

“The Enemy Within”

February 3, 2008 * Romans 7:14-8:4

“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.” ~ Galatians 2:20

I. Why Should I Care About Purity?

A. What is sin?

B. What is sin like, and what will it do if we let it?

II. What are the two primary reasons why we have to **fight for purity?**

A. We have a _____ nature.

B. We have an _____ nature.

Why do we need to address both things?

The First Obstacle To Purity: Our Sin Nature

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.”

III. What is the natural state of human nature?

A. I am _____.

What does this mean?

1. It means not one of us by nature

_____.

a. What about the ‘God-gene’?

b. How does anyone come to God then?

2. It means not one of us by nature can understand the _____ of _____.

a. What does 1 Cor.2:12 &14 say?

B. I am sold as a _____ to _____.
Meaning what?

“War is natural. Peace is an accident. We’re animals...If you think people are inherently good, you get rid of the police for 24 hours – see what happens. I could start a war in 30 seconds. But some countries spend 100 years trying to find peace. Just like good manners, peace has to be learned.”

~ A famous theologian

IV. When shopping for a religion, what 3 questions should I ask?

• _____ am I here?

• What’s _____ with the world?

• What will _____ the world?

A. Besides Christianity, what other faith/philosophy out there comes closest to describing how animal-like we are?

B. What’s insufficient about this faith/philosophy’s explanation for human evil?

V. If I’m still not convinced that these words are true, what does Paul describe in vss.15-20.

VI. What hope does Christianity offer?

A. Rom.8:3a – The Problem

B. Rom.8:3b – The Solution

C. Rom.8:4 – The Effect

Projects For The Week:

1. Memorize Galatians 2:20.

2. Meditate long, hard and deep about the Cross this week.
Suggestions: study the crucifixion narratives; take a hymn and study/sing over & over hymns about the Cross; each day write out some of your reflections

3. Pastor Barry likes to say: ‘There is no excuse for sin, there is only a sacrifice.’ What does this mean? Write out all the excuses you give to justify your behavior. Why don’t these hold any water in the end?

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I. Why Should I Care About Purity?

A. What is sin?

Sin is walking in an anti-God direction. God tells you to walk this way, you walk the other way instead – that’s sin.

B. What is sin like, and what will it do if we let it?

Sin is not this neutral thing that just sits there like an arcade game till you put a coin in it. No, it’s hungry, and aggressive and it grows, and if you let it get a foothold in your life, it is out to take you over and destroy you.

II. What are the two primary reasons why we have to *fight* for purity?

A. We have a nature nature.

B. We have an untrained nature.

Why do we need to address both things?

I cleaned out my office last week, and winnowed out my book collection, and was stunned by all the books I own on how to have a happy marriage. All the principles for a happy marriage are in those books. All the teaching and training and truth that pertains to having a happy marriage is in those pages. Yet you could take each of these books home, memorize every page, master every principle, and still make a mess of your marriage. Why? Because in addition to your untrained nature, you also have a sin nature. And the natural selfishness that courses through your veins will ooze out through the cracks of your life and muck things up no matter how much you know and how well trained you are.

The First Obstacle To Purity: Our Sin Nature

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.”

III. What is the natural state of human nature?

A. I am unspiritual.

What does this mean?

1. It means not one of us by nature

seeks God.

a. What about the ‘God-gene’?

There’s a big difference between genetics and brain chemistry. I wouldn’t doubt for a moment that the brain of someone who is a devout Christian is very different from one who is not. All sorts of studies are being done right now on what is called the ‘elasticity of the brain’. Your brain is not a static thing – all the time you are changing it, rewiring it, if you will, by the things you choose to do and the things you choose to think about. But rather than your brain dictating to you what you must do, you actually are dictating to the brain what it must do. And how you want it to organize itself. “Put the neurons over here,” you say to your brain, and your brain replies, “Yessir!” And that’s a very different matter than saying, “Oh there’s a God gene. You can’t help but be a Christian.” In fact, it’s just the opposite. According to the Bible, you can’t be a Christian without help, because no one by nature seeks God.

b. How does anyone come to God then?

God has to enable you to come to him. He has to pour grace on your stony heart. Jesus said in John 6:44 – “No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.”

2. It means not one of us by nature can understand the truths of God.

a. What does 1 Cor.2:12 &14 say?

“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us...The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him., and he cannot understand them.”

B. I am sold as a slave to sin.

Meaning what?

