

Msg #168 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"Your Other Self"

With Randy Smith

(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, or send messages)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about your other self. I mean that person within you that is opposed to you being a Christian. The apostle Paul referred to this other person in Romans 7, verses 17-20. It says, "But now, it is no longer me that sins, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for I have the ability to will; but how to perform that which is good I cannot find it out. 19 For the good that I desire to do, I do not do: but the evil which I desire not do, I do. 20 Now, if I do things which I will not to be done, it is no longer me that does it, but sin that dwells in me."

Now, this is a confusing scripture for most people, but if you take it one part at a time, it makes perfect sense. Basically, Paul was telling us that he fights the battle between his spiritual self and the body of flesh every day, and that when it comes to the problem of sinning, we, as born again spirit persons, can realize that if righteousness remains in our heart, and the intent of our heart is truly right and good before God, then the sin that takes place in our body is not the same as taking place in us. I am righteous if my heart remains pure before God, but my body is sinful.

When we're born again, we become a new creature which now lives through the righteousness of Jesus Christ instead of living for the lusts of the flesh. But just because we're born again as spirit beings and now have life in the Spirit, does not mean that we don't carry this old fleshly body around with us. Heavenly beings are spirit, just as God is spirit, but we humans are flesh and

blood. However, when we're born again we become new creatures and the life we have is the born again spirit life through Jesus Christ, and we are no longer that same old man of the flesh.

But what Paul is saying in the verses I just read is that the body of flesh, with its earthly desires, still wars against the heavenly desires of our born again spirit man, and vice versa. And you, of course, know exactly what he's talking about. We all know what he's talking about. We try to live righteously, but we always fail in some aspect. No, I'm not saying that to backslide is acceptable. This isn't what Paul was talking about. He was talking about being a Christian who is righteous in heart, but who's flesh is still subject to the temptations of this world.

The flesh is strong. We, like Paul, want to do that which is right and good, but we don't always do that which is right and good. We slip up. We make mistakes. We stumble. We open our mouths and say things that Christians shouldn't say. We go to the refrigerator and eat when we know we shouldn't eat. We get ticked off by people who treat us unfairly instead of loving them as Christ would love them. In short, this body of flesh that we still live in is a real problem.

The flesh is nothing but trouble. It has desires that are contrary to God. How many times have you said, "oh, I wish I could just cut this body off of me and be free from it?" Of course, we can't get rid of our bodies because we're stuck with them. But the good news is that Jesus Christ has made the way to still be righteous in the sight of God in spite of being caught up within this fleshly body and its evil desire.

Now, it's important to realize, and I want to really stress this point, it's important to realize that righteousness can still be attained even when sin is active in our body, but this righteousness can only be maintained by a right spiritual relationship with God. A right relationship with God is a relationship in the spirit. And it is also a relationship that maintains, and here, listen to this closely, it is also a relationship which maintains perfection through the intent of the heart to be righteous.

Now, think about this. This is important. Unless you maintain a proper mental and spiritual relationship with God, the sin in your flesh will contaminate you. You see, what Paul was talking about is that our bodies of flesh make us desire fleshly things. However, even though we stumble at times, we can still retain the righteousness of God if we have the right heart. And the reason for this is that, as it says in 1 Samuel 16:7, God does not look on the outward appearance of a man, but he looks at the heart. He looks on the inside.

So you see, whatever you do, God is not looking on the outside of you. God isn't looking to see what you're doing in your actions and what you're saying in words. God is looking at your heart, and therefore he sees exactly what the intent of your heart is. And this is also what the apostle Paul was referring to. If you want to do good and you are trying to resist evil, then God sees you as being good, even though you don't end up doing what you should. But then, whoa! This does not mean you have a license to sin. It isn't a license to do whatever you want and still think you can go to heaven. What it is, is a deliverance from the penalty of sin, but only if you truly do desire to do what is right.

Now, let me give you an example, and maybe that will help you to understand. I'll use the example of food. This is one that always troubles me the most. Anyway, I know that I cannot eat a whole bunch of junk food and still be pleasing in God's sight. And for sure, God has convicted me strongly of this. So let's say I am tempted to eat something I shouldn't. So I think about it and decide that to eat the food is not pleasing to God. So in my mind I tell myself, "no, Randy. You do not need to eat that stuff." Well, I don't know about you, but I'm not perfect. There have been many times in my life that I have tried to resist the evil, but then I end up doing it after trying not to do it. And this is what the apostle Paul was talking about.

So anyway, I go to the refrigerator and get the food that I know I shouldn't eat, and even though I don't want to eat it for the sake of Jesus, I still go ahead and eat it anyway. Then I feel really guilty, and I tell the Lord that I'm sorry and I also ask him to deliver me.

