

Chapter 13

The Bad Part Of You *Your God-wannabe*

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find (Romans 7:18).

This scripture makes it clear that the "bad" part of me can be termed my "flesh." When the Bible uses the term "flesh," most of us immediately jump to the conclusion that what is being referred to is our entire self, and it is "bad." We think that "flesh" always causes us to be engaged in sinful behavior, such as fornication, drunkenness, or idolatry (Galatians 5:19-21).

However, it may surprise you to know that when the Bible uses the term "flesh," it is not always talking about a "bad" thing. For example, when the Bible said that Jesus came in the flesh, did He come in something that was "bad?" Since He was sinless, He couldn't possibly be a part of something that was sinful. ¹

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. (1 John 4:2-3).

The Lord also spoke to the people of Israel and said,

Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19).

¹ **Romans 1:3**, Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.

1 Peter 3:18, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

1 Peter 4:1, Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

2 John 1:7, For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

It is evident from the context that the "heart of flesh" that the Lord was going to give them is a good thing, not a bad thing.

When "Flesh" Is Not Bad

In fact, there are several ways that "flesh" (the Greek word *sarx*) in the Bible refers to something that is not "bad." What follows are primarily New Testament references, which were written in Greek.

1. Flesh can refer to our entire person.
2. Flesh can refer to the physical part of man.
3. Flesh can refer to our creatureliness and frailty, the fact that we are finite and vulnerable.
4. Flesh can refer to something that is purely natural or external.^{2 3}

Fuzzy Words

In our Western world we like to think our words are precise tools which we can use to understand perfectly what someone else is saying. We tend to transfer this concept to the Bible and to the languages in which it was written. With accurate definitions we can clearly understand Scripture. But often words are not so precise.

Have you ever wondered why biologists, anthropologists, and other scientists use such long words to specify a certain species (for instance, "*saintpaulia ionantha*" for "African violet")? They do this so that when they talk with other scientists, they know exactly what species is being discussed. They do this because many English words have numerous meanings, some meanings of a given word being unrelated to each other.⁴

For instance, the English noun "round" has several possible meanings. When hunting, or on the firing range, it refers to one thing (a bullet).

² Rudolf Bultmann adds to the variety of the meanings of *sarx*: "In fact, like *psyche* and *pneuma* . . . *sarx* can even be used to designate the person himself" (p. 233). And, "Thus, *sarx* can mean the whole sphere of that which is earthly or natural . . . Or, differently said, 'to live' or 'to walk in the flesh' means nothing else than simply 'to lead one's life as a man,' an idea which in itself does not involve any ethical or theological judgment but simply takes note of a fact; not a norm but a field or a sphere is indicated by 'in the flesh'" (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Part II, pp.234, 235-236).

³ See Endnote #13-1 for more details concerning the meaning of *sarx*.

⁴ See Endnote #13-2 for more details on "fuzzy" words.

When in a bar drinking, it refers to something else (drinks for everyone). It would be a good idea if the bartender did not confuse these two meanings when you ask for a "round." Otherwise it might hurt a lot.

Many of the important concepts in the Bible are explained using fuzzy words (since that was all that was available to the writers). Then how can we understand what the author is telling us? We can gain an accurate understanding by paying attention to the "context," to what the writer is talking about at the moment. The bartender needs to recognize that the person wants to buy drinks. The manager of the firing range needs to recognize that the person wants some ammunition.

Sarx (the Greek word for "flesh") is one of those fuzzy words. It is unfortunate and confusing that the word "flesh" has such a wide range of meanings. But with careful study of the context of various biblical passages in which the word is used, we can better understand what the writer is trying to say. We always must be on guard so that we do not apply the wrong meaning in a given context or situation.⁵

The Bad Part

In the New Testament sometimes the term "flesh" does not mean something bad, but in other passages it does mean a bad thing in us. When "flesh" is referring to the "Bad Part," it can be referring to one of three possibilities.

