

The Most Dangerous Battlefront

Carnal Nature

David F. Maas

Given 11-Oct-98; Sermon #FT98-07B

This nautical shofar in my hand is called a bosun whistle or a boatswain's whistle. Its piercing shrill and penetrating sound makes it particularly useful for signaling distress or alarm. Sailors can hear its distinctive sound through roaring ocean breakers or howling gale-force winds. It rouses deckhands out of their lethargy and gets them all to focus upon the crisis at hand, which I would like to do this morning.

Brethren, Almighty God has declared a military alert! We are in a state of war on three fronts: Satan the Devil, the world, and our own flesh. But the most dangerous battle at hand is our own flesh. This is the battlefield where we least suspect treachery and where we have become the most complacent. The purpose of this split sermon is to shock us out of our complacency and give us some strategies to make us combat ready.

Several weeks ago I was listening to a tape of an old radio rerun, "Another tale well calculated to keep you in SUSPENSE." The entire program including commercials, announcements, and station ID were all recorded during World War II. They were preserved intact. At one point the announcer, accompanied with the strains of this bosun whistle, glumly stated, "Pacific War Time is now 8:30." The commercials for this program consisted of Roma Wine and United States War Bonds.

From the tone of those spot announcements, I began to sense the mood of a nation at war, or at least on the brink of war. The overall feeling was one of grimness, determination, and an electrifying resolve to fight, something like the Gulf War but only much more intense.

As soldiers of Jesus Christ, my purpose today is to place you on military alert. It also is to warn you that this is going to be the toughest and most

treacherous military campaign you will ever undertake. Scores of our former brethren with poor defenses, low fire power, and inadequate logistics, have already perished in the battle.

The terrain of this battlefield is rugged, containing millions of cavernous convolutions. Three main fissures cut the battleground into quadrants. The fissure of Rolando separates the frontal lobe from the parietal lobe. The fissure of Sylvius separates the cerebrum from the cerebellum, and the corpus callosum separates the right from the left hemisphere.

The battleground I refer to is the human mind, also referred to as the "heart" or the "spirit." Often the Bible uses the term "spirit" to signify disposition and motive .

The seriousness and gravity of this campaign is illustrated in Proverbs 16.

Proverbs 16:32 He who slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

We are not talking about Big Sandy, Texas or Mayberry, North Carolina, but a huge fortified enclosure with impregnable walls. The gravity of not controlling the mind or spirit is illustrated in Proverbs 25.

Proverbs 25:28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a
city broken down, without walls.

Consequently the name of our battle plan is "Operation Bootstrap" or "Operation Self-Control." Self-control is the ninth and perhaps the most difficult of the fruits of God's Spirit to attain. It certainly proved to be the most difficult for me. I missed the deadline for the Forerunner this month. Fortunately I can share the contents with you today.

The difficulty in achieving victory on this front has been adequately depicted by the apostle Paul in Romans 7:14-24. We have heard it expounded upon already. We are going to jump down to verse 20.

Romans 7:20-25 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 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. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Protestants stop with verse 25, glorying in their victimhood and their helplessness, turning *all* the responsibility for character formation over to Jesus Christ.

But the good stuff, the helpful stuff, the inculcation of God's Holy Spirit enabling us to strive against our human nature, comes in chapter 8. Paul reminds us in Romans 8:6-7 (memory scriptures) that the carnal mind is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life. The carnal mind is hostile to God and does not submit to God's law.

But Paul assures us in verse 9 that if we have God's Spirit, we will be motivated to submit to God's law. But where we and the Protestants part ways is the insight Paul gives us in verse 13, "If you live according to the sinful nature you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death [mortify] the deeds of the body, you will live."

The emphasis in this verse is that after the impregnation of God's Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) the real struggle has only begun. God has no intention of rapturing us out of the arena or battleground of life. We have a lifelong battle against our human nature to grow into the fullness of Christ.

Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered. We should not think that we are going to receive a free ride on the grace train. We read,

Romans 8:20-21 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be liberated from the bondage to corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

What these verses tell us is that our liberation from carnality will not come about without a life and death struggle against our human nature. God Almighty will supply all the Holy Spirit we need, but we have to struggle and go into combat. We cannot be sunshine patriots or conscientious objectors in this battle against our human nature. We should not fear mortal combat with our human nature.

In the immortal words of Thomas Paine in the *American Crisis*:

The harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap [cheap grace for example] we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.

Of course, the freedom I focus upon is our ultimate freedom from the deadly carnal pulls of the flesh. This kind of freedom, a product of godly character, is not for sale and is certainly not free. Character must be fought for with every ounce of energy within us.

Herbert W. Armstrong used to say, "God will not create character by fiat!" Most Protestants like to throw out the red herring of salvation, trying to imply that when we advocate developing character, we are trying to earn our salvation. As the late Joseph Tkach once said, "Is someone out there eating poison mushrooms?"

The English poet, Shelley, once posed the question, "Love, why chooseth thou the frailest for your attention?" Our tenderness and affection seem to fixate on short-lived perishable things: flowers; rabbits (little bunnies); birds; butterflies.

Our children, for example, receive their special quality from their vulnerability. If they were made out of tungsten or industrial diamonds, they would not be as precious to us. To a mortal human being, life itself becomes more precious to us when we see how easily it can be snuffed out. God Almighty planned it that way.

In Ezekiel 28:12 the Sovereign Lord said of Helel the Archangel, "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." In verse 15, He adds, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created."

This perfection did not develop from the inside out and did not involve a struggle against his own nature. Perhaps the biggest difference between a created archangel and a regenerated son of God is that the archangel does not comprehend the reality of eternal oblivion and the enormous consequences of sin. The angelic being does not have to struggle against these intense downward pulls in order to affirm that he wants with every fiber of his being to keep and fulfill God's holy law. With angelic beings, it is not so much a matter of volition or choice as wired in instinct. God desires his sons and daughters to want, of their own volition, to choose God's way of life.

As Richard so succinctly stated it on the Day of Atonement, "We have battled all our lives against Satan's downward pulls. Consequently, the reward will be greater."

Edgar Allen Poe once wrote a poem in which an artist or poet addresses Israfel, a created archangel in the Koran, having dazzling powers of musical and artistic expression. I suspect this reference could have been made about Helel.

Yes, Heaven is Thine; but is a world of sweets and sour; our
flowers are merely—flowers, and the shadow of Thy perfect bliss
is the sunshine of ours. If I could dwell where Israfel hath dwelt,
and he where I, he might not sing so wildly well a mortal melody,
while a bolder note than this my swell from my lyre within the sky.

Following Richard's sermon on the Day of Atonement, Rex Ulmer gave a closing prayer in which he thanked God for His plan for our lives and for

God's plan for Satan, adding that we are thankful that we have this adversary to push against as some kind of a gigantic weight to build our spiritual muscle.

Throughout the course of our lives, we find ourselves struggling against ourselves. Most of us either want to run away or escape from the struggle, or worse yet, yield to these pulls.

Trials and tests in God's eyes are a positive thing. Peter and James tell us to rejoice in our trials, insisting that the genuineness of our faith, being made more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire (I Peter 1:6). James has reminded us that we should rejoice when we fall into various trials, adding that the testing (the refining, the shaping) of our faith produces patience.

Again back to Thomas Paine, in the *American Crisis*, he stated that hard times, struggles, and severe trials, panics, purge faults and purify strengths. He states:

Panics produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is usually short; the mind grows from them and acquires a firmer habit than before. But they are the touchstones of sincerity, and hypocrisy and bring things to light which may have lain forever undiscovered.

Like most people, I have always hated trials and have tried to find the fastest way out. The past year I felt trapped in a situation which I have only within the past two or three months learned to see it as a bountiful blessing. When Ambassador closed, I expected to move into a job, an endowed Chair of General Semantics at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Like clouds without rain, this position vanished like a desert mirage. What opportunity did come to me looked very questionable. I was offered a job as English Department Chairman at the oldest historically black college in Texas, a school which lost its accreditation the same year Ambassador gained its accreditation.

