

Spiritual Denial

Jack Elder

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I know you can't see this cartoon, but I'm a big Dilbert fan. Having retired from a corporation, I've seen most of this. He makes a cartoon out of all the silliness that takes place within a corporation. I've seen probably ninety-nine percent of that silliness. So, I appreciate Dilbert. And anyhow, he's got a cartoon here. He looks like he's doing a power point in front of his boss. You know his little pointy-haired boss. It's a dry run. There's a CEO coming, but he's doing a dry run here. And Dilbert says in the first panel here, he's pointing to his power point. He says, "I based my estimate on a reliable input from people who just wanted me to leave them alone." And he's got like fourteen percent there. I don't know what he's driving at there. But anyhow in the second panel, he says that he's decided against labeling it, putting his name to it because he wants to marry a deniability. In other words, he didn't want to be attached to this silly thing he was doing at all. A little bit of humor there!

But the deniability part, as you know, I'm going to speak about spiritual deniability. When we really think about that in the spiritual context, deniability can be a very serious thing.

Well, what do I mean by that? I've taken kind of an approach to this. A lot of times an alcoholic or an addict refuses to deal with a problem. Neil talked a little bit about that in his sermonette. We have problems and sometimes we just don't want to think about them. It's just too uncomfortable. So we'll just basically deny them.

I have a couple of granddaughters, as you probably heard me talk about before. But anyhow they both have t-shirts. And each one of the t-shirts says, "My sister did it!" (Laughter!) And us adults aren't too far from that one when you think about that.

The definition of denial—actually there's a whole handful of definitions. You can look those up online which all of us do. (It makes it easy on us speakers anymore. We can look up almost anything online and come up some verbiage to express what we're trying to talk about.) But there's just a few basic descriptions that will get the point across of what I'm trying to get across here. And these are from medical dictionaries, online medical dictionaries, because they recognize denial as a problem that can lead to serious clinical outcomes, as we're aware of.

Okay, the first definition of denial is; it says, "It's an unconscious defense mechanism in which emotional conflict and anxiety are avoided by refusal to acknowledge those thoughts, feelings, desires, impulses, or facts that are consciously intolerable." That's a long-winded way of saying, "We just don't want to deal with it." That's from Mosby's Medical Dictionary, Eighth Edition, © 2009.

From psychiatry, a definition of denial from psychiatry, it says, "It's a primitive ego defense mechanism by which a person unconsciously negates the existence of a

disease or other stress producing reality in his or her environment by disavowing thoughts, feelings, etc."—very similar to the first definition.

And another one says, "It's a psychological process by which painful truths are not admitted into an individual's consciousness." In other words, it's an attempt to escape the consequences of a reality in a person's life, whether that be a medical condition or some other condition.

And the point being with those definitions is that we can do the same thing spiritually. In fact, we do if we're not very careful.

So what's the problem? What do we tend to be in denial about?

Remember from one of the definitions, actually from a couple of them there, said it was a "primitive" definition. It was an ego defense; it's a mind defense mechanism. That idea actually came from Sigmund Freud as an online encyclopedia would lead us to. He and other psychoanalysts in their observations of human behavior recognize that most people at some time in their life will employ this little device of denial in order to get around some kind of a stressful situation, in order to be able to cope with it.

In essence, it's part of what we call human nature and scripturally, goes clear back to the beginning. And that's what I'm talking about. We have human nature. And sometimes we forget about that. Neil alluded to it a little bit of that in his sermonette. But I just have some reference Scriptures back in Genesis. You don't need to turn there, but if you want to. And we can kind of just run through a little bit and kind of see where this actually originated, where that human nature came from, which just allows this denial mechanism to begin with.

And we can go back and we can remember that the one that we know that later became Jesus Christ created the earth, created every living thing, created man, gave him dominion over everything. And then Genesis 1 verse 31, He saw everything that He made and it was very good! So far so good. There's no problems at this point. So here we have the historical record that God created mankind and everything that He created was very good at that point. And that's all inclusive. It just means that man didn't have a problem at that point. Spiritually speaking, we have always termed that as "Man started out with a clean slate" right from that point. No sin had yet entered the picture.

