

Concerning Addiction

Galatians 5:16-24 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁶ But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now **the deeds of the flesh** are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

Introduction

Our topic is addiction.

Addiction comes in different shapes and sizes: drinking, smoking, pornography, overeating, drugs, gambling, excessive play of video games, workaholic, shopaholic, even cell phones. We can be addicted to a particular substance, thing, or activity. Anything that is compulsive with adverse effects.

Let me begin with medical and psychological definition on addiction from ‘Wikipedia.’

Medical/psychological definition: “Addiction is a brain disorder characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences” (Wikipedia). Typical treatments are medications and psychological counseling.

I don’t have to tell you about the negative consequences of addiction. You all know about it; how devastating they are. They hurt us. They destroy our relationships. They even kill us and our loved ones. So, we want to know how we can help ourselves and our loved ones to be free and stay away from all types of addiction.

I am going to talk about addiction in three ways this morning. First, we will learn how God sees addiction. Next, we will look into God’s solution for the problems of addiction. Thirdly, we will name the battle plan.

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Where do we start?

Today, many treatments and programs are available out there. One thing I noticed among them, though, is this: the vast majority are focused on physical and visible aspects of addiction and treat the symptoms accordingly. For instance, you hear a lot about ‘brain chemical imbalance’ and they try to correct it through medications and counseling. Such an approach seldom talks about God and His power to set us free from addictions. It is often passive and reactive too. That is, it reacts when the problem arises. God’s approach is different; it is proactive.

When it comes down to understanding, prevention, and treatment of addiction, we must begin and end with God. Both cause, effect, and answer for addiction are found in His Word. The cause is found in human nature. The solution is found in Christ.

What Does the Word of God Say about It?

Addiction: the Yoke of Slavery

You will not find the word ‘addiction’ in the Bible. Rather, God’s Word explains addiction in a different way.

God’s Word calls addiction ‘the yoke of slavery’ (Galatians 5:1) rooted in ‘desires and lusts’ in us. The yoke of slavery is caused by the unhealthy and ungodly desires or lusts in our flesh, to be exact. Remember the psychological definition? “*Addiction is a **brain** disorder characterized by **compulsive** engagement in **rewarding stimuli** despite **adverse consequences**” Brain--the flesh. Stimuli--pleasures, desires and lusts. Adverse consequences--slavery.*

The flesh in us creates unhealthy and ungodly desires and lusts that lead us to addictive behavior that results in slavery. This is how God looks at addiction: the spiritual state or condition where we are enslaved to a particular substance, thing, or activity.

Root of All Addictions: the Flesh.

Definition of the flesh: the inner most seat of our desires. The depraved human nature. The flesh constantly looks for pleasure in life. Without control, and without boundaries, it goes wacky and we end up paying the prices for it. The pursuit of pleasure creates pain in us in the end. Don’t get me wrong. Pleasure itself is God’s gift. He wants us to live a healthy and abundant life. He wants us to be happy and content. However, in Him. In all good and godly ways. Not in selfish ways. Nor in destructive or compulsive ways.

Addiction Is Bondage: Please note here the nature of addiction. *Compulsive.* Against your own conscious wishes. *Adverse effects.* It hurts and tears you down instead of

building you up. It enslaves you to carry out the desires of the flesh against your wishes. So, basically, addiction in God's eyes is slavery. Addiction is bondage.

By nature, the flesh is a ruthless dictator. It doesn't know when and how to stop. By nature, it is a slave-driver. It doesn't care what happens to us—we are mere slaves to carry out the flesh's desires and lusts. It demands us to pursue whatever it wants even to the point of killing ourselves. As long as it gets what it desires, it never stops demanding.

Bondage. 2 Peter 2:19: **by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.** That's how the people with addiction feel about themselves. Slaves. ... "I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin" (Romans 7:14).

How we can help:

Treatment Options: secular vs. divine

Secular approaches are valuable, and we need them. However, we must use God's solution first. Why?