Our clientele, in the words of our President, Dr. Haywood Strickland, consists of students that no other institution wants—first generation college students from the inner cities of Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Detroit, Queens,

St. Louis, and other urban areas—students with chips on their shoulders, many with a hostile attitude toward learning. I knew it would be hard, but I did not think it would be that hard and I really wanted to bail out. My efforts seemed so terribly futile. I am really ashamed that when John and Evelyn visited our area last summer I engaged in non-stop grumbling about this trial, wishing we could move out to some Shangri-La up amidst the Aspen and Cedars of southern Utah where we could find our own "place of safety." Like Tevye, in *Fiddler on the Roof*, I asked the Almighty, "Would it defeat some vast eternal plan if we could just let us settle here until You establish Your Kingdom?"

I remember a man in Glendale who used to wear a sweater with the caption, "In 500 years this won't matter." Both Tevye's question and the words on the sweater ignores God's plan for all of us. As the Eternal says,

Isaiah 55:8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord.

If God believed that we could develop character by running into the wilderness to escape from our problems, or by winning the lottery, He would gladly accommodate us. But the bitter truth is that times of prosperity and no struggle, our forebears have fared disastrously and have almost destroyed themselves. In the history of Israel after periods of prosperity, the people generally forgot God. The book of Judges, for example, chronicles recurring cycles of apostasy, oppression, distress, delivery, getting fat and flabby, and back into apostasy again.

Henry David Thoreau asked in *Walden*,

But why do men degenerate ever? What makes families run out?
What is the nature of luxury which enervates and destroys nations?

Obviously God feels it is necessary that for a certain period of time we endure hardships in the arena of life. Jesus told His disciples in John 17:15, "My prayer is not that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one."

British psychologist, Dr. Robert Sharpe, wrote a book 21 years ago called *Thrive on Stress*. His thesis seemed to be at odds with every self-help book on the market. In his introduction Sharpe said, "We want you to forget all the bad gloomy things you have been told about stress. We want you to stop fearing stress and start learning to control stress, to stop trying to avoid stress."

Why? Because properly controlled and used, stress can be the best thing that ever happens to you. Once you have learned the procedures which enable you to master stress, you will find that it is no threat to your survival and success (or salvation for that matter), but a powerful force that can transform your life for the better.

The German philosopher, Nietzsche, suggests "That which does not kill me, makes me stronger." I have a corollary to this saying: "That which does not make me stronger will eventually kill me." If riches and leisure would help us overcome our human nature, God could and would accommodate us.

The Modern Symphonic Composer, Hilding Rosenberg, once told San Francisco Symphony Conductor, Herbert Blomstedt, "I thank God for those things I wanted with all my heart, but never got. Those 'blessings' in the long run would have turned out to be curses."

On the other hand those "curses" which we whined to our Creator about eventually turned out to be blessings. A former Dean of Faculty at the University of Wisconsin once told me, "Every experience, good or bad, when properly evaluated, is the starting point for greater growth."

Self-control, the ninth fruit of God's Holy Spirit, consists of displacing carnal human nature and replacing it with God's Holy Spirit. This means that the beachhead we attain as God's soldiers is not just a matter of struggling and enduring, but it is a matter of aggressively winning back territory from our carnal mind and establishing a base of operation (or as Harry Truman calls it, a foxhole in the mind) for God's Holy Spirit. Band Director Gerald Prescott at the University of Minnesota used to tell his students "Practice for results, not for hours." We need to have enclaves of secured territory.

The area below the Golan Heights was the sight of a lot of deaths of Israeli Kibbutzun. While terrorists from Syria and Lebanon pounded these areas (during the time of cease fire) there was no peace. Only when General Sharon led the attack to secure a beachhead in Syria containing the firepower of the Syrian rockets could there be any tranquility below the Golan Heights.

