



# Wretched Man I Am

Introducing the struggle of the nature of man and sin.  
by Don Hooton

## Lesson 7 | The Works of the Flesh

April 19, 2023

We are commanded to crucify the flesh. Surely we can because Paul said Christians *have crucified the flesh* (Galatians 5:24). In Romans 6:6, he said, *“knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”* Since he could have said “killed” but used the word crucified instead, it must have significance. Crucifixion 1) invokes the significance of what Jesus did on behalf of the world; 2) invokes reminders of what it means to follow Him (c.f., Matthew 16:24); 3) connects the pain often associated with death – and will be here as well; And 4) tells us to deal with the flesh decisively. In Colossians 3:5, he said, *“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion...”* In Ephesians 4, Paul wrote, *“But that is not how you came to know Christ, assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, to take off[g] your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires...”* Note the footnote on verse 22, [g] *This means: take off (as a command).* CSB.

As noted in past lessons, this is something that the believer does, as he is directed or led by God’s Spirit. It was not and is not the sovereign, “unilateral” work of God. The old man is crucified with Jesus so that God, as Sovereign, will make in us new life when we are born again. In Romans 6:6, the believer has crucified the old man and then Paul says that we are to reckon, or account, the old man as dead (6:11). But *the flesh* is to be crucified. On his notes on Galatians 5:24-25, Stott says, “Please notice that the ‘crucifixion’ of the flesh described here is something that is done not *to us* but *by us*... Galatians 5:24 does not teach the same truth as Galatians 2:20 or Romans 6:6. In those verses we are told that by faith-union with Christ ‘we have been crucified with him’. But here it is we who have taken action.” This is what we are focusing on in the remainder of these lessons. How can we “crucify the flesh”?

First, **fearing the Lord will be the beginning of it.** “One turns from evil by the fear of the Lord” said the wise man (Proverbs 16:6). When questioned by Abimelech, king of Gerar, as to why he did not disclose that Sarah was his wife, Abraham replied that “I thought, ‘There is absolutely no fear of God in this place. They will kill me because of my wife.’ (Genesis 20:11). Moreover, what prevented Joseph from committing adultery with his master’s wife? The fear of God. Period. Listen to Joseph: “ So how could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?” (39:7-9). “ To fear the Lord is to hate evil...” (Proverbs 8:13). If we, in naivete, associate glamor or fun with sin, it will find it’s appeal in our hearts.

Second, **we have to be willing to put on our running shoes**, so to speak. Still drawing from Joseph’s example, when the woman got hold of him and asked him to “lie with me,” Joseph, *“leaving his garment in her hand,... escaped and ran outside”* (Genesis 39:11-13). The Bible says: *“flee fornication”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Paul warned Timothy about youthful lusts and said the way to overcome it was to flee (2 Timothy 2:22). Do you want to overcome and crucify the flesh? One good way of doing that, according to the Scriptures, is to flee, to abstain. *“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want”* (Galatians 5:16-17).

Next, by believing God’s interest in us **we should develop optimistic attitudes.** It is the promise of God that He *“will also make a way of escape”* out of temptation for His children (1 Corinthians 10:13). Paul says, *“those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh ...”* (Galatians 5:24). Remember, it is His promise that will empower us. The certainty of that promise is in the character that is God’s that the Spirit has revealed and Jesus has explained. Every where we look at God we see His will that we can.



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And last, **pray**. Without God we are nothing – and we can do nothing (John 15:5). Paul said that he could “do all things.” How? *“Through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13). In fact, He makes us conquerors (Romans 8:37) and leads us in triumph (2Corinthians 2:14). *“But if we sin, we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1John 2:1-2).

The list is not a complete list every type of sin – or even of these types as we have them grouped Even Paul acknowledges such by saying “and anything similar.” These lists characterize what people who walk after the flesh do. With an emphasis in Galatians on hostility, those were likely the most significant. Yet, Paul makes lists like this in other places were problems he knew in them or knew to be addressed.

Galatians 5:23-25	Ephesians 4:25-5:5	Colossians 3:5-9	1Timothy 6:4-6	2Timothy 3:2-4
sexual immorality	lying	sexual immorality	conceited	lovers of self
moral impurity	unresolved anger	impurity	no understanding	lovers of money
promiscuity	stealing	lust	disputes	boastful
idolatry	foul language	evil desire	arguments over words	proud
sorcery	bitterness	greed which is idolatry	envy	demeaning
hatreds	anger	anger	quarreling	disobedient to parents
strife	wrath	wrath	slander	ungrateful
jealousy	shouting	malice	evil suspicions	unholy
outbursts of anger	slander	slander	constant disagreement	unloving
selfish ambitions	malice	filthy language	depraved minds	irreconcilable
dissensions	sexual immorality	lying	deprived of the truth	slanderers
factions	impurity		imagine godliness is a way to gain	without self-control
envy	greed			brutal
drunkenness	obscurities			without love for what is good
carousing	foolish talking			traitors
and anything similar	crude joking			reckless
	greed			conceited
				love pleasure
				deny godliness' power

Go through the lists and “connect the dots” of those that are repeated in each list.