We have to think about, too, that it was a pristine, unpolluted, uncorrupted environment that the first human beings were given that they were created into. And even man's mind was uncorrupted. It was unpolluted at that point. That record is also all through Genesis if we look at that and analyze that.

And we know that God planted a garden, two trees. Neil mentioned Mr. Armstrong. We've heard about a thousand times about the two trees in the garden—the one of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. And God put a garden for man to—actually He developed and He created a garden for the man and the woman to tend, right?

And we have to think about that that there was some education that had to go on there. There was some agricultural education. And it's not exactly clear to us what God taught

the man and the woman at this point, but there had to be some education there, if He's going to have them do a job, do something that actually took some skill and took some knowledge.

And we have to assume also that there was some moral education there. Most of our parents teach our children. What do we teach them? We teach them our values, our standards, all those moral things that we believe in. So at this point, man's nature was of a very high caliber because remember Satan had not entered the picture yet. And man's mind was unpolluted as human nature was basically starting out with a clean slate.

In Genesis 2 verses 16 through 17, it says (from the New King James):

Genesis 2:16. *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17) "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* (NKJ)

And we have to consider too, well, there had been no death of human beings up to that point. They were still alive. How did they know what death meant? Well, I think it's fairly obviously, and again, it's a conclusion we can draw from the account that we have in Genesis that the animals died. They saw the death of the animals. It's not clear at that point whether they were eating the animals. But they saw the animals die. So they knew what death was.

So, in fact, I knew a minister one time that they were driving along the road one time and there was an animal hit. (I don't want to say a cat or a dog because it upsets my wife.) But there was an animal hit in the road. And so, this minister stopped and he wanted his little kids to see that so they'd know what death looked like. You know there's no life there. Anyhow, we can kind of assume that that's the way Adam and Eve learned about death.

And in Genesis 2 verse 25 and it says at that point:

Genesis 2:25. *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.* (NKJ)

Still so good so far. Satan has not yet entered the picture. But he does shortly, and he deceives the woman, causes her to disobey God, and takes down Adam in the process.

Genesis 3 verse 7 and 8:

Genesis 3:7. *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8) And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God* (NKJ)

All of a sudden they had a problem with God! And that was due to Satan's influence. Satan had effectively corrupted their intellect. He had affected their human nature and all of mankind from that point.

One commentary expressed it as an evil, but it was not just an evil. It was a "malignant evil," which meant that it grew and grew and grew from that point. And man's nature effectively was changed from that point.

In Genesis 3 and 11 through 13, where God said to the man and the woman:

Genesis 3:11. *And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12) Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." 13) And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (NKJ)*

So historically, what do we have there? We have first and second denial—first in history, pass the buck, spread the blame. Kind of like my little granddaughters' t-shirts—"Someone else did it!" They didn't have the problem. They blamed it on someone else. But the point being that their whole outlook had changed because of this one submission to Satan.

And that whole degenerative process of human nature began at that point. And, as we know, the story goes God cursed the serpent. Satan had broadcast these thoughts to Eve, and, of course, she pulled Adam in. Ultimately, they both had a problem there. And then, God drove them out, set angels to guard the way to the Tree of Life so they couldn't enter back into the garden. And all that's said in right there the first three chapters of Genesis. It kind of sets the stage and tells us that our problem is human carnal nature. It's been affected by Satan and it's become actually a mechanism for him to use against us.

So, again the point being, if we get to the point where we think we don't have a problem, we think we're going pretty well—and, you know, I've heard of people in the past that thought, well, they didn't really have anymore to overcome. Well, how does that happen as long as we're breathing living human beings? Because we're going to have human nature right to the point where we die!

And when you think about that, that's the way God designed that. That's how that works. But if we forget that human nature, we may go into some kind of a spiritual denial actually. And we could have problems just like Adam and Eve did. You know Satan kind of slipped in sideways, affected their human nature, and we've all suffered from that ever since then.

