



## CARNAL?

**Author:** Skip Moen

. . .because **the mind set on the flesh** is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able {to do so,} . . . **[Romans 8:7]**

**The Mind Set On The Flesh**

– How are you doing in your fight for sinless perfection? Are you winning the battle every day or have you suffered defeats? Are you a sanctified soul or a carnal Christian?

Do these questions bother you? They should.

Somewhere along the way, Christianity embraced the Greek metaphysics of the body / mind /soul split. When this alien concept crept into Christian thinking, it eventually led to the postulation of a carnal Christian, the believer who has confessed Christ as Savior but does not live with Christ as Lord. This is the person whose life is characterized by actions that do not glorify God but at the same time claims God's forgiveness and acceptance. The "carnal" Christian has a body under sin's control but a soul that belongs to God. What? Does that mean God saves only part of this person? Does that mean that what happens in my body doesn't really matter as long as my soul is saved? A careful reading of the Bible endorses none of this Greek nonsense, but it certainly is a popular way of explaining behavior. Perhaps we need to take another look at Paul's famous comments about "carnal" Christians (the King James translation of this phrase).

The critical Greek word is *phronema*. This word covers the..

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## Corinthians

| **Author:** Skip Moen

. . .to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been **sanctified** in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

**[1 Corinthians 1:2]**

**Sanctified** - You've got to be kidding! These people, the Corinthians, have been sanctified? No way! They are the worst lot of sinners ever to gather as a worshipping assembly. In fact, they tolerate immorality that Paul doesn't even find among the outright pagans. How in the world can Paul call them sanctified?

The Greek word is *hegiasmenos*, a perfect passive participle of the verb *hagiazō*. The verb itself means "to make holy," but in this case the grammatical structure is really important. First, this verb is in the perfect tense. That means it is an action in the past that has continuing results. Keep that in mind while we notice that this is also a passive construction. That

means it is an action *done to* someone by another agent. In other words, the action in the past that continues to have effect today was not our action. It was God's action. He sanctifies, not us. Finally, we see that this verbal form is a participle. It is an on-going action that acts like an adjective. It adds some characteristic to the subject. And the subject is *us*, you and me and the Corinthians. We have been acted upon by God in the past and that action continues to affect us today. He set us apart, blessed by His name, and the consequence of His action continues.

Something wonderful has happened. God acted upon us. He stirred us toward Him. He set our course. And He isn't giving up any time soon. Of course, we can always resist, rebel and reject, but that does *not* change the fact that God's past act provides for our sanctification. We have to work out the manifestation of being holy in our lives, but we did not have to *establish* it. God did that - and no man has the right or ability to remove God's handiwork.

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# Corinthians

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This is a terribly important lesson for all believers. Inevitably, we will encounter those among the assembly who just don't seem to meet our standards. Perhaps we will encounter these pitiful types when we look in the mirror. But no matter where we meet them, we must always be mindful that God has done a work in their lives and that God's work hasn't stopped affecting them. The game isn't over. The transformation process continues. These are not enemies. They are fellow travelers. Even that person in the mirror is still traveling with us, trying to let God's sanctification become a present reality. What matters most is our compassion for the fighters. We are together in this. We rejoice together. We weep together. We repent together. We exult together. As soon as we stop remembering that God's work is completed, continuing and characteristic, we become the hypocrites we once were. So, take my hand and squeeze it tight. God called us, and I need you.

**Topical Index:** sanctified, *hagiazo*, 1 Corinthians 1:2

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## CARNAL?

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...the entire translated phrase, "the mind set on". *Phronema* means "what one has in mind, purposes or thoughts." In this case, Paul says the purpose or thoughts of this mental condition is *sarx*, the flesh. This should remind us of the passage in Genesis 6:5, "the intent of the thoughts of the heart." But notice that the Hebrew equivalent does not suggest a split spiritual state where men confess God but act disobediently. In the Genesis equivalent, the thoughts of their minds were given over to evil and, as a result, God brought judgment upon

...the earth. These were a long way from the "carnal" Christian bifurcation we find today. In Genesis, intent and purpose in thoughts leads directly to judgment, not excuse. In the ancient world, if your mind was filled with purposes of the flesh, you were not standing in God's grace. You were not redeemed. You died in the flood along with all the other evil people in the world because the mind whose purposes and intents are determined by *sarx* is the enemy of God. In Hebrew thought, this is *yester ha'ra* run amuck.

