

I have great confidence in you, brothers and sisters. This lesson is intended to help us in our spiritual growth to “cease to do evil; learn to do good.” (Isaiah 1) Speaking of Isaiah, he

saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up.... 2 Above it stood seraphim.... 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

Glory Demands Purity

The High Priest

You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. **Exodus 28:2; 39:30**

Purity of the Heart

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. **Matthew 5:8**

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, WITH ALL YOUR MIND... **Mark 12:30**

As the Heart Goes, So Goes the Body

Those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies... **Matthew 15:18-19**

We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Ephesians 2:3

The perversions and other sins listed in **Romans 1** are not sins of weakness that happen in a moment.

“Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God... but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (v. 21), and “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” (v. 28) So, God “gave them up to uncleanness” (v. 24), “vile passions” (v.26), and “a debased mind.” (v. 28)

Purity of the Body

First, let’s talk about something that is just plain wrong, in other words, has no good use or value. So we’re NOT talking about, for example, over-eating. (Food is good and can be used to our benefit.) **Just Q-U-I-T if something ... ***

Q) . . . is **Questionable**. The very fact that many people consider it morally wrong casts a dark shadow of doubt over it. **Romans 14:23** teaches that "whatever is not of faith is sin." For something to be "of faith" in the context of Romans 14 there cannot be any doubt about it in the person's mind. Unless you believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that **it's right** to do what you're doing, you have doubt, and so **you sin if you do it** and are keeping company with people who have "defiled their mind and conscience. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work." (Titus 1:15-16)

U) . . . is **Unhealthy**. Harming the body is sinful. I've talked with Christians who are caught up in addiction. The first thing they admit to me is,

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price....

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), but a Christian's **physical body** is, **too!** The passage continues, "Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20)

I) . . . is **Influential**. "Your actions speak so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying." The goal that Paul set for Titus:

In all things showing yourself to be a pattern [or, example] of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. (**Titus 2:7-8**)

You can judge something's influence by whether or not you'd want your kids to know you do it. If you try to hide it from your brethren, your conscience has spoken (is screaming at you).

T) . . . **Takes over**. Addiction. Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (**1 Corinthians 6:12**) Even wholesome things become evil when allowed to take us over. (Reference the recent sermon on spiritual idolatry.)

Now let's talk about things that are mostly good, but have some bad in them.

Illustration of what we tolerate: A plate of dirty food. A fine plate of food. We would not tolerate a hair, a speck of dirt. And while we would never eat a plate of dirt, sometimes, spiritually, we tolerate whole spoonfuls of dirt. *How?*

"I'll eat around the dirt."

"I don't mind the taste (or crunch)."

"I'll chew softly and swallow fast."

"It's not bad for me."

We expose our hearts. The music we listen to – "I just listen to the music." The TV and movies we watch and recommend – "It didn't have that much cussing... did it?"

[Story on self about violent movies changing my speech.] The internet sites we visit.

We defile our hands. When we touch think that we shouldn't, go places we have no business going, eat and drink things that are unhelpful, etc. we are spooning dirt onto our plates and eating. *Do we invent ways to tolerate it?*

Resistance is.... Pitiful.

Some things are just plain unhealthy in ANY measure. (See above to Q-U-I-T.) Other things become unhealthy when not properly handled. “Glorify God in your body.” Now we MAY BE talking about over-eating! But I don’t want to talk about portion sizes and metabolism and genetics of our “containers.” I want us to think about **the heart that is behind our behaviors**. We build up our defenses, and we build fences.

- Are we blind to a problem? We **stay crazy-busy** in hopes we won’t think about it very often.
- Do we have a limited vision of how to glorify God in our bodies? We **look at people who are on or below our level** so we never feel pressured to improve.
- We **focus on the good that we have done...** so we don’t have to go to the next level! (In other words, we **stop trying!**)
- Are we so **prideful** that we will not ask for help?
 - Do **we think Christ cannot help** us control our habits? Do we neglect to pray for his help? (**1 Peter 5:8; Philipians 4:6, 13**)
 - Are we **embarrassed** about asking for our brethren’s help?

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. **James 5:16**
- We **shy away from relationships** so no one will feel comfortable bringing it up.
- We **use humor** to avoid being sober-minded about the topic. “I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (**1 Cor. 9:27 ESV**) “Discipline” comes from a boxing term meaning “to hit under the eye,” that is, “buffet” or “disable.” Oh, bu’ffet, buffet’.... I buffet’ my body daily,” hahaha.
- Are we weak-willed? We **refuse to consider harsh measures** to get control of our behaviors and habits, then we run to the *other* extreme, and can’t imagine any solution. (“Strain out a gnat” – “I don’t HAVE to do THAT hard thing to control my habits!” and “swallow a camel.”) I’ve heard people read Jesus’ command: “If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you.” (**Matthew 18:9**)
 - It does not mean to do that *literally*. After all, you could still look on a woman to lust after her with your other eye, and lust begins in the heart, anyway.
 - **Why do we even put forth that disclaimer?** Are we actually afraid someone would take Jesus literally and mutilate themselves? Do we miss the point that Jesus is commanding harsh measures in order to avoid being cast into hell fire?
- What would you consider a harsh measure? Fasting? (**Matthew 6:16**)
 - It helps us practice self-control. (**2 Peter 1:6**)
 - It helps us humble ourselves before God.
 - It has physical benefits, too.
 - “But we don’t have to!”

We laugh off buffeting our body, we focus on what plucking out an eye does NOT mean, and we dismiss fasting because we don’t HAVE to.

- Okay, how about “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”? (**Galatians 5:24**)

BTW, I don't care whether or not you fast. Fasting is a personal matter. My concern is whether we're willing to do *whatever is necessary* to get control of/"disable" our bodies.

- A couple of real-world examples of extreme measures:
 - How about the little boy who threw a spit wad, and then had to write 1,000 times, "I will not throw spit wads"?
 - How about the woman who, every time she caught herself speeding, made herself pull over to the side of the road and start again?

The Solution

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. **Galatians 5:16**

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. **Romans 12:1-2 NKJV**

13 Gird up the loins of your mind ("prepar[e] your minds for action" ESV), be sober ... not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." **1 Peter 1:13-16 NKJV**

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. **James 4:8-10**

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. **Psalms 24:3-5 NKJV**

Summary

God expects purity of heart and body. Purity Prepares Us for Glory.

Notice Isaiah's change of heart, from "Woe is me!" to "Here I am!"
8 I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?"
Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." **Isaiah 6:1-8**

You can be washed clean through baptism. Why would you delay? (**Acts 22:16**)

If you hope to see Him someday, turn from impure things. "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." **1 John 3:1-3 NKJV**