But when you think about that, we might think, "Well, what's the use? I have human nature. I'm going to have it. I've had it. I've become aware of it since I've been converted. The problem that it's causing me and what I need to overcome, but what's the use? What's the use of me going on?" Well, God turns everything. He can turn anything into good that He wants to and we see that throughout the Bible. He can even turn human nature, which is basically badly influenced, to good. So let's see some of that.

I'd like to turn over to Romans 5. See a little bit more of this train of thought. Romans 5 and verse from the New King James Version:

Romans 5:12. *Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (NKJ)*

And we don't want to forget about the context there—what led up to this verse. The fact that there's reconciliation through Christ's sacrifice, His blood, so we can be justified spiritually. In other words, we have something with which we can battle. I mentioned that recently, I believe. I vaguely recall. We have something that we can battle this human nature with.

So let's go over to Romans 7. In Romans 7 verses 14 through 25, again from the New King James, the context here, we remember, Paul's talking about the Law. And we know that the Law reflects God's character. It reflects His love, and Paul is telling us how he never really understood the purpose of the Law until he was converted. And at this point, he's like, when he goes through this discourse here in Romans 7, he's been like twenty years converted. He thought as a Pharisee he thought that the Law was salvation unto itself. He thought that's all he had to do. He didn't think that he had anything really inherent, part of his make-up that he had to overcome. He thought he just had to keep the Law, keep the other ritualistic things, all the things that they came up with and added to the Law. The Jews added to the Law in Judaism. He never understood the purpose of that. Verse 14:

Romans 7:14. *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16) If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17) But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18) 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. (NKJ)*

Apart from God's spirit, none of us realize that. Just like the situation Paul was in before that. He didn't understand until his conversion what he was up against within himself, let alone Satan!

I have a comment on the first part of verse 18 from [The Jewish New Testament Commentary](#). And I'll quote that commentary. He makes a very good comment about verse 18, the first part.

Living according to our old nature literally in the flesh, the Greek, the *sarx* [I believe how you pronounce that] is rendered "old nature" here [He's referring to Romans 7 verses 14, 18, and 25.] and eleven times in chapter 8. [You know the two chapters are basically the same discourse.] The problem with translating *sarx* is that it reinforces the mistaken popular notion that the New Testament sets up a dualism between the soul and spirit regarded as the soul is higher and the body regarded as lower or worse. This is not what today's reader gathers from

the King James of verse 18, where it says, "For that I know within, me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing."

And then he goes on to comment that:

Celibacy and other ascetic practices found in some Christian denominations are taken as proof that the New Testament teaches this. Even though in reality this teaching comes straight from paganism [which we know that it does].

By flesh—and there's different versions of that; there's different associations of that word *flesh*, *carnality*, and I don't have time to go into all that. What Paul means, he didn't mean the physical body alone, but all the thoughts, emotions, and physical urges that comprise human nature. Especially in that human nature found in us prior to conversion where we don't really understand what's going on. We just sort of do, follow our impulses, do whatever we think is good for us. In other words, what we can get from this is that our human nature and our physical body are not separate. It's a package deal.

I heard one time in a sermon where someone made a subtle distinction between our human nature and our carnal mind. He mentioned the fact that physically our human nature is just what makes us human.

Like we have a dog, a cocker spaniel—that's actually quite a bad little cocker spaniel. But a dog has a nature. Dogs do what dogs do. That's why they're dogs. The way they greet each other and all that kind of thing! (Ha-ha, too much information there!)

Humans, we walk upright. We've pretty much got to point our nose with whatever we're looking at. We don't have eyes in the side of our head like a fish or anything like that. But we also have this other part of us—and this again, the point being this is a package deal. We have that human nature, that carnality in us that is so easily affected by Satan. That's what causes us to sin, causes us to do the things that we do.

Like Paul said, he wanted to do what he knew was right from God. He wanted to follow God's standards. Just like God created the first two human beings. He taught them His morals, His standards. The standards of His Kingdom is what He taught them. He wouldn't have taught them anything else.