When "flesh" is referring to the "Bad Part," it can be referring to one of three possibilities:

- 1. Sensuality or lawlessness. Here it means a disregard for God's moral standards.**
- 2. Trying hard to be good!**
- 3. Our tendency to respond to perceived wounding with bitterness, judgment, and blame.**

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Also see Endnote #4-1 and Endnote #13-1 for discussions of the importance of context when encountering a "fuzzy" word.

It may be a surprise to you that to try to be good by your own willpower is not just futile, it is in fact sinful. The tendency to do this comes out of your "flesh" – the "Bad Part."⁶

The Common Denominator

Behind all three of these tendencies of the Bad Part is a common theme. All of these tendencies are based upon a "self-reliant attitude of the man who puts his trust in his own strength and in that which is controllable by him."⁷ There is something in us, in our "flesh," which wants to be God. This is what happened in the Garden of Eden: Satan told Eve, "*For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God*" (Genesis 3:5). Eve and Adam believed Satan and ate of the fruit. From that moment on, we humans have had the tendency to want to be our own god. That is the dynamic behind the "Bad Part" of each of us, which is one of the uses of the word "flesh."⁸

The Primal Sin

This desire to take God's place, to be our own god, is foundational to our difficulties in this life. This desire and drive is therefore the "Primal Sin"---the bedrock of our sinful side.

"For just this is the essence of flesh: the essence of the man who understands himself in terms of himself, who wants to secure his own existence . . . This then is sin: rebellion against God, forgetting that man is a creature, misunderstanding oneself and putting oneself in God's place" (Bultmann, Existence and Faith, p.81).

⁶ In Jesus' day the Pharisees were not trying to be bad (# 1 in the box above), but they were trying to be good (# 2 above). They were trying diligently (with their own willpower) to obey the Law. Yet Jesus told them they were of their father the Devil (John 8:44), and they were white washed tombs full of dead men's bones (Matthew 23:27-28). In other words, Jesus said they were not only failing to keep the Law, but they were full of sin in trying to do so.

The Pharisees were under the delusion that they had in themselves the strength to obey the Law. As we have seen, this is a subtle but profound way of taking God's place. When we are reaping from the operation of God's law, we are in fact impotent (see Chapter 2). To think that we have the power to stop this reaping is demeaning to God. If we could do it ourselves, Christ died in vain.

Also see Endnote #13-3 for scriptures that clearly show that trying to keep the Law in our own strength is sin.

⁷ Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Part I, p.240.

⁸ **See Endnote #13-4** for more information about flesh and sin in Scripture.

"But man misunderstands himself and puts himself in the place of God. And every man comes out of a history that is governed by this misunderstanding. He comes out of a lie; he is determined by the flesh whose power he

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cannot break. Were he to imagine that he could break it, he would assume that he does have himself in his own power after all and would thereby repeat the primal sin" (Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Part I, p.83).⁹

My God-wannabe Builds The Wall

In Chapter 9, "There Is Buried Treasure," I referred to The Wall that separates me (my Head) from myself (my Treasure Inside). This Wall closes me off from an awareness of the living God who dwells in me. You may recall that The Wall was made up of Bitter Root Judgments and Inner Vows, both of which spring from this same bad place in me - my tendency to take God's place. When I judge, I am taking God's place as judge. When I make an Inner Vow, I am deciding to take care of myself, because I don't trust God to do it. I am deciding to run my own life, because in that "Bad Part" of me (my flesh) I don't trust God; and I have the delusion that I can do it better.

I need to have the blood of Jesus ever available to me, so that He can clean up the mess that my God-wannabe keeps making inside me.

This exact tendency has created difficulties in my own life. My parents were unavailable and not trustworthy to meet my needs. So I learned to trust only in myself, and I made a decision to do it myself.

⁹"The primal sin is not an inferior morality, but rather the understanding of oneself in terms of oneself and the attempt to secure one's own existence by means of what one himself establishes, by means of one's own accomplishments" (Bultmann, Existence & Faith, p.81).

