

We've been considering this verse for several weeks. Thus far we've considered the positive command (put on Christ), and last week, we began to consider the negative (and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts). If you recall last week, I mentioned I intended to consider the negative, by way of three questions: What is meant by the flesh? What is meant by not making provision for the flesh? What is meant by fulfilling the lusts of the flesh?

Having considered the first of these last week, we come to the second this morning: What is meant by not making provision for the flesh?

But before we do that, I need to remind you of something. Several weeks ago, I mentioned the need to keep our text together. Remember, there are two parts to this single verse. We are to put on Christ and make no provision for the flesh. We talked about the first and now we are talking about the second. But remember they together. We can never put on Christ if we're making provision for the flesh, and the only way we can effectively make no provision for the flesh, is by putting on Christ.

And if you recall this means at least three things: first, that we reckon true of us all that Scripture says is true of us, by virtue of our union with Christ; second, that we improve upon that union by finding strength and motivation from Christ; third, that we put on those virtues and character traits that were perfectly in Christ (reckoning, obtaining, and imitating).

- I. A Brief Explanation of the Phrase
- II. A Broad Expansion of the Principle

- I. A Brief Explanation of the Phrase

1. Here I want to briefly and simply explain the phrase "make no provision for the flesh"—I can say very little about the word "flesh" as considered that last week.
2. If you remember, by "flesh" is meant the remaining principle of sin or evil that remains in every Christian.
3. The flesh reigns in sinners and it remains in saints—or, the sinners are in the flesh whereas the flesh is in saints.
4. And, as we learned last week, to the degree the flesh remains, it remains evil—it never changes or improves.
5. Thus, our text—"make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts"—that is, its sinful or evil desires.
6. The Greek word rendered "provision" literally means "forethought" and refers "to prior thought or plans."
7. For example, let's say my wife's birthday was coming up and I wanted to surprise her with a birthday party.
8. This would necessitate me to give forethought to the party—I would have to plan ahead in anticipation.
9. I would have to make provision for the party—I would have to prepare the food, buy a present, and invite the guests.
10. I would have to do certain things to ensure the party—I would have to be intentional in my preparation.
11. Well, in contrast to this, Paul is telling not to be intentional in making provision for the flesh, and by way of inference, be intentional in not making provision for the flesh.
12. Remember, when a command tells you not to do something, it also implies, a command to do something.

13. If we are not to be intentional in making provision for the flesh, then we are to be intentional in not making provision for the flesh.
14. Thus, the broad principle is this—do nothing to strengthen the flesh and do everything possible to fight the flesh.

II. A Broad Expansion of the Principle

1. Here I want to expand upon the broad principle that Christians are not to make any provision for the flesh.
2. Or, perhaps put another way—how are we, as Christians, enabled not to make any provision for the flesh?
3. (1) Starve the flesh—by this I mean, we are to do nothing that will strengthen or unnecessarily entice the flesh.
4. Let me remind you something that I said last week—if you recall, there's nothing we can do to change the flesh.
5. The flesh remains evil until our dying breath—it never weakens or changes—it always remains as it is.
6. And yet, while we can never weaken or change the flesh, we can keep from it anything that would tempt it.
7. Specific things, places, or people that would feed, entice, provoke, or arouse the passions of the flesh.
8. (a) Avoid things—by this I mean, certain actions or activities that have proven a cause of unnecessary temptation.
9. For example, the use of alcohol, movie watching, secular books, magazines, news, and political resources.
10. While none of these may be sinful in and of themselves, none of them are necessary—you can live without any of them.
11. And we all have to be honest whether or not any of them are causing unnecessary difficulty or temptations.
12. (b) Avoid places—here of course I am thinking of specific places where temptations are usually present.
13. For example, for some people, beaches and bars, are places of unnecessary temptation, that may be avoided.
14. I remember a younger man once telling me, why he chose to get off of a theological board on social media.
15. He said it became impossible for him to interact with people without being tempted to be rude and unkind.
16. Christopher Love—"Keep away from all external occasions of any sin you are tempted to commit, whatever your sin is. Suppose it is pride; do not wear that apparel which may give an occasion of pride. Suppose it is drunkenness; keep from bad company. If it is uncleanness, keep from the door of the harlot. Carefully avoid occasions of sin."
17. (c) Avoid people—here of course I refer to people who are not Christian and thus don't believe or practice the truth.
18. Ps.1:1—"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful."
19. Prov.4:14-15—"Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on."
20. Now, let me take a few minutes and answer this question—Is it always wrong to associate with unbelievers?