So, there's the example. Now, how does this fit into being righteous? Well, being righteous is a matter of God's opinion, not mine, and therefore, whether I am considered to be righteous, and to be acceptable into God's presence is strictly up to God. But God makes his decision, not by looking on the outward appearance of me, but by looking at my heart. And believe me, when these times have taken place, my heart is right before God. In fact, there were times in my younger days when I cried before the Lord that I would actually give my right arm if God would deliver me from the temptation of food.

You see, I hate sin. I hate doing anything that is displeasing to God. But my fleshly body is made to be a physical body and it is made to react favorably to anything that will stimulate it. Now, the things that stimulate the physical body are worldly things. Things like food, or maybe alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or sex. In fact, the things that stimulate us in this world are considered to be found in three general categories. They are lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life.

But Christians realize that the delicacies this world offers is not what God is all about. In fact God tells us to set our affections on heavenly things and not on things of this world. But then, we're human. We're still locked inside these fleshly bodies even though we're born again and want to be righteous. Even the apostle Paul wanted to be righteous, but still fell short of the mark. And we Christians don't want to give in to sin either, but we just can't seem to resist everything. We slip, we stumble, or we say something or do something that isn't pleasing to God. We want to be righteous, but our body overcomes us sometimes.

So, was Paul a sinner? Yes, he was, but no more than you or I. But Paul was also righteous, because he had found Jesus Christ who makes us righteous not by what we accomplish on the outside, but by what is accomplished on the inside. Paul was righteous because he wanted righteousness. He wasn't perfect in the flesh. No man can be perfect in the flesh. Only Jesus Christ was perfect in the flesh. We humans don't ever measure up to what Jesus did. We make mistakes. I do, and you do. Whether it's food, or sex, or pride of life, I don't know, but I do know that I'm not the only one out there who falls short of being perfect. But my perfection is not in my flesh. The Law of Commandments taught us all that. The Law of Commandments

was our schoolteacher. It taught us that no matter how hard we tried, we could not be perfect in our flesh. But then, this is exactly why Jesus Christ died for us. He died for us to bring us back to God after we finally come to the realization that righteousness by our own works is impossible.

Now, the Bible tells us that God is the only one who is good. And we know that Jesus lived a perfect life. Therefore, we know that Jesus is God. Even Jesus said that there is no one that is good except God. Now, I know for a fact that I, myself, am not good. Well, sure, God has done a miracle in me and I'm not the same person I used to be, but I'm still not perfect, and I never will be perfect in the flesh. Remember, 1 Corinthians 15:50 tells us that flesh and blood bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Fleshly bodies cannot be perfect, therefore they cannot go to heaven. The bodies we end up with in heaven will be new glorified bodies. They won't be bodies of flesh. Bodies of flesh cannot be perfect, therefore they cannot come into the presence of God.

So, how in the world do we accomplish our quest for perfection if sin still dwells within our flesh? How do we attain perfection in the eyes of God if we still do things that we know are not right. When God convicts you of something and you end up doing it anyway, how do you maintain your righteousness and hold on to the salvation that Jesus gave to you? Well, actually, the answer is simple. Because of the simple fact that God does not look on our outward appearance, but only looks on our heart, then in order to please God we must make absolutely certain that our hearts are right. We must make certain that our true desire is to be perfect, even though we fail at being perfect. It is our intent and true desire to be perfect that pleases God. God is going to look at the intent of your heart, and he is going to judge you on that basis and on that basis alone. No matter what you do in your actions or words, if your heart truly desires righteousness, then God looks at you as righteous. If you accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and you hate sin, and love the good things of God, than God will judge you to be good.

And get this. This is the whole thing in a nutshell. Perfection in the eyes of God is based on the intent of your heart. It is not based on what you accomplish before God, but on what you would like to accomplish. And believe me, like I said before, this is not a license to sin, because if you truly want to sin, then your heart has just condemned you already. God knows if you hate sin. He knows if you really want to be good. And goodness doesn't come from being good in the flesh, but it comes from being good in your heart. And if, now get this, if your heart is right before God, the flesh will begin to lose the battle. No, maybe not immediately after you get saved, but it will change. No, you will never be perfect in the flesh, but you can be perfect in your heart. And when your heart wavers, you can still attain perfection by repenting.

You see, as John said in 1 John 3:9, "Whoever is born of God cannot sin." Now, before you jump to conclusions, please realize that John was describing someone who is born again and someone who remains in a right relationship with God, a right relationship from the heart. If you truly want righteousness, you will be considered righteous. But then we also read in 1 John 2:1 that if you do sin, then you have an advocate who will go to God on your behalf. This means you have a lawyer who will plead your case. So if your heart slacks off, and God looks at your heart

and says, “oh, oh. You’re losing your desire for heavenly things,” then you can repent. You can turn around and tell God you’re sorry and once more get back on the narrow path. And when you do, Jesus will go to the Father and explain that your heart is now right again. And God, who looks at your heart and not at your flesh, will see that your intent to be good has been renewed, and you will once again be judged as righteous.