But Paul didn't understand that until he was converted. It goes on to say here that even this author in this commentary goes on to say that "In Christ we're a new creation. We have a new human nature." And we understand when we come out of the baptismal pool, that we are a new creation; we're a new man. The old nature, supposedly, died. It was buried in that baptism in that water.

But going on in verse 19, Paul goes on and says:

Romans 7:19. *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20) Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21) I find then a law [or a principle or a rule, some translations may say], that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23) But I see another*

law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24) O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25) I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. (NKJ)

He realized that he had that human nature. He realized what his problem was. And he knew, just like Adam and Eve, he knew that he had a choice. God allowed that in the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve.

Paul here was saying that he was wretched because he could see clearly at this point he was spiritually enough mature he could see all the problems that his human nature was causing. And he could see, too, that it was a battle. It was a war that was taking place inside of him! He could see all those little self-centered nuances. Just like all of us, we all know that we have our, or like I mentioned in the sermonette that I gave a week ago. We all have our own little spiritual battles going on. We all have our own human nature. We all have our little peculiarities, the little nuances that we have to fight against all the time.

But Paul also knew the source. And he mentions evil here a couple of times. And there's a couple of words that are used for evil. Like in the Old Testament it's used a certain way. It just means—the Hebrew word is *ra*, which just means bad. And it's used in the sense of evil words, thoughts or actions. The opposite of what God considers good. That's the way evil is used in the Old Testament.

We have the accounts in 1, 2 Kings and 1, 2 Chronicles. The kings did evil in the sight of God. They did things that were opposed to God. In other words, they were being ruled and guided by their human nature. Of course, Satan was behind that, moving all of that.

In the New Testament there's a couple of words for evil. It's the same ones that are used here in these verses. The first one is, I believe is pronounced *kakos* (*kak-os*'). It's similar to the Old Testament usage which means something observable, something evil in character, a bad action, etc. This second *poneros* denotes an evil that causes pain and sorrow, something malignant. That's sounds kind of familiar. That's the kind of evil that seems to be part of that human nature that we have.

We have another phrase in the Greek that is *ho poneros* with *ho* being the article "the" and evil becomes "the evil one". Remember in the model prayer that we need to pray that we're protected from the evil one, from the evil, because it has a tendency to synchronize with our human nature. And it affects us in that way. Anyhow, Vine's says that's used like thirteen times in the New Testament.

So what Paul is saying there, he saw that evil, the bad, the ungodly things that were taking place and that law of sin within himself. And he thought it was worse. He saw it as something as being worse than having Satan and his demons throwing darts at him because that comes from the outside. This problem was from the inside, the human nature! And he saw that.

We can think of Scriptures like over in Matthew 7 where didn't Christ use the example and said, "You being evil know how to give good gifts to your children." And He's referring to the people there, even to His disciples at that point.

We can think about the affect that human nature has on us. We might commit a sin. We can go to God and ask for forgiveness and get that forgiveness and then turn right around and sin again.

I can think of the times when I've been going through a health trial and have had a lot of pain. You'd think you would learn something from that. And I used the example before. I don't remember whether I used it here or not, but I had knee surgery. I had a herniated disc in my back. I was going through all kinds of pain. I could barely make it to the bathroom, do all kinds of things. I couldn't do a whole lot of things. I was in pain. And that probably lasted for months at a time. But right after that I went right back to the same old Jack. That's the one lesson I learned from that. I'm still me! Whenever something happens to you, you might learn some lessons along the way. And I'm sure that's not the last pain, not the last trial, not the last lesson that I'll ever go through.

But Paul saw that. He saw all of that. And he didn't deny his carnality. He took full responsibility for that. He teaches us in another place that we should no longer be slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness. In other words, displace that. But again, Paul knew, he understood at this point that he was locked in a spiritual battle against his own nature.

Over in 2 Corinthians 10 verses 3 through 6, again, New King James, verse 3:

2 Corinthians 10:3. *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. (NKJ)*

Can't win it physically!

Verse 4:

2 Corinthians 10:4. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (NKJ)*

That stronghold, we could certainly read into there our own human carnal nature!