21. And my simple answer is, NO—but this answer obviously needs some explanation and clarification.
22. 1Cor.5:9-10—"I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world."
23. This is actually a clarification of something he apparently wrote in a previous letter that is lost to us.
24. They were not to keep company with professing Christians who are immoral and under church discipline.
25. He then clarifies, he did mean the sexual immoral of this world—that would be an utter impossibility.
26. Now, let me suggest a distinction—while all unbelievers are wicked, not all unbelievers are equally wicked.
27. For example, many of us have family members, neighbors, and co-workers that are not Christian people.
28. Are we never to keep company with these people? For example, my mother, sister, and brother are not Christians.
29. Ask this question—Are you able to stay true to your Christian convictions and remain a good influence upon them?
30. That is, if they are tempting you to think and act contrary to Scripture, and you don't have to be around them, then don't.
31. When I'm with my mother, she knows I'm a Christian and she generally knows what I believe on most issues.
32. She may say things that are not Christian (because she isn't Christian)—but she is not able to influence me.
33. Another thing we have to keep in mind is our present maturity—this is an important factor in determining who we should spend time with.
34. But either way, we have to be honest with ourselves—is this relationship harmful (and is it necessary)?
35. (2) Resist the flesh—by this I mean, we must resist the early motions, suggestions, or desires of the flesh.
36. Jas.4:7—"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you"—this verse is similar to Romans 13:14.
37. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you"—I fully admit that James exhorts us to resist the devil and not our flesh.
38. But you have to remember—the devil tempts our flesh, which in turn tempts us—he tempts us to tempt ourselves.
39. Because every time we are tempted or enticed to do evil, it always directly comes from our own flesh.
40. Yes, the temptation may originally arise from another source, but all they can do is tempt us to tempt ourselves.
41. Jas.1:14—"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (his own flesh)."
42. Thus, when James exhorts us to "resist the devil" he means, resist your flesh as it's been influenced by him.
43. It's as if Satan has an ally in our soul—or perhaps put another way, every Christian has a traitor in his heart.
44. And so, even if there were no Satan our flesh would still need to be resisted as its the source of all actual sin.

45. Christopher Love—"Were it not for corruption within, all temptations would be no other to you than they were to Christ. The tempter came to Him, but he found nothing in Him. His temptations were but as a spark of fire cast into the sea; but the devil comes to you, and the world comes to you, and they find fit matter in you, a suitableness in your nature to fall into and close with the temptation."
46. Let me briefly remind you of the theological distinction between original and actual sin—original sin refers to our sinful nature (flesh) and actual sin to its deeds or works.
47. Thus, when I speak of the early motions or suggestions of the flesh, I am referring to the remains of original sin.
48. If we were to equate original sin with the flesh (which we can), we can say, while original sin no longer reigns it remains.
49. Here's my point—before sin is born it dwells within our flesh as a desire—that desire has to be resisted.
50. Are the desires of the flesh sin? Yes! But it's far better to resist them, then let them become actual sin.
51. For example, your wife somehow offends you—she says something to you that was harsh or offensive.
52. You go into the other room, sit down and think—who does this woman think she is speaking to me in that way?
53. It's at this point your flesh begins to stir and offer suggestions—You should go and tell her a thing or two!
54. Your flesh has confronted you with a sinful suggestion—you must fight against it with gospel weaponry.
55. Christopher Love—"If you would not have the flesh in its sinful motions prevail over you, then resist them while they are but bare motions before they break forth into actions. Crush the serpent in the egg."
56. (a) Be aware of besetting sins—by "besetting sins" is meant sins that continually harass, assail, and annoy us.
57. These are sins that we often fall prey to—sins we've struggled with for years—fear, unbelief, anger, impatience.
58. These have proven weak spots in the past—we largely know where the enemy will seek to breach the wall.
59. Last week, after the service, I was talking to several of you, and some of you mentioned our enemies are often predictable.
60. For many of us, if not most of us, we tend to fight the same temptations and have to resist the same desires.
61. (b) Examine your heart—by this I mean, we must search our heart to find the hottest parts of the battle.
62. For example, let's say a city is being assaulted by an enemy army—the king of the city would need to know where his enemy has placed the most troops.
63. At what point of the city is his enemy focusing their attack? What part of the wall are they trying to tear down?
64. While our enemy is always trying to tear down our wall, there are usually spots that have become weak.
65. How do we know which spots have become weak but through examination—searching our own hearts.
66. Ps.139:23—"Search me, O God, and know my heart"—search me to see where there's a potential breach in the wall.