The lessons will be grouped in this fashion:

1. SINS of IMPURITY: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity (April 19, 26)
2. SINS of IDOLATRY: idolatry, sorcery (May 3)
3. SINS of HOSTILITY: hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, and envy (May 17, 24, 31)
4. SINS of INTEMPERANCE: drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar (May 10).



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## **SINS of IMPURITY: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity** (April 19, 26).

Paul said of the Gentiles that “They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more” (Ephesians 4:19).

**The list of these sins are sins of impurity.** In the context of Galatians, Paul said, “But I say, ...” which I take to be a contrast to the biting and devouring one another he had warned them to stop (15). Instead, he said, “*walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh*” (16).

And this impurity is connected to sexual impurities. The sexual immorality of our day seems to be wretched but the times in which Paul wrote were as bad, if not worse. Here is some evidence from non-Christian writers to show that the sexual life of the Greco-Roman world.

- Demosthenes | “We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for the day-to-day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes” (Against Neaera, quoted, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 573 B).
- Seneca | “It is hardly possible to mention a great Greek figure who had not his hetaira, his mistress, and often these mistresses were the most beautiful and the most cultured women of their day. Alexander the Great had his Thais, Aristotle had his Herpyllia, Plato his Archeanassa, Pericles his Aspasia, Sophocles his Archippe.

This impurity was rampant and often unnatural as Paul would say.

- Caligula notoriously lived in habitual incest with his sister Drusilla, and the lust of Nero did not even spare his mother Agrippina (Suetonius, Caligula 34; Nero 28).
- In one of his dialogues, Lucian makes Lycinus relate: “It were better not to need marriage, but to follow Plato and Socrates and to be content with the love of boys” (Lucian, *The Lapiths* 39).
- Plato's *Symposium* is about love, but it is homosexual love. Phaedrus begins the subject. “I know not,” he says, “any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved boy” (Plato, *Symposium* 178 D).
- Gibbon writes: “Of the first fifteen Emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct. Julius Caesar was notoriously the lover of King Nicomedes of Bithynia. ‘The queen's rival,’ they called him and his passion was the subject of the ribald songs the soldiers sang. Nero ‘married’ a castrated youth called Sporus and went in marriage procession with him throughout the streets of Rome, and he himself was ‘married’ to a freedman called Doryphorus.”

**This sexual immorality that Paul lists first**, this is from the Greek word *porneia*, which is often translated as fornication. Word studies find that *porneia* in Old Testament times had strong associations with harlotry. The term is rooted in a word meaning: “to sell” and referred originally to prostitutes and prostitution. Over time, it came to mean the one who visits a prostitute and then began to be applied to adultery. In the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Kittel tells us that the rabbis believed “unnatural forms of intercourse” would also be *porneia*. That said, it is apparent that in Jesus' day **sexual activity with a person one is not married to** would meet the definition of *porneia*. A man and woman who are physically intimate with one another and are having or simulating sexual relations would easily fit the definition and standard use of *porneia* in Jesus' time. To be physically intimate with someone not your mate, making physical contact with another person in a sexual way, is *porneia*.

“Fornication,” i.e. the Greek “*porneia*,” actually describes a much larger class of activities, however, than “intercourse between unmarried people.” It is, in fact, the root that we get our word “porno” from, and it covers about the same broad class of behaviors as “porno” does to us today.



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What does the Scripture say about pornea? As a whole, the New Testament uses porneia, most often translated: "fornication," in at least four ways:

- Voluntary sexual intercourse of an unmarried person with someone of the opposite sex (1Corinthians 7:2; 1Thessalonians 4:3).
- A synonym for adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9), which is sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse.
- Harlotry and prostitution (Revelation 2:14, 20).
- And various forms of sexual sin such as homosexuality and bestiality. It is a broad term used to cover any form of sexual sin.

Let's look at some of the Bible's exhortations against this sexual sin:

- Ephesians 5:5 (NASB) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
- 1Thessalonians 4:3 (NASB) For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

**The second word is "moral impurity."** This comes from the Greek word *akatharsia* from which the word catharsis or "cleansing" comes. The alpha at the beginning of the word makes it a negative, meaning: "not cleansing" or "filth" or "filthiness." It also is a more general term than immorality, going beyond the act to the evil thoughts and intentions of the mind. It could include aspects of sexuality that is practiced outside the norm or natural, including what would be child abuse and "kink" as some would say. This word was used in other ancient writings to refer to pus that oozed from an unclean wound.

**The third word is "promiscuity" or sensuality.** The Greek word *aselgeia* originally referred to any excess or lack of restraint but came to be primarily associated with sexual excess. It is *unbridled nonrestraint* that is its connection. It is a fixation of sexuality. The same Greek word appears in:

- Ephesians 4:19 (NASB) and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

It speaks of someone who flaunts their immorality, throwing off all restraint and having no sense of shame, propriety, or embarrassment. William Barclay wrote: "The great characteristic of aselgeia is this, the bad man usually tries to hide his sin; but the man who has aselgeia in his soul does not care how much he shocks public opinion so long as he can gratify his desires."

So walking in the Spirit is the way to address these sins we must crucify. Today's sensuality, pornography and sexual deviancy are all illustrations of the Greek world Christians were commanded to crucify in them – and to crucify this. It is not that sex is bad. It is that sex without the way of the Spirit is feeding the flesh.

1Thessalonians 4:3-7 | *"For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness."*