Verse 5:

2 Corinthians 10:5. *casting down arguments [our human reasoning, our human logic] and every high thing (NKJ)*

Those high things could be our thoughts, our own opinion of our own thoughts.

2 Corinthians 10:5b. *that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought [or every wrong thought] into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (NKJ)*

Verse 6:

2 Corinthians 10:6. *and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (NKJ)*

In other words, what we do when we catch these things cropping up by and through our human nature. Catch them before they get started!

And another place we can go over to is Galatians 5. I'm sure you know exactly where I'm going here. Galatians 5 verses 15 through 21 from the NIV where it says in verse 15:

Galatians 5:15. *If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. (NIV)*

And there were problems going on in the Galatian Church at this point. There were outside influences coming in.

Galatians 5:16. *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17) For the sinful nature desires [We could say our human nature, desires] what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. (NIV)*

Very consistent with what Paul said there in Romans!

Galatians 5:18. *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. (NIV)*

Rick gave that sermon on the holy spirit. The difference being that we can have it in us, but not be led by it. Well, Paul is telling them here they need to be led by it because their problems are coming from their human nature. They're giving in to the human nature.

Verse 19:

Galatians 5:19. *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, [and] factions (NIV)*

I see that "dissensions and factions" there and it reminds me of 1 Corinthians 3 where Paul talks in the first few verses. What does he tell the Corinthians there? You know they're having all kinds of problems. They're having splits. He says, "You're carnal! You're like babes." He says, "I can't talk to you other than like little children because you don't understand anything. You take everything literally. You don't have any spiritual depth," that's what he's telling them. He's telling that that they do have God's spirit, but they're not using it. They're not going anywhere with it.

But it goes on here in verse 21:

Galatians 5:21. *and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like (NIV)*

Every time I see the immorality, the orgies and all that, I have to think of Hollywood. Neil mentioned a little bit of that there, but everything that we see coming out of Hollywood seems to be all this really perverted stuff. And to me that's the low end of human nature. That's all that seems to be coming out of Hollywood at this point.

We use Netflix. I do. My wife doesn't watch movies like I do, but I like old westerns. I like older movies because they actually had to do some acting in them. I got one a while back that was a western because I'm a western fan. You know, I'm an ol' cowboy. Anyhow, they ask you to rate those movies. If you rent a movie from them, they ask you to rate them. So I went in and I did a little reading on this and I said it was basically Hollywood garbage, the western. I said the horses couldn't even save this one. They had stuff in there that wasn't necessary to that western at all. It was just bad.

Anyhow Paul goes on to say here:

Galatians 5:21b. *I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this (NIV)*

Or run their lives like this basically following the impulses, urges and everything of their Human nature:

Galatians 5:21 continued: *will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NIV)*

And it's just like Paul says and he teaches throughout his writings, this carnal pull that's always trying to make us sin. It's always trying to make us lapse back into those bad habits we had before we were converted because that's going to defile and affect our relationship with God. Just like Adam and Eve. Just like them! Nothing's changed! That corruptive polluted human nature has affected all of us. Again it's malignant.

But even though Paul knew that he was in a constant battle, that he had this spiritual battle going on from the inside, he knew there was hope. And again, we can see that in Romans 7. I'm going to go to Romans 7 and to chapter 8 to verse 23. This is from the New Living Translation, © 2007. And we read part of this, the last part of Romans 7.

Romans 7:24. *Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? (NLT)*

And certainly we can see that. Neil mentioned the world. And it is dominated by sin. It's dominated by death. There is no good news because of those things out there, because of the human nature that dominates everything—everything!

Verse 25:

Romans 7:25. *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. (NLT)*

In other words, it's pulled him in! And if he's not careful—same way with us, if we're not careful—it will take us captive again. That's how it works.

Romans 8:1. *So now there is no condemnation (NLT)*

And this is chapter 8 verse 1.

Romans 8:1. *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2) And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (NLT)*

It can free us, if we're in the process, if we're using it!