**Paul is a Jewish Messianic rabbi.** Do you suppose that he entertained the Greek tripartate division of human beings (body, mind and soul)? Not likely. Paul's anthropology was homogenized; the *neshama* or *nefesh* was one person all mixed up together embodied in this world. God doesn't save the soul and leave the body to rot. *That's Greek, not Hebrew.* So, if Paul would never have accepted the division of human being into parts, then how could he possibly suggest that spiritual existence could be divided between the carnal and the spiritual? If the purposes and intents of my mind (read *neshama* or *nefesh*) are filled with hostility toward God, doesn't that force us to conclude that such a person is *not* redeemed? After all, this person is an enemy, not a humble seeker. This person is *dominated* by the *yester ha'ra*, not struggling against the evil inclination in order to be obedient to the Lord.

Does that mean that Christians are only those who no longer experience the fight for personal holiness? Of course not. That fight goes on for a long, long time. But the person who isn't fighting probably isn't domesticated to God. I am either motivated to obey and struggling to do so, or I am capitulating to the evil inclination and comfortable with the result. *I am either fighting for God or fighting against Him.* There are no fence-sitters in this war.

**Topical Index:** *yester ha'ra*, *sarx*, *phronema*, mind, body, soul, **Genesis 6:5**, **Romans 8:7**, carnal



*"Christianity started in Palestine as a fellowship; it moved to Greece and became a philosophy; it moved to Italy and became an institution; it moved to Europe and became a culture; it came to America and became an enterprise."*

Rev. Sam Pascoe

## REVOLVING DOOR

| **Author:** Skip Moen

*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* **Matthew 3:2 [NASB]**

**Repent** - Repentance is the first step to becoming human again (see yesterday's Today's Word). Since it is now a vital issue for every homo sapien, we need to explore the concept and process of repentance a bit more. It's no longer just a religious idea about getting right with God. Now it's a concern about who I really am. Without repentance, I cut myself off from the purpose of God and that purpose is to be uniquely human in the world. In other words, one of the dynamics of being human is to be purposeful. To be in God's image is to be purposeful about God's intentions for me. When I either do not know what those intentions are or I do not pursue those intentions even if I know what they are, then I make of myself something other than "in His image." Repentance is the way back. *Continued on page 3*

## REVOLVING DOOR

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The Bible sees repentance as more than simply confession and request for forgiveness. Repentance must be followed by atonement and atonement by transformation. Unless atonement and transformation are consequences of repentance, then repentance has not occurred. That's why *regret* is not the same as repentance. Regret is remorse for what I have done (usually because my actions have caused me pain and suffering). Regret proclaims that I wish I had not done what I did. But regret is not the determination to never do these acts again. Regret is feeling sorry, contrite or even lament over past behavior but it does not necessarily redirect future actions. It might make us much more careful, but it doesn't have to change our direction. Repentance is a change in the moral compass – or it is nothing at all.

How can we tell the difference? "If the sinner repents the sin, atones, and attains reconciliation with God, the sin is wiped off the record, the sinner forgiven, and the sinners' successors rendered blameless. The mark of repentance comes to the surface when the one-time sinner gains the chance to repeat the sinful deed but does not do so; then the repentance is complete." [1]

The Jewish concept of repentance is much like the Jewish concept of education. I have not learned anything if I can repeat the facts, do the calculations, recite the text. I have only learned when what I have absorbed *changes the way I live*. Until that moment, no true education has occurred no matter how many courses I have taken. So it is with repentance. Until I no longer do what I used to do, repentance is only a word in the lexicon. It is not a reality in my life nor are its consequences a reality with the community and with God. *Teshuvah* requires altered behavior. There is no way around it. To believe is not to gather mental or spiritual stowage. To believe is to *change direction*.

**Topical Index:** repent, *teshuvah*, transformation, Matthew 3:2

[1] Jacob Neusner, *Judaism When Christianity Began*, p. 154.



### Sin in Repose

| Author: Skip Moen

*. . . sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.*

**Genesis 4:7 [NASB]**

**Crouching** – Genesis chapter 4 is the story of Cain and Abel. It is a story that we have probably known since childhood. It is the story of the results of allowing the *yetzer ha'ra* to guide emotions. God knows that emotional situations can become the seedbed for sinful acts. He sees Cain's depression. He knows that there are two monumental choices facing Cain. Cain can agree with God's assessment of the situation and take steps to repair the relationship, or Cain can defend himself, refuse God's offer and let his emotional state carry him into another action.

The text tells us that sin is crouching at the door. Notice some very important things about this statement. First, sin is still outside. It is right there, ready to come in if invited, but it is not yet part of the emotional equation. The word used here is *ravats*. It means "a resting place." In almost every occurrence in the Old Testament it is associated with "repose" or "rest after exertion." It does not carry with it the idea of something evil lying in wait. In fact, this word is used many times to symbolically describe the rest of sheep under the shepherd's care. Translations that imply that this verse means sin is crouching like a tiger, ready to spring into action probably miss the mark. God says to Cain, "Sin is in repose just outside you. If you choose to accept my solution, it will

stay there. It cannot begin to work until you open the door. But if you don't heed my warning, if you let the *yetzer ha'ra* guide your emotions, sin will have the opportunity it needs to spring into action. Be careful, Cain."

