8:8	The flesh [<i>sarx</i>] has no capacity to please God.	and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.	Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.	That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.
Romans 8:9	Paul affirms the believer is not in the flesh but in the Spirit providing the Spirit lives in them (assumed so). If the Spirit is not in them, they are not Christians, only religious people attempting to live a godly life in their own strength, not in the Spirit's strength, the gift of grace.	However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.	You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.	But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.)
Romans 8:12	Therefore our indebtedness—in common sense reasoning—is not to the flesh that brings death, but to the Spirit that brings life.	So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—	Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.	So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do.
Romans 8:13	The “how-to” is finally stated: believers whose life and power are derived from the Spirit are to “mortify” [KJV, <i>thanato</i> : to kill] the behavior (<i>praxis</i> : practice) of the body. Paul specifies those behaviors—“deeds of the body”—in Galatians 5 and Colossians 3. See below.	for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.	For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,	For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.
Romans 13:14	In summary, Paul concludes we are to make no provision or care for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (<i>epithumia</i> : longing for the forbidden). Very clearly we are expected to act in this. This isn't something God does for us.	But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to <i>its</i> lusts.	Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.	For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.
1 Corinthians 5:5	Here Paul states his decision to deliver the sexually sinful man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Many conclude this carries the sense of the flesh as inside sin-power, not physical death per se.	<i>I have decided</i> to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.		Then you must cast this man out of the church and into Satan's hands, so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved when the Lord returns.
2 Corinthians 7:1	We are called upon to cleanse ourselves from all the filthy behavior of flesh and spirit to bring to completion the holy life in respect of God. Paul's reference to the death of the flesh is in reference to behaviors that demonstrate a person is associating with the flesh rather than the Spirit.	Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.	Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.	Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God.
Galatians 2:16	No one can be made right with God through doing religious rituals in the flesh. One of the primary expressions of the flesh is the attempt to gain acceptance before God through self-righteous activity or by following religious ritual	Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified	Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.	And yet we Jewish Christians know that we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying

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				the law.”
Galatians 2:20-21	This passage is not on sanctification but on justification, how a person is made righteous before God. The “I” that was crucified historically with Christ is Volume I of my personal biography—my pre-Christian life came to a definitive end in death when I trusted Christ as my Savior. This is my old self, or old man. My new life [Vol. II] lived in this body [the new man] is lived by faith in the Son of God, not faith in following religious ritual.	“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the <i>life</i> which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness <i>comes</i> through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”	I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”	I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not one of those who treats the grace of God as meaningless. For if we could be saved by keeping the law, then there was no need for Christ to die.
Galatians 3:3	The Christian life begins in the Spirit as a gift of God’s grace, not as a reward for religious duty or ritual. If that is how eternal life begins, it is foolish to think that spiritual development is the result of personal effort rather than God’s gracious work in a person’s heart. It is really easy to slip into legalism and suffer spiritual deadness as a result.	Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?	Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?	Have you lost your senses? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?
Galatians 4:23	Isaac was Abraham’s son of promise; Ishmael was the result of the flesh. This is a dramatic illustration of the contrast of religion and grace.	But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.		The son of the slave-wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God’s promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God’s own fulfillment of his promise.
Galatians 4:29	Ishmael persecuted Isaac and Paul compared that to his day of the Jewish leadership’s persecution of Christians. Is it also not allegorical of the believer’s battle of the flesh warring against the Spirit that he addresses in chapter 5?	But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him <i>who was born</i> according to the Spirit, so it is now also.		And we who are born of the Holy Spirit are persecuted by those who want us to keep the law, just as Isaac, the child of promise, was persecuted by Ishmael, the son of the slave-wife.
Galatians 5:13	The believer’s freedom in Christ is NOT to become an open gate to indulge the desires of the flesh.	For you were called to freedom, brethren; only <i>do not turn</i> your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.		For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love.
Galatians 5:17	The opposition of the flesh against the Spirit and Spirit against the flesh is a non-stop, no ending, war. It is the war of a spiritual terrorist against all that is good, right and God-pleasing. The terrorist is very personal—it is our pre-conversion natural response to God expressing itself. It must be aggressively counteracted throughout our entire lives.	For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.		The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict..