Verse 3:

Romans 8:3. *The law of Moses was unable to save us, because of the weakness of our sinful nature. (NLT)*

Because that Law was outside of the mind, right? You can't keep a law; you can't keep a ritual. It's just like Paul teaches in Hebrews. The sacrifices of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. They can't do that. That was ritual. But God works from the inside out.

Romans 8:3b. *So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. (NLT)*

And again, this is from the New Living Translation. This is verse 4 of Romans 8.

Romans 8:4. *He did this so that the just requirement of the law [the spiritual intent] would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. (NLT)*

Which is what we should be doing! It's what we strive to do, unless we let down. Unless we let the human nature grab us again and make us do things we don't really want to do, but we do them anyway because that's our nature, right?

Verse 5:

Romans 8:5. *Those who are dominated by the sinful nature [enslaved by it] think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit [in other words, led by it] think about things that please the Spirit [or please God]. 6) So letting your sinful nature control your mind, leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind (NLT)*

Using it, not grieving it or quenching it like Rick mentioned.

Romans 8:6b. *leads to life and peace. (NLT)*

Verse 7:

Romans 8:7. *For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. (NLT)*

Like Paul taught! He teaches us still—going on here. Just continuing the same discourse.

Romans 8:7b. *It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8) That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. (NLT)*

The unconverted in that state, in that natural human state, can't please God!

Verse 9:

Romans 8:9. *But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. 11) The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. 12) Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. (NLT)*

Even though we have those urges still. We have those impulses still.

He uses that term "brothers and sisters." It's kind of interesting Paul uses that in a number of places. That sounds kind of syrupy-religious sounding to us, but to Paul that was a term of endearment because he cared deeply for these people. That's why he taught them strong things.

But going on in verse 12:

Romans 8:12b. *you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. (NLT)*

I already read that. Sorry. Verse 13:

Romans 8:13. *For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. (NLT)*

That's what we should be doing all the time in our lives!

Romans 8:14. *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15) So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him "Abba, Father." (NLT)*

Verse 16:

Romans 8:16. *For his Spirit joins with our spirit (NLT)*

We can see in other places that God's spirit joins with our human spirit, the spirit in man, right? Which has as a component our human carnal nature, but God's spirit helps us overcome that human nature.

Continuing the verse:

Romans 8:16b. *to affirm that we are God's children. 17) And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. (NLT)*

We have that human nature. We have to fight against it. Did Christ have that human nature? He was tempted in all things. He just never sinned. But He overcame that. Remember, He showed us that it could be overcome! It is possible with God's spirit.

Verse 18:

Romans 8:18. *Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19) For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20) Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21) the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22) For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23) And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering [and from this human nature]. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies [without human nature] he has promised us. (NLT)*

And we also, let's turn over to 1 Corinthians 15. I hope you'll see where all this ties in. 1 Corinthians 15 beginning in verse 44, breaking in on the thought here:

1 Corinthians 15:44. *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body [with human nature], and there is a spiritual body. 45) And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being [with human nature, unfortunately]." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (NKJ)*

Verse 46:

1 Corinthians 15:46. *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47) The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48) As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. (NKJ)*

Verse 49:

1 Corinthians 15:49. *And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. 50) Now this I say, brethren, that*

flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. (NKJ)

Human nature can't be there! Won't be there!

Verse 51:

1 Corinthians 15:51. *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (NKJ)*

And it goes on to say "Death is swallowed up in victory." We've heard that many, many times.

But at the very end of this section in verse 58:

1 Corinthians 15:58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (NKJ)*

We saw there in Galatians 5—am I there yet? We can recall from Galatians 5 the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. That's what it's actually referring to there.

Okay. We have many, many Scriptures about the old man, the inward man, the natural, the spiritual, all of that. We've heard sermons on that in the past. But the point being that whenever we're converted, we start that process of using God's holy spirit that enables us to fight against things from the outside and the things from the inside. And the human nature's what we fight—that carnality from the inside. So we start to understand that and realize that and worked our whole lives doing that using God's holy spirit. We do that from baptism, right? Again, when we come up, when we bury the old man and start with the new man. We have an example that warns us about this. Turn over to Revelation 3. Revelation 3 and you know exactly where I'm going again. This is from the New Revised Standard verses 14 through 22.

