

Fathom Academy – Spiritual Warfare

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LESSON 2

THE ENEMIES: THE “FLESH”

“The flesh” is the King James translation of the Greek word “sarx”.

1. This Greek word literally means the meat or muscle.
Jn. 6:52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”
2. It can be used of living beings or mankind in general as living beings.
Acts 2:17 ““And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”
3. It is used in the New Testament for the body or physical part of a person as opposed to the immaterial part (the soul or spirit).
Mt. 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
4. From this it takes on the moral meaning of the human nature, the internal workings of humans in their natural state without God.
This is the sense throughout Romans 8.

It is the moral meaning (#4) of “the flesh” we are talking about when we speak of “the flesh” as the enemy of God’s people.

Our study of Genesis 3 shows us what this human nature is like.

To say that we have a sinful human nature is to say that:

1. It is natural for us to: *Distrust the goodness of God.*
2. It is natural for us to: *Distrust the warnings of God.*
3. It is natural for us to: *Set up our own good and bad.*
4. It is natural for us to: *Do evil thinking it’s good.*
5. It is natural for us to: *Doubt God, being willing to believe just about anything else but God.*
6. It is natural for us to: *Think we know better than God.*
7. It is natural for us to: *Think we can do better for ourselves apart from God.*

The NT on the sinful human nature

Mark 7:21

Romans 7:7-9

Galatians 5:19-21

- impurity
- sensuality
- enmity
- strife
- jealousy
- rivalries
- dissensions/divisions/factions
- envy

Romans 7:18-23

Galatians 5:16-26

1 Peter 2:24

Galatians 5:25-26

Applications: Waging war against the “flesh”/our sinful natures

Below is a list of the tendencies of our human nature that we discovered during Session 2.

1. Look (in prayer with the help of the Holy Spirit) for areas of your life where you see these tendencies.
2. Highlight or underline those which are a particular struggle for you.
3. Then ask yourself, with the help of the Holy Spirit: “As I move AWAY from this tendency, TO WHICH TENDENCY should I move?”

Use your knowledge of the Bible to help you.

Remember Jesus’ illustration of the empty, cleaned house, from Matthew 12. It does not work to just try to get rid of the nasty things listed above. The house must be filled with good so the bad has no room. So as you house-clean, find the opposite GOOD TENDENCIES with which to fill your inner life.

4. Then make it a daily habit to “keep in step with the Spirit” as he moves away from the bad tendencies that come so naturally and into the good tendencies which are his purpose for you.

This is “living by the Spirit” – always staying close to and aware of the purpose and directions of the Spirit (primarily found in the Word). In this way you are being “led by the Spirit” away from the natural into the spiritual.

In this way the “spiritual” is not some ethereal reality in which you live; rather it is responding to the personal training of the Spirit of God towards all the best He has for you.

5. Make this a life-project to battle through these tendencies to the good life the Spirit desires for you!
6. If you need help with any of these tendencies seek out a brother or sister in whose heart/life Christ is strong to give you counsel, accountability and prayer.

The tendencies of our human nature that we discovered during Session 2

1. It is natural for us to: Distrust the goodness of God--
Think that God is holding back good
And so think there are better things to be gotten by making an end run around God than living life in or through God.
2. It is natural for us to: Distrust the warnings of God--
Think that “it can’t be that bad”
And so set ourselves up as a better judge of consequences, having better insights into what might happen, than God
3. It is natural for us to: Set up our own good and bad defined by:
What looks good
What “tastes” good
What enhances my “good”
4. It is natural for us to: Do evil thinking it’s good
5. It is natural for us to: Doubt God, being willing to believe just about anything else but God

6. It is natural for us to: Think we know better than God--
And so always seek to work things out our own way
Being always suspicious of directions that come from God
7. It is natural for us to: Think we can do better for ourselves apart from God
8. It is natural for us to: Resist doing something just because we're told to do so (by the law or an authority person)
9. It is natural for us to: Be attracted to the "dirty"
10. It is natural for us to: Resist restraint and so have a hard time keeping ourselves from doing what feels good
11. It is natural for us to: Treat people as enemies
12. It is natural for us to: Take issue with everything
13. It is natural for us to: Let our emotions heat up, whether that be sexual, anger, opinion, our rights
14. It is natural for us to: Seek influence and advantage by any means
15. It is natural for us to: Take sides
16. It is natural for us to: Resent others' good fortune when ours is not so good