

Fight! Winning the Internal Conflict

Part 4: Escaping Escapism

(preached 10/27/24)

Please turn to *1 Corinthians 12:12-26*.

LAST WEEK:

- The moment we want to make a change we'll meet resistance...from us.
- The Devil isn't to blame.
- If we've been giving our body what it wants: junk food, booze, etc. it will actively resist us when we try to eat healthier and exercise.
- If we've been following our hearts and emotions it will pout, get depressed, and shut down the moment we try and follow our spirit.
- If we've let our minds run things it will rebel with fear and anxiety when our spirit takes charge because it's no longer controlling everything which it likes to do.
- Our parts aren't evil but some of their desires are. None of them are meant to be in charge.
- Our parts deceive themselves with lies they use to justify meeting sinful desires.
- Our bodies lie to us and say that eating is one of the few pleasures it has and is an effective coping mechanism when things go wrong.
- Our hearts bamboozle us into thinking no one will ever love us except this abusive person, who seems to be the only one willing to stick around.
- Our minds delude us into thinking that we're the only ones who do it right, and thoroughly, and so we must take control of everything to get the desired outcome.
- We respond to every lie with the truth, which begins and ends with God's Word.
- We have respectful internal conversations with ourselves acting as our spirit.
- We swing the Sword of the Spirit against any lies we're telling ourselves, then come up with healthy and Godly alternatives to our desires.
- This will take work! It won't be a matter of merely trying to pray something away or listening to another sermon.

TODAY *we're going to address escapism and how to overcome it.*

We've already spoken of using sinful desires and fears as a

REFUGE or a shelter that we run into when life gets bad: that's escapism. Booze, video games, porn, romance novels, junk food, drugs, binge-watching TV or videos, and social media are just some of the ways that we *escape from dealing with our problems and fears*.

Why do we do these things? **They offer a false shelter from the problems of life.** They're quick and easy, giving an instant payoff...and they're having a scary effect on us all of which is destructive. Time for a science lesson and keep in mind: I'm simplifying this greatly so we can all understand and apply to our lives.

There are 3 “pleasant” hormones our limbic system produces: dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. Now that we all know our “parts” we’ll see how each one corresponds to said hormones.

- The Body/Flesh is motivated by dopamine.
- The Mind is motivated by serotonin.
- The Heart is motivated by oxytocin.

DOPAMINE is the **instantly gratifying pleasure drug** that shoots into our system upon proper stimulation. When we eat something tasty, smoke a cigarette, get a massage, itch a scratch, have some booze, play a video game, have sex, do drugs, etc. we get an “injection” of dopamine.

Addiction takes place when we prioritize pleasure and consistently stimulate ourselves via one of the means above over a period of time. The brain eventually detects “too much” dopamine in the system and turns production of the same DOWN resulting in a “crash.” With little to no dopamine in the system, a person is joyless and often falls into deep despair, depression, and struggles with suicidal thoughts. *They react by ingesting more of the indulgence of choice to continue getting dopamine hits.* While things like drugs are more intense, the same process happens with things like junk food and video games.

Dopamine is also a motivator, driving us to do what needs to be done to meet the need. It's 10pm but we go to the store for cigs, we steal to feed our drug addiction, scrounge for change to get another beer, or apologize & buy flowers hoping to get lucky.

Side note: **the big corporations who produce our food**, tobacco, booze, and electronics are well aware of this and tailor their products to make sure we're addicted to them and spend money.

Sinful desires of the flesh prioritize pleasure and begin lying to us that we “need” and “deserve” these things, despite us knowing that sin is against God and our indulgence is affecting our health in a bad way.

It's not the devil doing this to us:

[Jas 1:14-16 ESV] 14 But each person is tempted when he **is lured and enticed by his own desire**. 15 Then **desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin**, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

SEROTONIN is *the sense of confidence, stability, success*, security, well-being and is the purview of the mind. When all the bills are paid, our jobs are going well, our marriages stable, our kids doing well at school. Perhaps we've paid off a debt, we've lost weight, we get a clean bill of health, or passed the exam. *Since this is an election year:* our candidate took office, the US economy's getting back on track, and policies we approve of are getting passed.