Now, this doesn’t mean that you lose your salvation if your heart slips up. In fact, we don’t actually have salvation until we die or when Jesus comes back. What we really have is a promise of salvation that if we continue to strive to be obedient to God’s word, and we continue to repent when we fall short, and continue to pursue righteousness, then the promise of salvation will be fulfilled in the day we stand before God. The promise is given to those who don’t turn away from God.

But, if your heart gets cold, and never returns to God, never repents, then eventually God will allow you to turn away. But if you only slip, if you backslide, you can still hold onto the promise of salvation by trusting in Jesus Christ to be your advocate. However, keep this one thing in mind. God does not forgive us unless we first repent. God’s forgiveness only comes when we first establish a right relationship with God. If we are ignoring God, and just doing our own thing, then God is not going to forgive you until you’re ready to come to him in sorrow and repentance. Now, there’s another thing that will also help us, and that is your conscience. We may sin in the flesh and not even realize it, but if our heart turns away for even a moment, our conscience will let us know. It is when we refuse to repent that we approach the danger point. Hell is full of people who’s hearts grew cold and who’s conscience became useless. The Bible describes these people as having a conscience that is seared by a hot iron.

It is the intent of the heart that determines your place with God. Your life, after being born again, is not a life in the flesh. The flesh will continue to be sinful, and the best you can expect your righteousness to be in the flesh is as Isaiah 64:6 says, “as filthy rags.” The only righteousness you can really have in this world is the righteousness that is given to you through Jesus Christ. Not perfection in the flesh, but the righteousness that comes from having a pure heart before God.

It is the intent of your heart that will determine your eternal future. And Jesus demonstrated this and taught it in the book of John. In chapter 13, the Bible tells us that after the last supper that Jesus had with his disciples, he took water and began to wash the disciples feet. Peter at first refused to let Jesus wash his feet, because he felt Jesus was much too important to be washing anyone’s feet. But Jesus explained that he must wash Peter’s feet, or else Peter could not have any part with him. Then, in a sense, Peter said, “Oh, well, okay. Then also wash my hands and my head, because I want to be with you wherever you go.” But Jesus replied that it was not necessary to wash anything else except Peter’s feet, and that if Peter’s feet were washed, then Peter would be entirely clean all over.

Now, Jesus wasn't referring to physical cleanliness, but was referring to being clean spiritually. He was referring to being clean in the sight of God. And what this meant was that Peter could be entirely clean in a spiritual sense just by the cleansing of his feet. You see, in scripture it is the feet that symbolize the intent of a person. It is the feet that demonstrate the intent of the heart. Oh sure, it is the hands which actually get into sin, and it is the head that thinks about sin, but the hands don't get into trouble unless your feet take you to the spot where trouble exists. It means that the feet symbolize the intent, because it is the feet that allow the hands to come into contact with evil.

What Jesus was telling Peter was two things. First, the only way to be a true leader is to become a servant to others. Something that many leaders in today's church have forgotten how to do. To be truly great is to humble yourself. But Jesus was also explaining another thing. He was explaining that feet are symbolic of the intent of a man. It is man's intentions which must be pure, and then the man can be pure all over. It is the intent of the heart that must be pure, and then no matter what the hands get into, or the mind thinks about, God will still know that the man is righteous because the intent of the man is right, because the man's heart truly wants righteousness to reign in his body.

If you intend to do evil, then God will look at your heart and see the intent of your heart and that it is evil. You will be judged, therefore, as being evil. However, if you intend to do that which is righteous, but your flesh wins out sometimes, God will still look at your heart, and when he sees that in your heart you intended to do that which was right, then he will judge you as being right. He will condemn your flesh because of sin, but he will save you because your heart is right before God.

You see, the apostle Paul was explaining that sin in the body was not him anymore. He was a new born again spirit person, and his body was no longer who he really was. And even though he might blow it sometimes, he was still assured of the promise of salvation because he had become a person who truly desired to be righteous, and he would also certainly grieve when he did sin. This way, sin was kept in the flesh, but the heart was kept pure. And this is the key to righteousness because God looks at our hearts instead of at our outward actions. Our actions and words can sometimes get out of hand, but if our heart is right, God will know that it was just a slip up. Or, if it was more than a slip up, and your heart deviated for a moment, then God will know that it was only for a moment, because you will prove it by repenting. But if there is not true intent for righteousness, or there is no repentance or remorse for sin, then God will see that too. When God looks at your heart, he sees what is really there.