Using the power of God's Holy Spirit we must go armed with God's Spirit into trench warfare with Satan in deadly hand-to-hand combat.

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Peter amplifies the same message in I Peter 5.

I Peter 5:8-10 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us by His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered for a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

God gives us all the Holy Spirit we will need to undergo combat with the enemy, but we still are commanded to resist, we still are commanded to struggle and to overcome or we will not develop character.

Did I contradict something I had said earlier in this message? Do I still call the flesh and our own human nature the most treacherous battlefront? Can I not lay the whole blame for my shortcomings on Satan? I have tried to do that, including blaming him for the red lights on the 323 loop in Tyler instead of blaming myself for not getting out the door on time.

The British won the battle of the Falklands through sophisticated satellite communications, the same kinds of communications used in the Gulf War. Satan is skilled metaphorically in using sophisticated military communication hardware. Metaphorically he has a communication satellite

trained upon each one of us. He does not have to transmit any new diabolical ideas—all he has to do is amplify and intensify attitudes we already have in our heads.

Brethren, in Revelation 12:10, John refers to Satan as the accuser of the brethren, but he does not accuse us falsely. We are guilty of all the things Satan has accused us. In one sense it is like we have satanic fellow travelers or sympathizers hiding deep within the recesses of our heart or the cavernous convolutions of our mind.

Jesus said back in Matthew 15 that it is not what goes in from the outside, but what goes out of man's mind that defiles him.

Matthew 15:19-20 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.

The schematic diagram of our human nature (which Satan knows like the back of his hand) is described by Paul in Galatians 5, beginning with verse 19.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.

During the Millennium the inhabitants will not have to contend with two of the three fronts which we have to deal with (the world's system and Satan) but they will still have to contend with themselves, and sadly some of them will not make it. "For the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed." (Isaiah 65:20)

Most of us I trust have committed to memory, or at least can paraphrase, the contents of verses 14-15 of James 1 which describes the anatomy of sin.

James 1:14-15 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

One of my former students composed an analogy essay in which he compared Satan to a microwave oven. The microwave oven technically does not cook the meat, the waves simply set into motion the molecules already in the meat. Likewise Satan's microwave simply sets into motion the lusts, the hatred, the anger, the envy, the selfish ambitions already extant within us. We slowly cook ourselves to death.

In many of the prior religious backgrounds many of us have come out of be it Catholic, Protestant, even some strains of Judaism, we have been conditioned to accept a rather passive approach to overcoming, hoping that God would eventually work things out for us without our doing anything in return. A 'just as I am' approach.

We carry this dependency notion into our institutions, our government, our homes, and especially ourselves. I am amazed at the skill which some students have acquired to shift the responsibility for their own academic failure onto anything but themselves.

One time a young lady came up to me and said she had to drop my course. When I asked her why, she said her friend was a bad influence on her, causing her not to pay attention to the lecture.

Last Thursday, Julie, Aaron, and I had the privilege of hearing one of the leading black economists, Dr. Walter Williams, speaking at a standing-room-only Tyler Junior College. He attacked the erosion of our personal liberties by the federal government. At one point he said, "The welfare system has done irrevocable damage to the black community, carrying out what slavery and Reconstruction couldn't do, that is to create a perpetual system of slavery and dependency."

Last spring at Texas College we had a BEEP Seminar (Black Executive Enterprise Program) on our campus. The speaker, a vice president of Southwestern Bell, urged the students to excel, be the best in their field, and not to wait for grants or handouts. One of my students raised her hand and

asked him, "What about affirmative action? The speaker bristled and said, "Why do you want to rely on a band-aid or a crutch rather than rely on your own resources?"

I believe that racial prejudice of any kind is a malevolent cancer, but Affirmative Action reminds me of a camping trip my boys and I made back in 1982 coming back from Grandpa's farm. We had driven from Bolder, Colorado to Moab, Utah and the Arches. When we came to the little town of Cisco, a pile of debris, broken glass, wire, asphalt, cement blocks, roofing material, was right in the middle of the road. Next to the pile, someone had constructed a sign that read "Hazard." I marveled. Up in Minnesota, we would have cleaned up this mess in half an hour and eliminated the sign.

