

# How to Live in Victory Over the Flesh

by J. Sidlow Baxter

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*To live in victory over the flesh, we must continually put on the Lord Jesus Christ, walk in the Spirit, and seek to refine and sanctify our human nature through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 45:09

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, Romans 13:14, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 4:22

**Topics:** "Victory"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not making provision for the flesh and instead focusing on putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. He highlights the negative effects of constantly indulging in worldly influences, such as excessive television consumption, which can lead to negative outlooks and behaviors in young people. The preacher also emphasizes the need for a complete transformation of the mind through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a call to let the beauty of Jesus be seen in our lives, allowing Him to refine our nature and reflect His passion and purity.

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## Transcript

How to live in victory over the flesh. And as a beginning, may I direct your attention to a verse in the Romans epistle. That is, the epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter 13 and verse 14.

Here it is, Romans chapter 13, verse 14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. I think I'd like to read it once again.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Now it is quite plain that when Paul writes in our text, make not provision for the flesh, he is using that phrase, the flesh, in a recondite or figurative way to indicate some serious moral proclivity or predisposition towards sin, which exists in our human nature. He is being seriously wrong, because the apostle exhorts us not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

What then does Paul mean by the flesh? Well now, the Greek word translated as flesh, in our text, is the word sarx, in English letters, S-A-R-X. That word occurs 91 times in Paul's epistles, that is if we include the Hebrews epistle as Pauline. Those 91 occurrences of the word break down as the word is used 37 times of the physical body, 25 times of humanity, or of that which is human.

25 times in a figurative way, meaning an hereditary sin by us in our human nature. And twice it seems to be used in a kind of borderline way. Now, of course, I cannot take you here through all those 27 texts where that phrase, the flesh, is used figuratively of the hereditary sin bent in our moral nature.

But I can at least report to you the result of my own careful scrutiny of them all. The apostle means our inborn animal and selfish urges or propensities. These animosities which create in us a predisposition to sin, we have inherited from our human predecessors along with all those higher and nobler impulses which belong to our total humanhood.

If you look through all those 27 places where Paul uses that expression, the flesh, figuratively, of this moral evil in our nature, you may verify quite easily for yourself that in each case you can substitute for that expression the phrase animal and selfish propensities. That is the common denominator that fits them all, or propensities. It is important indeed that you and I grasp that.

In it, perversity or hereditary sin proneness in you and me must not be thought of as a kind of malignant growth which can be excised by spiritual surgery, or as a so-called old nature which can be eradicated, or as a parasite which can be ripped out from the fibers of the mind, or moral nature. Nor can we think of it as an ugly old man who can be bound and gagged or ejected from our inner being like some troublesome lodger. No, we are not to think of the flesh in that way.

It all means a corruption which is more accurately comparable to a blight, or to a disseminated sclerosis through the physical organism, or to a toxemia. It is not something concentrated inside us which can in any way be treated merely locally. In a word, it is not anything which can be treated in lump form.

It is an inhering, hereditarily received condition, coextensive with the mind. Thank God, that condition in our moral nature can be remedially dealt with through the gospel, by the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, let us look at the advice given in our text.

Romans 13, verse 14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, for the animal and selfish propensities, if I may use my paraphrase, make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. And of course you will observe at once that this apostolic advice is twofold, the first part being positive, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, the second part being negative, make not provision for the flesh.

Now what does that mean? I think we only need to turn to a somewhat correspondent to know what Paul refers to. In that Galatian verse we read, as many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ did put on Christ. So when we took Christ as our Savior and made our profession of it in Christian baptism, we did thereby, by inward receiving and outward witnessing, put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We became His people. But of course besides that initial and soul-saving putting on of Jesus Christ, repeatedly, continually, I know that every morning in my own private prayer, I seek to put on the Lord Jesus afresh as my wisdom and strength and guide and counselor and in every other way my all-sufficiency for the as yet unencountered experiences of the coming day. And all of us with every new daybreak should put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then of course there is such a thing as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ for every new emergency, for every new act of service, for every new challenging experience. We need again and again to put on the Lord Jesus with all His available sufficiency for our every human need. I'm quite sure that the Apostle

includes all that when he says, put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because in this verse he's telling them not of something which they did and did only once of their conversion. He's using the present tense when he says, put on, keep putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. However, I am human enough to suspect that while I'm making these comments, some of us are sitting here inwardly asking, but Mr. Preacher, how is it that when I put on the Lord Jesus Christ daily or for each new emergency or think I do, I seem to fall into defeat, mindful defeat, reminding me of something that happened years ago in Spurgeon's Theological College, London, England, when the famous Charles Haddon Spurgeon, popularly and affectionately known as the Governor, was still very active in that theological college which he himself founded.