When the mind thinks that life is good, serotonin is the result that makes us feel it. When the mind believes that life is bad it produces **cortisol** aka "the stress hormone" which is what makes us feel anxious, unsettled, and worried. We covered that in our "fear" sermon series.

The mind hates chaos and drama and seeks to establish order. It believes that order brings about peace, security, and confidence. Thus the mind attempts to create successful outcomes through controlling the heart and body, other people, and its environment. It tries to do so through the legislation of rules/commandments and then enforcing the same.

The dark side of the mind is it will trade freedom for peace. It's "cold" and therefore lacking in love, joy, or compassion. It's lack of ability to control the heart & body, its environment, or other people often bring the opposite of what it's trying to achieve: *stress, conflict, and anxiety (cortisol)*.

OXYTOCIN **is the sense of loving and being loved**, connection, compassion, sympathy to others and is the domain of the heart. When we feel loved by and close to God, our spouse, family, and friends oxytocin is what makes us experience the same.

An absence of oxytocin results in feeling distant from God, disconnected with your spouse, and absent from family and friends. Usually results in depression and isolationism.

Have you noticed that **some of the most addictive drugs** start out with the 3 letters “oxy”? That’s because said drugs artificially and harmfully produce oxytocin in our systems despite the fact that *there’s no heart change*. This leads to a “crash” in the heart after the drug wears off resulting in horrible depression, motivating us for more of the “oxy” pill to get that feeling back.

The heart will do anything for this connection and feeling even if it means getting into bad relationships and breaking God’s commands.

There’s another issue: **the amount of energy/resources we have are limited.**

Whichever one we’re addicted to robs from the others.

- Those addicted to dopamine are robbing from their “reserves” of serotonin and oxytocin.
- Those seeking the security and peace of serotonin feel little pleasure in their lives, are often anxious, and are disconnected from God and people.
- Those chasing oxytocin are impulsive, make poor decisions, have broken relationships, and fall into depression.

When we work FROM our spirit, however, we begin the journey back to God’s original plan: internal unity. Agreement. Resonance.

[1Co 12:12-20 ESV] 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, **God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.** 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The Church is called the Body/Temple of Jesus and He is the Head. This chapter is talking about the many different types of people AND the specific roles God has designed them to play. Since Paul is using the human body analogy, he shows us that some are meant to be the hands, others are the feet, some are eyes, mouths, noses, and ears.

Paul uses the same word—**members**—to talk of our body and its parts in Romans 7 that we read last week. In both epistles he says that 1) we shouldn't compete with each other and 2) we should work together.

Specifically: **God Himself DESIGNED us to be at our greatest power, Light, and effectiveness when we're in harmony.**

For this sermon *we have the following “members” in our “church”: the spirit, the heart, the mind, and the body.* God's design is as follows:

- All have a particular purpose that while different are equally needed.
- When functioning in unity they're healthy and can change the world.

Let's divide it up this way in regards to said “church”:

- **Jesus is the Apostle** Who planted/created the Church and oversees it in a “bishop” capacity.
 - The spirit is the pastor.
 - The heart is the worship leader.
 - The mind is the administrative overseer.
 - The body is the “hands on” deacon/doer.
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- Each has a very different role in the church.
 - Each is not only needed but a WONDERFUL part of the church.
 - One part shouldn't look at another part and say “I don't need you” or “I don't belong.”

Our bodies are the ones who operate and do things in the world. If it said “I don't need you” to the mind it would walk in front of a moving vehicle while stuffing its face with a donut.

Our minds are the ones who think, organize, and analyze. If it said “I don't need you” to the heart, it might as well be a lifeless robot just going through the motions yet empty inside.