Then God closes His conversation with this remark, "Sin's desire is for you but you must master it." Sin wants control. Sin needs control. The word for *desire* used here occurs only three times in the Old Testament. In both of the other occurrences, the word indicates a turning point, a moment when the person (Havvah in the Genesis 3 account) opts for actions controlled by personal desire rather than godly advice. God makes it very clear. Sin wants to own you. Sin wants a controlling, intimate involvement with you. And it will use the emotional gateway to get what it wants.

But God says that Cain can be sin's master. It is up to him. Choose! "You still have time, Cain. You can still reverse this emotional roller coaster you are on and prevent the downhill slide. Nod your ascent to my evaluation of the circumstance of your life. Agree that I am your King and deserve your tribute. And it will be acceptable. You will find joy. You will be released from this depression."

How often do we find ourselves standing next to Cain, receiving God's gentle instructions about the direction of our emotional decisions? How often have we discovered the power of the *yetzer ha'ra* is not in choosing, but in desiring what must not be chosen? But have we learned that sin has *no power* on its own. It lies dormant at the door and as long as the door remains closed, it can do *nothing* to harm us.

Perhaps that's why Sha'ul tells us that sin entered the world by Adam's act of opening the door. That's the way it enters our world too. We need more practice keeping the door shut. It helps to remember that there is no door handle on the outside.

**Topical Index:** Genesis 4:7, sin, *yetzer ha'ra*, crouching, *ravats*, repose

# An Internal Disagreement

*And God separated the light from the darkness. [Genesis 1:4]*

A believer has two principals at work within him. In his natural estate he was subject to one principle only, which was darkness; now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. Consider the Apostle Paul's words in the seventh chapter of Romans: "I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of G-d, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."<sup>1</sup> How is this state of things occasioned? "G-d separated the light from the darkness." Darkness, by itself, is quiet and undisturbed, but when the L-rd sends in light, there is a conflict, for the one is in opposition to the other, a conflict that will never end until the believer is altogether light in the L-rd.

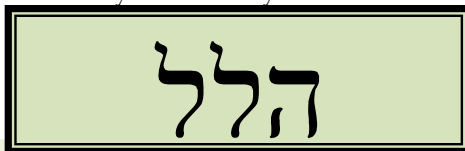
If there is a division inside the individual Christian, there is certain to be a division outside. As soon as the L-rd gives light to any man, he proceeds to separate himself from the darkness around; he withdraws from a merely worldly religion of outward ceremony, for nothing short of the Gospel of Christ will now satisfy him, and he removes himself from worldly society and frivolous amusements and seeks the company of the saints, for "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."<sup>2</sup>

The light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. What G-d has separated, let us never try to unite; but as Christ went outside the camp, bearing His reproach, let us come out from the ungodly and be a special people. He was holy, harmless,

The light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. What G-d has separated, let us never try to unite; but as Christ went outside the camp, bearing His reproach, let us come out from the ungodly and be a special people. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and as He was, so we are to be nonconformists to the world, dissenting from all sin, and distinguished from the rest of mankind by our likeness to our Master.

1 Romans 7:21-23 | 2 1 John 3:14

There are so many voices vying for our attention today: Politicians, teachers, family and friends. Sometimes it's tough to know who we can trust. But when G-d gives us direction, we know His word is absolutely trustworthy.



The Hebrew word for **praise** is Hallel

spelled הלל. We get Hallelujah from this word. The letter lamed ל in the ancient picture language was that of a shepherds staff: ׀ It represents the idea of authority and control. The letter also represents the tongue.

Whenever a letter or word is doubled in Hebrew it is for emphasis and makes it the greatest. The letter ׀ in Hebrew stands for the word "the". We see two different concepts here. We see Hallel

or הלל can mean "the tongue of tongues" which is the greatest thing we can do with our tongue is to "praise" G-d with it. The other idea is that to "praise" is the best way we can control where we are going!

---May the L-rd bless you and keep you!

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## Today's Blessing

*Father, may we walk, today, with divine atonement – at-one-ment, totally unified with You, the Father, Jesus Christ Your son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. May we walk with the peace of G-d that surpasses all understanding, with the knowledge from You that we are blessed and You delight in the zeal of our boldness for Your Kingdom. We rejoice knowing that we are your sons and daughters set free by the blood of Jesus Christ.*

*And now may the Lord bless you, and may the Lord keep you, and may the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and may the Lord be gracious unto you and give you His peace. ---AMEN. [Numbers 6:24-26]*

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