The problem with federal programs of any kind from food stamps to student loans to agricultural subsidies is they take a temporary problem and slap on a permanent solution. As a prominent native son of Missouri so eloquently stated, "We should measure our success by how many people we can get off welfare and off subsidies."

Most Protestants want to look upon grace as their welfare program or spiritual affirmative action, "Just as I am," and they will never get beyond the helpless dependency. Brethren, God Almighty called the weak and foolish of the world, but he did not intend that we stay in that condition. We are not going to confound the wise by our foolishness, but with the wisdom of a mind transformed by God's Holy Spirit.

In our daily overcoming, I doubt whether anyone of us in our struggle against sin have, as we read in Hebrews 12:4, resisted to the point of shedding our blood. Many of us have made little progress on certain fronts in overcoming since baptism. God Almighty made this very clear to me this summer when I was languishing in my "Woe is me—bricks without straw" attitude.

This summer in the middle of the drought in Tyler, I started to develop a change in attitude toward my responsibility for overcoming. I started to ruminate about Dr. Forbes' maxim, "Every experience, bad or good, can lay the foundation for greater growth."

Back in doctrines class at Ambassador University, Dr. Ward, a recreational gardener, was fond of using the hoeing metaphor. He stated that every human being has a row to hoe of about equal difficulty (when we factor in resources, abilities, and opportunities), but he counseled all of us to hoe to the end of the row, and quit looking around to see whether we have an easier row to hoe than our neighbor. God knows what we need to grow and it might be radically different from our brother. As John mentioned in his sermon, Peter didn't kvetch to Jesus, "John gets a better deal than I do."

Is there anybody out there who has an ideal life with no problems and trials, no stress of any kind? The idea is, though, whatever your current trials, use them as weights to develop strength. The best exercise we can have, physically or spiritually, is struggling against the self.

Charles Atlas, who developed isometric exercise called Dynamic-Tension, describes the discovery of the concept as follows:

Well, sir, I was standing there in front of a lion's cage, and the old gentleman was lying down asleep, and all of a sudden he gets up and gives a stretch. Well, he stretched himself all over—you know how they do, first one leg and then another and the muscles ran around like rabbits under a rug. I says to myself, Does this old gentleman have any barbells, any exercises? No Sir. Then what's he been doing? And it came to me. I said to myself, He's been pitting one muscle against another.'

Psychologically and spiritually speaking, we must put effort against the pulls, fears, and temptations which press against us. We must develop some beachheads or enclaves of victory within our human nature.

I did some specific things in the battle against human nature, some things I should have taken care of fifteen years ago. My son Eric took me aside last winter and said, "Dad, you didn't encourage any of us to develop our athletic ability." I got this from my dad who developed spinal meningitis at age sixteen and he developed an aversion to sports. I kind of inherited it. I took Eric's advice to heart this summer (though it was too late for Eric) and every day after walking a half hour through the woods, my youngest son, Aaron, and I shot baskets and played catch. We are not up to Michael Jordan's

capacity but this daily activity has developed quite a bond between Aaron and I and even after the academic year has started, we still go three times a week.

One day when we were shooting baskets a brainstorm emerged of how I could improve my productivity at Texas College and how to make the Feast absences go a little more smoothly. Why not write my own composition text and a written script and audio tapes and structured questions? My students, whose reading skills and attention skills are quite challenged, would profit from being read to and having a highly structured test. I commenced on this project and I have one-third of it completed.

Why in the last 23 years had not I done something like that? Ambassador College was rich and increased in goods and had no need of using our personal resources. As this project started to unfold I realized God had given me a solution. I did not have to find a 'Shabbes goy' anymore as a substitute for the Feast. My presence would stay with the students on tape and we could also solve the textbook crisis. (We have not had a bookstore for the past two years. We relied on the University of Texas bookstore. The students will not buy the book so our relations there have become strained with the college.)