Our hearts are the center of love and compassion, but without the mind would wear “rose colored glasses” that would blind it to certain truths and inspire impulsive choices.

Our spirit needs all of them, and all of them need the spirit. A spirit w/o Jesus grabs hold of ANYTHING spiritual and supernatural, most of which are demonic. Other religions, witchcraft, astrology, psychics, mediums...the Lord declared all to be an abomination before Him because these things were invented by and lead to Satan.

- **What happens when the body dies?** The spirit is out of the game. The spirit needs a working, healthy body to carry it wherever God has commanded it to go and do what God has willed it to do.
- **The spirit needs the mind** which represents the knowledge and wisdom of God, which are the Lights shining into the darkness of this fallen world deceived by the doctrines of demons.
- **The spirit needs the heart to express** the love of God in the world that sorely lacks it and needs it. It needs the heart to worship and love on Jesus, thanking and praising Him!
- **All the above need the spirit to lead** because it's closest to Jesus and hears Him. It's the only part of us completely cleansed from corruption.

As we just read in 1 Corinthians 12, ***God designed all our parts to depend on each other!*** To work together in agreement and unity.

Escapism is when each part is competing with our other parts to have ITS needs met because it's miserable, rife with problems, and seeks its own version of pleasure as a refuge.

Each part is “worried” that it won't get what they want.

Just like marriage. Just like having kids. Just like any “unit/organization” that consists of 2 or more people.

- Marital disputes occur because one or both don't feel like their needs are being met.
- Kids fight with each other and their parents for the same reason.
- Adults within any organization do the same.

When the spirit leads, everyone gets some of what they want.

- The heart will experience the love of God, marriages improve, family relations are better, and there's forgiveness and reconciliation. **Oxytocin.**
- The mind will see its secure in Christ and that the Lord is a God of order and planning. It will be confident of its standing in God and that Jesus will bring peace when He returns. **Serotonin.**
- The body will have its needs met in a healthy and Godly way, realizing the Lord isn't actually trying to deny it joy. Read 1 Corinthians 7! **Dopamine.**

[1Co 12:21-26 ESV] 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

- If we view one of our parts as being “weaker” it’s time to be more gentle and respectful toward it (not its sinful desires or lies it believes/tells).
- Let our parts work in harmony vs. division.
- Let each part CARE for the other.

SELF-TALK EXERCISE:

- Whenever one of your parts wants to escape, ask it ***“what do you want?”***
- Go deeper than a surface answer.

Ex: your body craves booze.

You: “what does the booze do for you?”

Body: “it makes me forget about my problems I can’t solve.”

You: “and what would that get you?”

Body: “some peace. Feeling like I’m succeeding instead of failing. I’ve messed everything up and feel guilty a lot. It’s easier to just drink.”

You: “So what you really want is a sense of peace and a clear conscience.”

Next you speak firm but gentle Biblical truth to yourself.

You: “If we’re being honest with ourselves, the drinking has only made everything worse and not better. Our relationship with God, our spouse, our kids.... It’s messing things up at work too, which affects our income and ability to live. The Lord says “woe to those who pursue strong drink!” and it’s certainly caused lots of “woe” in our lives.” This road only leads to loneliness and destruction.”

Next offer alternatives.

You: “the Bible goes on to say that instead of being filled with alcohol, we can be filled with God’s Spirit. There are Godly and healthy alternatives that bring peace like praying, listening to music, going for walks, or working on a project. We can talk to someone about our guilty conscience not just to vent, but to seek wisdom and resolution.”

Last call upon your true self: your identity in Christ.

“God didn’t design us to be an alcoholic, but His Temple. We are His resting place and He lives inside us. We’re made in the likeness of Jesus and not this world. We have a purpose in this life and He wants us to be free from guilt...and says we can be. Didn’t He die on the cross to forgive us? Didn’t He rise from the dead so we could live a new life? He hasn’t abandoned us. He’s designed us to walk in holy freedom from the past and to be His Light! This is who we are!”