Once every week there was a sermon class, and once every week one of the sons of the prophets, on the occasion to which I'm now referring, there was a very self-confident, budding young preacher, giving his sermon, and his subject was putting on the whole armor of God, which we'll tell you at once was that part of Ephesians chapter 6, which begins, Put on, therefore, the whole armor of God. And upon my word, with brilliant oratory and wonderful self-confidence, this young preacher would hear the clank, clank, clank very tightly, making sure that he was well buckled until at last every piece of the armor had been clanked into position. With a wonderful outburst of oratory, he cried, And now we have put on the whole armor, and now where's the devil? Hmm, he's inside the armor.

Somewhat your problem and mine, quite sincerely and effectively at the outset to put on the armor, but somehow there's still something wrong inside. From without, until we have learned how to deal with something within. The negative part, make not provision for the flesh.

That's not only inspired theology, it's very sensible psychology. 19th century gave place to the 20th, for the Middle East, and further east than that. And they set off on an expedition.

Now of course today, it's very common knowledge that malaria is caused by the malarial germ. But it wasn't known then. And it was as a result of that medical expedition, it was first discovered.

And from that moment, medical investigations were devoted to finding on what that malarial germ thrived being. Once we know what is the fructifying environment of that little monster, once we know what is the food on which it lives, then if we can separate it from that on which it feeds, and from that in which it thrives, we can kill it by starvation. We can kill it by neglect.

Now it's something of that that Paul has in mind when he says, make not with neglect, don't give it that on which it can feed. Don't surround it with that amid which it thrives. Separate it from its fructifying environment.

Make not provision for it. I know dear Christian believers, and probably you know some too, who have some peculiarly aggravating problem. Their days, and engages their concentrated attention.

I'm thinking just now of a dear Christian lady who had a certain trouble, and she told me, she said, do you know Dr. Baxter, I determined I would look up every reference to that wretched something in the Bible. And she'd gone all the way from Genesis, and at the time she spoke to me, I believe she was in Corinthians. And don't you see, all the time, she was keeping her mind focused on that thing.

And all the time, the references of the Bible to it, she was giving it exaggerated prominence in her mind, and giving the wretched thing all the food it needed to develop, and develop, and develop. Indeed as you

know, last evening our subject was the importance of prayer. But it's possible, even by prayer, to keep chaining the mind to something which ought to be neglected.

And shall I remind you, I said to Moses, speak no more to me about this thing. I have a feeling, that if this contented deep value, if you are beaten again, and again, and again, by some weakness, some temptation that besets you, I'm asking you to consider Paul's earnest advice in this. Whatever that thing is that is defeating you, instead of simply praying about it, thinking about it, reading about it, talking to your friends about it, turn your mind away from it.

Starve it. Neglect it. Freeze it.

And one sentence, in one of the chats, it burned still. It said this, It is psychologically demonstrable, that people, at which they look most often, today, look at the stuff that comes, and then I thought of the way that thousands of them are living today, and the outlook that many of them exhibit, and the alarming increase in juvenile, and I thought of that sentence again, It is psychologically demonstrable, and then I remembered reading the life, whom John Wesley called, the holiest man in England, and I remembered a sentence, and this holiest man in England says, live looking at him, Jesus. Now if ever a man lived looking at Jesus, John Fletcher did, seer truth and admiration when he said, Fletcher was the holiest man in England, that psychological axiom, you gradually grow like, that at which you look most often.

By way of quick illustration, look in his wonderful face, and you will see the opposite of anger in him. What is it that is defeating you? Is it jealousy? Instead of keep looking at that and trying to battle against it, keep your eye upon him, and in him you will see the opposite of jealousy. What is it that is defeating you? Selfishness? That has a hold which you can't break? Keep looking at him, and in him you will see the sublimest opposite of selfishness, and otherism which goes even to the cross.

What I am trying to say just here is, that the opposite of every evil, you find in glorious perfection in Jesus. And if you will train your mind habitually to keep looking at him, they'll lose their grip and lose their focus. I know this is no five minute cure or nine days wonder, but friends it works.

Make not provision for the flesh. 14. You have your New Testament with you, haven't you? Chapter 5. Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh An exhortation. Walk in the Spirit that if we do walk in the spirit, ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. release us from bondage to the flesh.

Well look first at the walk in the spirit. I notice in the Greek that the noun is in the dative case so it's better to read it walk by. Now a walk is a continuity of steps.

Therefore to walk by the spirit means literally keep step, keep step, keep step with the spirit. King here and what a cat for one thing, king to God. By step incidentals which together make up our daily walk.

It is indeed a remarkable picture of the Christian life. This keeping step by step, step by step, step by step walk with the Holy Spirit means obviously of course it means a continual yieldedness to him. Which in turn devotes sensitivity to him.

Which again in turn brings a continual guidedness by him. And you know of all kinds of guidance that is the sweetest and truest and most constant. I remember when my dear wife and I lived in Edinburgh.