"And since all pursuit, even the perverted sort, is, in intention, pursuit of life, this means seeking life where it is not - in the created world. For to deny God as Creator is to turn away from Him to the creation. . . Hence, the ultimate sin reveals itself to be the false assumption of receiving life not as the gift of the Creator but procuring it by one's own power, of living from one's self rather than from God" (Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Part I, p.232).

See Endnote #13-5 for more on this "primal sin" in mankind.

What makes this even more insidious is that our culture so highly values independence, and this ability to be self-sufficient is seen as a good thing. I certainly saw it this way.

Also, if my parents had met my needs, I would now find it easy to trust those in charge. I would now find it easy to trust that Jesus is active in my life, and that He is looking after my needs. I would not now think I am alone in my struggles, as I often do. Fortunately, God is now at work repairing this in me!

As with many things, we need freedom. We need to be able to act on our own behalf when this is appropriate, and to be able to be dependent when this is appropriate. When we make an Inner Vow, as I did ("I will always have to do it myself") we have lost freedom. Then it is very difficult to be dependent when it is appropriate. Then it feels very uncomfortable to really trust another person to meet our need. In fact, living independently is probably so automatic that we don't give it a thought. We just do it. Because of this wound in me, God has had to work very hard in getting me to trust Him and to depend on Him.

My reaction to my parents planted Bitter Roots in me. My "God-wannabe," the "Bad Part" that impelled me to react as I did, is a part of my fallen nature. I will never lose the tendencies that spring from this "Bad Part" as long as I walk this planet. In addition, because it is a part of my very being, it operates so automatically that it has done its work before I am aware of it. Therefore, I need to have the blood of Jesus ever available to me so that He can clean up the mess that my God-wannabe keeps making inside me.

Don't "Throw The Baby Out With The Bathwater"

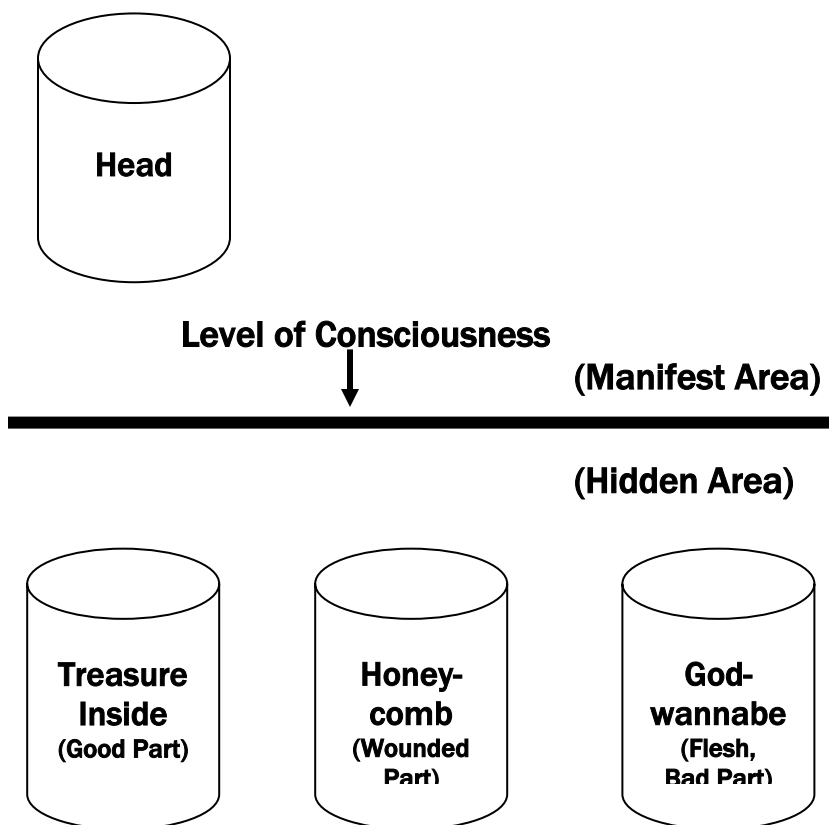
When we judge ourselves, or try to "die to self," it is because we have come to see everything hidden inside us as "bad." Everything seems to be in one "container." Since pain and the impulse to bad behavior come from someplace "inside," we conclude that everything "inside" is "bad."