Because of the recovery rates of treatments.

E.g. "Drug and alcohol rehab statistics show that the percentage of people who will relapse after a period recovery ranges **from 50% to 90%.**" (<https://alcoholrehab.com/addiction-recovery/beating-the-relapse-statistics/>)

"Four independent studies have shown that Teen Challenge has a national recovery rate for meth and other addictions ranging from 70% to 86%. Success is measured by the rate of students who remain clean and sober at least five years after graduating from the 12-14 month residential program... The success rate experienced by Teen Challenge graduates doesn't come from physical healing alone. They work on the heart and soul of each individual. Students who embrace the responsibilities of **community living**, and the **disciplines** of **study, worship** and **prayer** begin to fill the emptiness they once numbed with drugs with the presence and love of God instead" (<https://www.prweb.com/releases/2005/05/prweb237648.htm>)

The recovery rates clearly indicate that secular approaches, medications and counseling, are not sufficient. We need the Holy Solution. We need the Holy Strategy. We need the Holy Spirit.

Holy Strategy: Ask for help from the Holy Spirit. He is the Answer. He is the Holy Solution to addiction problems. He is an expert in deliverance business. He is the Flesh Slayer. Here we need to understand what's going on between the flesh and the Holy Spirit.

The Conflict of Two Natures: The Holy Spirit vs. the Flesh. The conflict of two natures in us. In today's text, we find 'flesh'—5 times (v. 16, 17-twice, 19, 24). The Spirit—5

times (v. 16, 17-twice, 18, 22). They are in opposition to each other. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. They **wage war against each other**: 1 Peter 2:11. *“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from **fleshly lusts** which wage war **against the soul.**”*

(Romans 7:14 ff): Paul confessing,

¹⁴ *... I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.* ¹⁵ *For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.* ¹⁶ *But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.* ¹⁷ *So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.* ¹⁸ *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.* ¹⁹ *For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.* ²⁰ *But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

²¹ *I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.* ²² *For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,* ²³ *but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.* ²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?* ²⁵ **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

The solution is found in Jesus Christ our Lord. It's the Spirit of God.

God's Way to Overcome Addiction: is to fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we may give no room to the flesh in regard to its desires and lusts. Romans 13:14. *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. E.g. Like feeding to the starving. Like oxygen to those with respiratory disease. Pump the Holy Spirit into your soul and spirit.*

Basically, the battle plan is very simple: The best defense is a good offense. Through the Holy Spirit, slay the flesh and crucify its unhealthy and ungodly desires and lusts. Don't worry about what you cannot do. Focus, rather, on what you can do instead. Be proactive. Walk by the Spirit. Constantly side with the Holy Spirit and He will kill the flesh. Listen to Romans 8.

Holy Spirit the Liberator

Deliverance from Bondage (Romans 8:1ff)

8 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ... (We) **do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** ... ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God... and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ ... **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.** ... ¹³ **for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Holy Spirit the Intercessor: God appoints the best helper for us and in us. 24-7 resident helper. He helps our weakness. He helps our addiction. He *Himself* prays for us! He doesn't give that job to any others but to Himself. He takes His job very seriously. Ask Him, *Help me, Lord.*

²⁶ *In the same way the Spirit also **helps our weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit **Himself intercedes** for us with groanings too deep for words; ... **according to the will of God**"* (Romans 8:26-27).

Action Points: stay disciplined in the following area.

1. Set your mind on the Holy Spirit, not on the flesh.
2. Seek a community of accountability
3. Study the Word of God (the Bible)
4. Pray
5. Worship

Conclusion

Let me read today's text one more time: Galatians 5:16, 24.

¹⁶ *But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ...* ²⁴ *Now **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

The flesh has been crucified—the flesh is dead. The dictator is dead. The slave-driver is gone. Free at last! Therefore, no longer carry out the desires of the flesh. Addiction is not God's will for you. He wants you to be free. You will be so, when you walk by the Holy Spirit. Let us pray.