Meaning by nature, I am prone to moving in an anti-god direction, prone to rebelling against his laws, prone to a self-centeredness that is breathless in its audacity to flip God the bird. Ephesians 2:1-3 says, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world...gratifying the craving of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.” Here is what we are by nature. It’s not a pretty picture. It’s as though there is this moral compass inside of us but it no longer point in God’s direction, it points to self instead.

“War is natural. Peace is an accident. We’re animals...If you think people are inherently good, you get rid of the police for 24 hours – see what happens. I could start a war in 30 seconds. But some countries spend 100 years trying to find peace. Just like good manners, peace has to be learned.”
~ Sylvester Stallone

IV. *When shopping for a religion, what 3 questions should I ask?*

- Why am I here?
- What’s wrong with the world?
- What will fix the world?

A. *Besides Christianity, what other faith/philosophy out there comes closest to describing how animal-like we are?*

Based on what I know about human nature, I can immediately eliminate all the feel-good, New-Age, “Eat, Pray and Love” religions which believe that God is a Giant Warm Teddy Bear and humans are basically good, because I know better. I can also eliminate all the utopian religions which believe if we just redistribute wealth, or get rid of all property, or abolish every sexual taboo, we’ll all live happily ever after. I can eliminate all the Eastern religions because while they certainly understand that this life is filled with suffering, they’re not sure why – wrong cravings Buddah said, but why do we have those?, he doesn’t say, neither does he say what we’re really to do with all this suffering other than meditate our way through it, and count the days till we can bust out of this popsicle stand and escape into the great

Nothingness, that is unless we get recycled back into this nightmare through reincarnation.

Honestly, besides Christianity, there is only one other faith/philosophy out there that is upfront with us about how animal-like we human beings are. And I’ve given you a hint what it is when I say ‘animal-like’. *Darwinism*. Only Darwinism comes as close to Christianity in telling us how rotten the human heart is.

B. *What’s insufficient about this faith/philosophy’s explanation for human evil?*

It still doesn’t go far enough in telling us how rotten we are. All it can say is we’ve evolved from animals, and when we misbehave, that’s our animal-side showing. Survival of the fittest, baby. But animals do not commit even a smidgeon of the evil we human beings do. When Stallone says, “We’re animals,” he’s missing it. Animals fight but do not wage war. Animals kill but do not conspire to murder. Animals copulate but they do not lust, deceive and cheat. Animals do not round each other up into concentration camps. One breed of animal does not subject another breed of animal to slavery. These are not animals slaughtering each other in Kenya right now. There is a depth to human evil, a spiritual depth if I can put it that way, that not even Darwinism can explain. This is not the behavior of a race evolving upwards from animals, this is the behavior of a race that has fallen from the heights of royalty

V. *If I’m still not convinced that these words are true, what does Paul describe in vss.15-20.*

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

VI. *What hope does Christianity offer?*

A. *Rom.8:3a – The Problem*

“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son...” Translation: God’s laws about what is right and wrong are powerless to change me or help me because I’m too weak in my sin nature. Can’t obey them with any consistency. So God sent his Son Jesus to rescue me from this. Now I won’t be powerless anymore.

B. *Rom.8:3b – The Solution*

“[God sent his own Son] in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man...” Translation: my sin, all these things I’ve done wrong in my life, all my selfishness, all this law-breaking comes at a price, comes with a penalty, a judgment. I’m separated from God. My spirit is dead in sin. I’m an object of God’s wrath. Hell is just around the corner. That’s what’s hanging over my head. I’m responsible. I’m guilty. I’m condemned. But Jesus took that judgment I deserved on himself so I wouldn’t have to face it. He took my place. He took my condemnation upon himself. He literally gave his life as an offering, a payment, a ransom for my sin.

C. *Rom.8:4 – The Effect*

Verse 4: “...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.” Translation: Now that Jesus has died for me, I’m forgiven and I can start over. And when I give my life to Christ at the foot of his cross – when I repent of my sinning and accept his death for me – something wonderful happens. God Himself through His Spirit comes and lives inside of me. And somehow that sinful part of me is dealt a death blow, it’s as though it were crucified to a cross. And the spiritual part of me that had been dead is now regenerated with new life. When I come to Christ, my sin nature begins to die. And my spiritual nature is born again. And with God Himself indwelling me as my Lord, my Savior, my Friend, I now have the capacity to obey him in a way I never could before. Through Jesus, purity now becomes a very real possibility.

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