However, below our level of consciousness there are at least three areas, which are symbolized by the containers in the diagram that follows (I have previously discussed each of these areas in detail in Chapters 2-4, 9, 12 and 13).

This diagram is an over-simplification of what we are like inside, presented to help you understand that everything inside us is not the "Bad Part." There is much more. Because Scripture is not precise about it, I

cannot be dogmatic about everything that is inside each of these "containers," nor that there are only three "containers" hidden inside. But I can with the backing of Scripture say that there is a Good Part, there is a Bad Part, and these two parts do not constitute all there is. I can also infer that there is a part somewhere inside that contains good roots and bad roots. We are incredibly complex inside, and the Lord is the only one who knows the whole picture. What is most important is to know that there is both a "Bad Part" and a "Good Part" inside us.

There Are Multiple Places Inside Us



You will see a similarity between the left side of this diagram and what I talked about in Chapter 9, "There Is Buried Treasure."

When we judge ourselves, we confuse the Treasure Inside (the "Good Part," the image of God in us) with the God-wannabe ("Bad Part")

and with the Bitter Roots (the black places in the "Honeycomb"). We lump all these together. We therefore condemn everything hidden inside us. We literally "throw the baby out with the bath water." The "Good Part" (the image of God in us that is innocent) gets condemned along with the part(s) that are guilty.

Understanding that there are several parts hidden in us will facilitate treating each part appropriately. Our Treasure Inside and God-wannabe (Flesh) can't be changed (or "healed"). They will always be what they were from the moment that Adam and Eve fell.

On the other hand, the "Honeycomb" (discussed Chapter 3, "Remove All The Bad Roots") can be healed. It is in a sense the "battle ground" where darkness and light compete. When, because of the influence of our God-wannabe, we judge, a Bitter Root is planted in our Honeycomb. However, this damage can be repaired by forgiving and being forgiven by Jesus. The Bitter Root can thus be changed into a good root through the blood of Jesus. Then light wins over darkness. Then the new good root will produce good fruit.

Finally, the image of God in us needs to be affirmed and loved. Love is the "fuel" that our Treasure Inside runs on. This is why it is so devastating to judge and to hate that part. Receiving "The Blessing" (see Chapter 10) helps us develop a love for our Treasure Inside, and thus to differentiate it from the other "parts."

Where Does "Die To Self" Fit In?

There is a perspective that says that we should "die to self." This view, while not uncommon in churches, often has destructive results. Many who advocate and teach this perspective often correctly say there is a part of us that does need to die and be reborn in the likeness of Jesus. However, the destruction in "die to self" comes about through a misunderstanding of what is meant by "self." These students get the impression this means that everything inside them is bad and needs to "die." In other words, in the diagram on page 204, everything below the "Level of Consciousness" needs to "die."

When this misunderstanding exists, though they are believers in Jesus, these students are prone to "The Big Hurt," and feel defeated. They develop a deep distrust of everything inside them - they "throw out the baby with the bathwater." Their Treasure Inside does not need to be obliterated, because he or she is made in the image of God (and therefore

thrives on love). In fact, being a part of the person's essence, it is impossible to eliminate the Treasure Inside. These believers are wounded and miserable because they are doing exactly the opposite of what they need to do - they are hating rather than loving their Treasure Inside (Matthew 22:39). Because their Treasure Inside is real, he or she continues to "speak" to them by sending up pain. Thus they attempt to build The Wall in order to suppress all that is inside.

Creating An Insolvable Dilemma

To the degree that they succeed in building The Wall, they experience all the problems that The Wall creates. To the degree they do not succeed, they feel guilty and condemned. It is an insolvable dilemma, because either way they lose. They become miserable and defeated.