A very wealthy man took us to see through the grounds where he had his beautiful home. And when we passed by the wonderful Arabian steams they were wonderful creatures and I beckoned to them and made a sound with my lips to try and get one of these lovely horses to come to me. Well they all looked at us and seemed to hesitate but none of them came.

And then this friend who was taking us round said, oh they will not come pastor, they will not come. Just put your hand on the wire fence, which I did and quickly withdrew it. That wire fence was just sufficiently electrified to teach those horses not to come again.

They only had to put their noses on it once, that was enough. You may think I have a peculiar kind of mind but the thought that immediately came to me was yes and that may well illustrate the highest kind of spirit is the electric current of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when you and I are truly yielded to Christ and are walking step by step day by day with the Spirit, our inward sensitivity to him makes it possible for him to be all the while guiding us and guarding us and constraining us in the varying episodes of every day.

We cannot always be conscious of the Holy Spirit in the upper stratum of the mind. Even amid the busiest moments we can carry with us a sense of him. As soon as the mind is released from other things, bringing inward guidance for each recurring need of guidance.

I wonder how many of us gathered here just now in this lovely deeper way are walking with the Spirit, keeping step with the Spirit and proving the reality of this guidance every day and every hour. I wonder, well when we quote verses like Galatians chapter 5 verse 16, we are not just dealing with attractive theory, we are dealing with divine realities. This is meant to be current experience in the life of Christian believers.

Keep step with the Spirit. At the assurance in the text that if we do walk by the Spirit, ye shall not fulfill so, though self-sense propensities are still there of dealing with them. In the really yielded believer, this walking closely with the Holy Spirit gives the Holy Spirit the chance he is waiting for to refine the mind.

And when we are walking in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit does refine the mind in all its impulses, in all its desires and native urges and in its being able to conquer the allurements to sin. Friends, there is a teaching widely popular today which can never be improved, let alone regenerated or sanctified. And theoretically, that evil something, that there is no getting without it, this so-called old nature, you can do nothing with it but get it crucified.

But even though it's crucified, you must never think it's dead. If you do, you'll be self-deluded. It's always there, sort of doctrine, but it's very common.

Now friends, it teaches nowhere. The New Testament says that regeneration regenerated me. It wasn't just the superimposition of a and all that I was before now becomes the old nature.

That's not real regeneration at all, but the New Testament says regeneration regenerates me. What about lovely verses like, and to make sure that we understand what holy means, the Apostle immediately specifies the three constituents of our tripartite humanhood. Your whole spirit and be preserved blameless even to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is beyond regeneration or sanctification.

I think of verses like, be not conformed to this age, but be transformed, metamorphosed, completely changed. Be transformed by the complete renewing of your mind. Now one of the things we are needing to recapture in these days is the New Testament teaching that the Holy Spirit can really refine.

It is quite scriptural, Jesus be seen in me, all his wonderful passion and purity, O thou spirit divine, all my nature refine, till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. It's scriptural when Charles Wesley sings, refining fire, illuminate my soul, scatter thy life through every part. Now when we are truly yielded to Christ and really walking step by step with the Holy Spirit, he gets his chance to sanctify us, to renew us, to refine us, to renew us.

Spontaneity, the very thought springs of our mind, begin to fill our minds and thoughts with that which is holy. I wonder how much of that experience we know, I wonder. Well now that means something else, it means that in every sudden emergency the Holy Spirit never becomes a substitute for our will, but he himself infuses his divine power into our human will.

You know there are some of our delightful hymns which talk about our wills being lost in his. I'm not sure that that is exactly scriptural. The Lord doesn't want our will, so to speak, to be lost in his, he wants our will to be one with his, so that we will with him one will.

The Lord never fights our battles for us, but he fights all our battles with us, his will through my will. Now when we are walking in the Spirit, there is that energizing, and we find that whereas there has been who under the pressure of acutely subtle, and through this sin, and sin against God. The physical possibility to sin will always be there, but Joseph was walking so closely with God, that he just couldn't do the evil thing, how can I do this and sin against God.

The whole strength of his moral being rose up and said get thee hence Satan. The Spirit is sanctifying, then there is also this expulsive power against evil. Surgical removal of a suppositionary all nature inside us into holiness are precious truths that we may be.

According to Romans 12.2, so renewed throughout our mind that we become transformed in character. Put ye on the Lord Jesus, make not provision for the flesh, that walk in the Spirit, step by step, and be fulfilled. Friends, you will all agree that this theme is indeed as I said at the outset of deep concern to every Christian believer.

It is exceedingly important that we should know the true meaning of holiness and live in the experience of radiant victory. Don't you think so? And here in this meeting, our Savior is present invisibly, yet nonetheless really and personally present. Get your eyes away from the mere human preacher.

Who is he? He is here simply to point the gaze of your heart to the face of Jesus. And Jesus is the wonderful answer to all our spiritual needs.

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