67. I've said this many times, but our combat with the flesh, will largely take place within our own heart.
68. Prov.4:26-27—"Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil."
69. (c) Watch and pray, Matt.26:41—"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt.6:13 – 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one')."
70. This is essential to resisting the flesh—we must ask God to keep us from things, places, and people, that will tempt us to sin (and, to the degree we have to be around these, give us strength not to give into the temptation).
71. (3) Mortify the flesh—let me clarify—I mentioned last week, that Scripture never tells us to kill the flesh.
72. And the reason is simple—it's not possible to kill the flesh—remaining flesh remains flesh until we die.
73. And so when I say we are to mortify (or put to death) the flesh, I mean, the works or deeds of the flesh.
74. Rom.8:13—"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."
75. Col.3:5—"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness."
76. Here we learn of our need to "put to death the deeds of the body" and to "put to death our members on earth."
77. In other words, our flesh uses the members of our body as instruments of sin—fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness (these are the deeds of the body).
78. Thus, what Paul is telling us is this—we are to mortify the sin that finds expression through our members.
79. Thus, the question becomes—what does it mean to mortify (put to death) the deeds or works of the flesh?
80. Well, as you can imagine, this is a rather large question—one we are not able to fully answer this morning.
81. But let me very simply suggest, one obvious way sins are mortified is by the dagger of evangelical repentance.
82. If you remember, the whole of sanctification can be reduced down into two words: mortification and vivification.
83. This is another way of saying—the Christians life concerns daily repentance (mortification) and faith (vivification).
84. Thus, while mortification entails more than repentance, at its very core, repentance is at its very core.
85. And so the question becomes—What is evangelical repentance? Well simply put, it means we deal with sin as God commands.
86. The two points we considered earlier (starve and resist the flesh), were largely aimed at hindering sin.
87. This point, mortification, largely deals with committed sin—what do we do when we have made provision for the flesh.
88. How do we deal with actual sin? How do we deal with the deeds or works of the flesh? And the answer is by repentance (which includes at least three things).
89. (a) We confess our sin—that is, we acknowledge our sin as ours—"against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight."

90. This is the first step in killing sin—confession—and brethren, as you know, it's in many ways the hardest.
91. (b) We mourn and hate our sin—we mourn and hate our sin because it's sin (an affront against God).
92. We hate it because of what it is (an offense God and His law) and what it does (dishonors God and destroys lives).
93. (c) We return to God for forgiveness of sin—this is at the heart of evangelical repentance—we turn from sin to God.
94. Isa.55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."
95. It's true this verse refers to sinners, but dear brethren, its basic principle also applies to saints (Christians).
96. Both sinners and saints need to repent (and this is what this verse describes)—sinners need to repent to become Christian and saints need to repent as Christian.
97. This is how (in a large part) we mortify the deeds of the flesh—we kill them by the dagger of repentance.
98. The Heidelberg Catechism Q.89—"What is the dying-away of the old self? A. It is be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it."

III. Motives

1. There are several blessings or benefits for those who daily and diligently starve, resist, and mortify the flesh.
2. (1) Strong assurance—this is one reason why many Christians lack confidence they're in a state of grace.
3. Rom.8:13—"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."
4. I understand "death" and "life" here as eternal—those who live according to the flesh will die (eternally), and those who by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body will live (eternally).
5. This is another way of saying—those who've never become Christians die, and those who have live.
6. Rom.8:8-9—"Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."
7. Those in the flesh don't have the Spirit (and those fail to mortify the deeds of the body), and those in the Spirit have the Spirit (and thus mortify the deeds of the body).
8. Thus, what is one obvious evidence of having the Spirit of Christ, but that by the Spirit who mortify the deeds of the body.
9. Put another way—those who are mortifying the deeds of the body, by the Spirit, are on a path that leads to life.
10. (2) Peace and comfort—peace and comfort are the results (perhaps the offspring) of a strong assurance.
11. There will never be an abundance of peace and comfort in any soul, that refuses to starve, resist, and mortify the flesh.
12. Put another way—any soul where the flesh is not being daily and rightly dealt with, will be filled chaos.
13. (3) Glory and honor to God—by this I mean, to deal rightly with our flesh, gives glory and honor to God.
14. This is why we fight—to give glory and honor to our King—who has called and redeemed us with His blood.