As I have previously shown, when we attempt to gain an understanding of biblical principles, a great deal of what we struggle with is based upon a misunderstanding of what a particular word means. These misperceptions are understandable for a couple of reasons. Since so many of the theological words we use have such broad ranges of meaning, how do we know which meaning applies in a particular passage? And there are always difficulties in translating from Greek to English. In addition, our popular culture and the New Age have redefined some words that would otherwise be useful. In order to avoid such a tragic misunderstanding, I would recommend not using the phrase "die to self." It would be much more accurate and fruitful to speak about Jesus pulling out the bitter roots and replacing them with His presence inside.¹⁰

Pride

In much of the church, one of the greatest sins that one is to avoid committing is the sin of pride. In this case, the use the term "pride" is meant to describe the human tendency to want to be our own God. I think this is misleading, or perhaps even dangerous, because the word "pride" is then usually understood to mean "I am really something

¹⁰ "Die to self" appears nowhere in the New Testament, and is in fact contrary to the clear teachings of the Bible. See **Endnote #13-6** for more details on "die to self."

great."¹¹ Therefore, to eliminate "pride" means to come to the place where "I am nothing." Consequently, to label a person's flaw as "pride" is to put him or her on a quest to see themselves as "nothing." As I have just been discussing, people are not "nothing." They are made in the image of God. Seeing themselves as "nothing" aggravates the already present low esteem of self that most people have, and perhaps paradoxically brings about building of The Wall, and further wounding and destruction inside. Ironically, seeing themselves as nothing will likely impel people into arrogant behavior, as a means of not feeling like a worm. Most braggarts are like this.

Arrogant behavior (or "pride") is a sin,¹² whereas the "Bad Part" I have just described is our sin-nature, our God-wannabe. The sin of "pride" can be repented of and washed in the blood of Jesus.¹³ Then it is gone. It no longer exists as far as God is concerned. On the other hand, what I have described as our God-wannabe is not "pride." It is something much deeper, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with how we feel about ourselves. It is a part of our very nature as a result of the fall, and it is in every human being. There is nothing we can do to remove it. It will be present as long as we live on this earth; and it is present in people whose "self-esteem" is practically zero.

¹¹ Webster's Dictionary defines "proud," in part, as "having or displaying excessive self-esteem." The word "pride" is, in part, defined as "the quality or state of being proud: inordinate self-esteem."

¹² It is interesting that the term "pride" is very rare in the New Testament. It only appears three times (Strong's, p.840). Apparently the New Testament writers did not see it as a major issue to be addressed. In light of this low emphasis, it is interesting how much emphasis the Western church has placed on the need to not be "proud." In contrast to this, sexual sins like "fornication" and "adultery" are addressed dozens of times in the New Testament.

¹³ **Isaiah 43:25**, "*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.*"

Jeremiah 31:34b, "*For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*"

Legalism

Legalism is deadly. Legalism is the process of trying to please God by keeping His rules, by trying to live a holy life through our willpower. However, if our “bad behavior” is bad fruit from a bad root, attempting to keep the rules is worse than futile. It is sin. Our God-wannabe will impel us to try to do it ourselves. Therefore, when we are told what we are supposed to do without being taught HOW the blood of Jesus can change us inside, we are actually being encouraged to sin! It is because of this deadly trap that Jesus was so hard on the scribes and Pharisees.

Summary

The word “flesh” in the New Testament refers to a wide range of things, many of which are not “bad.” However, one use of the word “flesh” does refer to the place inside us which does not trust God, and which wants to take His place. It is out of this fallen place that most (if not all) of our tendency to sin arises. It manifests itself in disregard of God’s commandments, in zeal to obey Him out of our own strength (our willpower), and in our tendency to take His place by judging.

When we are children, we don't understand that we are multifaceted inside. Therefore, when we discover that we sometimes tend to be “bad,” we then judge everything hidden inside us as “bad.” We then “throw the baby out with the bathwater.” This is tragic, because there is a “good” place inside us that needs to be loved. Not being able to love that “good” place brings about destruction in our lives.

When we understand the truth that we are multifaceted inside, that there are “good,” “bad,” and “wounded” places inside us, we are in a position to begin to successfully walk out our healing.

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:32, 36).