Revelation 3:14: *"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: 15) "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. 16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17) For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I [have] need [of] nothing.' (NRS)*

Ultimate denial! Ultimate spiritual denial! "I don't need anything from God!"

Revelation 3:17b. *You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (NRS)*

So here we see an entire Church that's fallen into a spiritual stupor. They've been desensitized like Neil was mentioning. They've been desensitized by the moral values

that we see all around us. It comes at us from a thousand different directions every day. Not only from the TV, from everything! From everything we read; everything we hear. Sometimes we even have bad dreams about it.

I don't know if you've thought about it, but if we look back to, again, if we reference back to Galatians 5 where it talks about the works of the flesh—what comes naturally to all humans to one degree or another—and the fruits of God's spirit, we see a Church here that's kind of stuck right in between in Revelation 3. I don't know if you've thought about it that way. That's a lukewarm Church.

How many places are we told to overcome? How many places where we're told not to quench or grieve God's spirit? We're to cleanse ourselves. We go through a whole process during the Spring Holy Days of getting sin out of our lives, which is basically overcoming that human nature, right? We do all that by resisting and by fighting that human nature.

We're told to go on to perfection. In other words, live up to those standards, those high ideals that God gives us. God has a very high bar for us. Just like He had and actually taught Adam and Eve until they were corrupted, until that human nature was corrupted and polluted.

But Christ goes on speaking to His Church here in verse 18:

Revelation 3:18. *Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire (NRS)*

And that *gold* is what? That *gold* is godly character, a result of taking on God's attitudes and values. Not the attitudes and values that come very naturally to us.

Revelation 3:18b. *so that you may be rich; (NRS)*

Spiritually rich as opposed to carnally rich—which we could be, which we were at one time. And you know we were all very worldly at one time. I know that I was.

Revelation 3:18 continued. *And white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; (NRS)*

The shame there would be that we wasted this opportunity.

Revelation 3:18 continued. *and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19) I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. (NRS)*

Which is what we do when we recognize we have sinned, when we've recognized we've done things that we shouldn't do. Like Paul said he thought that (in Romans). He admitted to the Romans that he sinned in chapters 7 and 8. He admitted it there. But he was mature enough when he saw those things, he repented of those things.

Verse 20:

Revelation 3:20. *Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. 21) To the one who conquers (NRS)*

Conquers what? Conquers our human nature! That insidious carnality, which as we know is induced and inspired by Satan just about every way we turn.

But continuing on:

Revelation 3:21b. *I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

He did not sin one bit!

Kind of reminds you of Matthew 5 verse 3 where it talks about "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Contrast here with the poor in the sense that they don't have that proud, self-sufficient human nature. It says there that "Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," the poor in spirit. Well, rich in God's spirit!

But going on in verse 22:

Revelation 3:22. *Let anyone who has an ear (NRS)*

That's just an idiom for being attuned to God spiritually.

Revelation 3:22b. *listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."*

So here's the whole point of what I've been trying to get across here is that we've seen that we have human nature. We saw where it came from, where it actually got into the human race, where we actually got our part of that. We all got a portion of that. We saw where it came from. And we know that we must have God's spirit to overcome that, to resist it, to use that, to be led by God's spirit to overcome that.

It says in 2 Corinthians 4:16 is a reference there that even though we're humanly dying outward, we're renewed inwardly every day. In other words, we put down that human nature each and every day. So in other words, we can't forget about that human nature. We can't deny that it's a problem within us and we're going to have that problem till we draw our last breath. We might have that final thought, that final impulse of whatever it may be, but we should never deny that. We should be like Paul. We should take the responsibility that we have to struggle against that. We have to overcome that as best we can in this life with the opportunities and with the power of God's spirit that He gives to us. So because if we do that—if we do that like Paul said here and like it says so many other places in Scripture—that we have a glorious future to look forward to in God's Kingdom if we overcome this human nature and seek God's righteousness in every part of our lives in every way.