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Galatians 5:19-21	Behavior [deeds] that evidences a focus and companionship with the flesh is addressed. Here is the classical list. Similar listings of behaviors we are to put on or off as we would clothes are in Colossians and Ephesians.	Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.	The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.	When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, ²⁰ idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
Galatians 5:24	The word for crucified (stauroō) means to “impale on a cross; figuratively to extinguish (subdue) passion and selfishness: (Strong). Rienecker ³ points out that this is aorist active indicative, to crucify. “The aorist points to a completed action in the past and might most naturally refer to conversion (Guthrie).” “The active voice is where the subject of the verb is the doer of the action of the verb, i.e. where the action of the verb moves outwards from the subject.” ⁴ “The indicative mode ‘indicates’ something; i.e. it is used for making a statement (or asking a question) about what <i>is</i> .” When Jesus was crucified for our sins, we were placed in union with him and were crucified with him. Just as the payment of sin was efficacious for all humanity but only becomes effective when faith is placed in Jesus, so the effectiveness of the crucifixion of the believer’s flesh is activated through the reckoning of faith that it is so.	Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.	Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.	Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.
Ephesians 2:3-5	This describes the flesh as the controlling factor in our pre-conversion lifestyle. God brought it to an end. It was his work completely, with no help from us. This is not a description of how sanctification occurs but rather how a person is brought into a right relationship with a holy God. It is not a product of fleshly ritual-keeping, but of God’s grace.	Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made	All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in	Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him. Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. ⁴ Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse

³ Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers: *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1980), 517.

⁴ Ward Powers: *Learn to Read the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 71.

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Colossians 2:11-13	<p>In these verses, Paul uses circumcision as a metaphor for our responsibility as believers to definitively confront fleshly behavior in our lives—it is to be cut off, even as the foreskin is surgically removed! The believer responsible to initiate that action based on the fact that in his crucifixion, Jesus literally accomplished the breaking of the power of sin. Because he did so, I am then to take definitive action and slice off the behavior and throw it in the garbage.</p> <p>NASB and KJV use the word “transgressions” (<i>paraptoma</i>) and it refers to a “slide slip (lapse, deviation) unintentional or willful transgression.” God’s magnificent grace in Christ covers the entire realm of our sinful behavior! God leaves no room for excuses of any kind. It is the tendency of the flesh to find a way to reduce the true state of sin and its actions.</p>	<p>us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).</p> <p>In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,</p>	<p>transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.</p> <p>In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins</p>	<p>jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.</p> <p>When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins.</p>
Colossians 3:1-4	<p>Facts of the Christian’s identification with Christ include. . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised with Christ Because of this fact we are to think or mind (present, active, imperative) things above—keep seeking; this is the opposite of seeking things “below”. The biblical method of achieving a mind-focused on God is by memorizing and meditating on the Scriptures. Spiritual victory is proportional to thinking about and obeying God’s Word. • Crucified with Christ; we are dead— aorist active indicative. • Present life hidden with Christ in God “The idea of life being hidden in God suggests three thoughts, i.e., secrecy where the believer’s life is nurtured by secret springs; safety, ‘with Christ in God’ marks a double protection’ identity, the believer is identified with the risen Lord (Johnson, 212).”⁵ • Future revelation when Christ is revealed <p>Because of this complete identification with Christ in death and resurrection, the Christian is to take aggressive action against the expression of the former life.</p>	<p>Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.</p>	<p>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.</p>	<p>Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God’s right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.</p>
Colossians 3:5	<p>While Paul does not use <i>sarx</i> here, he does refer to it in principle. This is something we are to do as Christians. We are not told to kill the flesh—an abstract term for a spiritual power. The bodily members that we find so responsive to sin</p>	<p>Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which</p>	<p>Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and</p>	<p>So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don’t be greedy for the</p>

⁵ Reinecker, 578

	<p>are to be looked upon as dead. Would that not apply to our sexual members, tongue, mind, hand, feet, ears and eyes—the “tools” of sinful behavior? We are to mortify or kill our “members”, the bodily members that are the vehicle of the flesh in specific behaviors. Obviously, he is not commanding us to mutilate our bodies. Sin is not addressed as an abstract; it is concrete behavior. These behaviors must be confronted with energy and determination. Refusal to do so will only bring “death” or hurt, brokenness, tears and moral disintegration [see Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 1:4].</p> <p>“The meaning here is to be compared to Rom. 6:11 and contains the idea ‘reckon as dead’ (Bruce)... The members of the body were used to carry out the desires. According to the rabbis there are as many commandments and restraints in the law as the body has members and the ‘Evil Impulse’ is said to be king over 248 members 9s. Schweizer) and the two great passions which plays the most upon are the passions of idolatry and adultery.”⁶</p>	amounts to idolatry.	greed, which is idolatry.	good things of this life, for that is idolatry.
Reference	Comment	NASB	NIV	NLT
Colossians 3:8-10	The metaphor changes from medical surgery to getting dressed. A Christian has a definite responsibility to change behavior based on what Christ achieved on the cross in the defeat of sin and its power. Because we were placed in him, his death becomes ours and the validity of what he achieved can be experienced in daily life. However, it isn’t a simple trip to the altar, a one-time prayer. It requires vigilance and continual focus on Jesus who is our life and power, who by his Spirit lives in these bodies to stimulate godly behavior.	But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, <i>and</i> abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its <i>evil</i> practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him	But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.	But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.
Colossians 3:12-17	Our focus cannot be limited to the negative—what we have to kill in our behavior. Life is more than exhaling; without inhaling we wouldn’t be able to live. Balance is the key concept. There are those purveyors of spiritual life that want to only talk about the positive. The positive couldn’t exist without the negative polarity. So we must have both. Paul doesn’t hesitate to confront sin, but he doesn’t leave it there. He moves directly into the behaviors that characterize Christ living in and through us—the Spirit-filled life that brings honor and glory to God and participates in his passionate love for people who are imprisoned in sinful lifestyles and can’t get free except through his power and grace.	So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things <i>put on</i> love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the	Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of	Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let

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		peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms <i>and</i> hymns <i>and</i> spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, <i>do</i> all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.	Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.	the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father.
Reference	Comment	NASB	NIV	NLT
1 John 2:15-16	The lusts of the flesh are definitively from the world system and not from God. We are not to love the world. It is a matter of obedience to a command.	Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.	Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.	Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world.

Observations based on the above analysis:

As mentioned in the previous e-devotional, my struggle to understand the terms of “old man/self” and “flesh/sinful nature” has been long and confusing. I have taken the time to do this analysis of the use of the word for flesh when Paul applies it to the power of inside sin to help clarify his statements. I am also disturbed by the blatant incursion of sin in easily definable behaviors of Christians. Much of what we address as a lack of church health is nothing short of sinful behavior, the work of the flesh in all its destructive expression. When will we get back to “whatever happened to sin” as a prominent psychiatrist wrote years ago? If renewal is to come, if the church is to make an impact in the post-modern world, will it not begin here with these passages that are crystal clear about specific behaviors and their source? That is my understanding of the judgment that must begin in the house of God. Consult the July 2004 issue of *aLife* magazine for an excellent article by Tom Allen.

- ❑ Paul uses the word *sarx* to refer to the physical body. The physical body is also the vehicle through which sin—an abstract power—is expressed. To give this reality of an inside power expression, he uses the term *sarx*, or flesh, to describe all aspects of sinful behavior (sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit). He lists particular behaviors to give clarity to what he means. This is very concrete language, rather than something abstract or philosophical.
- ❑ Christ’s death on the cross provided a complete answer to the damage and damnation sin brought on humanity:
 - Eternal separation from God
 - Social separation from others: dysfunctional families and interpersonal conflict, community violation in unlawful behavior, international conflict expressed in war
 - Personal dislocation as expressed in various unhealthy attitudes and action.
- ❑ Jesus bridged the gap created by sin so we can enter into a relationship of love, acceptance and peace with God. In that same act, God identified us with Christ in his death and resurrection to terminate the power of sin. As a result a person *can* change life styles: he or she *can* conquer imbedded sinful, destructive or addictive behaviors. God did the work. We could not

have accomplished that feat in or by ourselves. When a person sees or feels the flesh rising generate sinful behavior, he or she is to consider the member of the body that would be the vehicle of expression as dead to that impulse. For example, anger is a prominent problem whether it is road rage or manipulative and punitive control in a family or marriage (and yes, the church). In feeling that emotion rise, a quiet prayer, or audible for that matter, must go directly to the point and before God claim the tongue, the fist wanting to hit, the foot wanting to kick, the specific member of the body, dead to respond to that powerful drive. The application is certainly applicable to sexual sins. A person crosses a lot of thresholds before taking off their clothes for the act. Early on, the hands, the tongue, the sexual members must be looked upon as dead to sinful use. I find NO OTHER strategy identified in the Bible to care for this issue. God doesn't deal with wrong behaviors in psychological or sociological terms. There may be contributing factors to sinful behavior, but the core issue is one of sin and that is the exclusive territory of the church. No government or other institution is given the responsibility for the inside change of the heart. If we do not teach people about the dynamics of the flesh, how it operates in the behavioral system and God's provision for victory, we will continue to face the unhealthy results of sin in the church.

- The Christian (new or long-time) is a work in progress. It is synergistic with God initiating and working in him or her and them, in return, cooperating with him. On the basis of Christ's complete salvation, we are responsible to take definitive action to stop sinning. We are now free to live a life of love and purity, the very life that Jesus lived because he lives in us. That is why we must surrender every area of life to the Holy Spirit for his control and power. He is the Spirit of Jesus. Surrender is constant, moment by moment, and a conscious dependence upon him. Our call to obedience is both to end our sinful behavior and to practice those things identified as God-pleasing behavior. For this to become reality demands minds continually renewed through interaction with the Word in meditation and obedience. The bottom line—obey God.