Well, I started to charge them a modest fee for copying expenses, but then my boss said, "I don't think the new Vice President is going to like this idea." I said, "Oh no! I've already put a lot of work into it." Well, I gave him a copy of the text and after a week or so one of my colleagues bounced over and said, "Guess what? Dr. Howard highly commended your textbook at the President's Cabinet meeting and he asked the other faculty members to emulate your example."

A friend once gave me a poster with a scene of a pond with rocks jutting out from the water. A caption over the poster read, "Whereas some see obstacles, others see stepping stones." I had always regarded that as a sentimental platitude until this summer when it became a reality.

I would like to share you another personal example. I feel elated on one hand at applying it and sorrowful that it has taken me 54 years to grasp this insight. Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Don't take any anxious thoughts." I

thought, OK, but the anxious thoughts come naturally, almost to the point where it did not seem I could even control them. As far back as I can remember, I have earned the title as the World's Biggest Worrywart. Typically at 3:00 to 4:30 in the morning, anxious thoughts such as "I should have done this," or "I should have done that," or "What will happen if?" would flood my mind. I tried to bring these fears and worries under control in many ways.

Fifteen years ago I confided this problem to my old friend, Harry Sneider in Pasadena and he said, "What I think is happening is your mind is taking a *dump*." Well, I accepted Harry's diagnosis until July of this year. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (I do not exactly like his economic policies but he had a lot of warmth and intimacy in his fireside chats) one time said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

About 28 years ago right down the road in Lake of the Ozarks, Al Portune gave a sermon on meditation in which he suggested that all of us are past masters of meditation when we ruminate about bad things happening to us. Psychologist William James proclaimed that a positive and negative thought cannot co-exist; one will cancel the other one.

My mom late in her life turned to the Charismatic religion. She used to say, "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." My niece one time asked her, "Grandma, why do you keep saying 'Praise the Lord' all the time?" and the answer mom gave was quite instructive. She said, "I used to be bothered by swear words coming into my mind. Now I say Praise the Lord." (seemingly a refined way of saying cotton-pickin').

When my mom died two years ago, my dad remarried a widow who had lost her spouse a month before my dad lost mom. Her stepfamily invited us to Brownsville last Thanksgiving (Dia de Gracia) for a family gathering. My new kin speak more Spanish than English, making me feel linguistically naked. Consequently, in order to learn Spanish, I started practicing by making my own Interlinear version of the Proverbs (Proverbios) and translating line by line. At first the chapters took about three or four hours apiece.. Every time I would get the early morning anxious foreboding

thoughts, I would translate Proverbios. Amazingly after several weeks of responding to these anxious thoughts, these thoughts completely disappeared and I had to set the alarm clock in order to get up to finish the project.

All of you must have something that you can occupy your mind with to keep from getting bored. My father-in-law gets up at 5:00 each morning and plays solitaire. Hanoi Hilton survivor, Leo Thorsness, told how the POW's would keep their mind sharp by making chess pieces out of tin foil. Laura Ingalls Wilder mentioned that in the long winter months on the Minnesota and Dakota prairies, the Ingalls children would memorize the Psalms.

Dr. Ward in Doctrines class pointed to verse 11 of Psalm 119 as an antidote to sin and our carnal human nature.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

The key to winning the battle against the self does not rely on passive dependency, or on cheap grace, but on an active fight against the downward pulls, using the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Above the Auschwitz Death Camp are the words "Arbeit Macht Frei." 'Work makes free.' I reflected on the grim irony of these words and do not take them lightly. A couple of years ago a dear friend of mine, Cohen Rood, a survivor of six Nazi concentration camps (my dad's age) the last one being Gleiwitz, gave me a huge book about the size of the Los Angeles Yellow Pages published by the Dutch government. It had the register of the victims murdered in Auschwitz and Buchenwald and Sobibor and all those places. There were thirty-six Maases (18 men and 18 women), 23 of them lost their lives in Auschwitz from 15 year old Wolfgang, 16 year old Louisa, to 83 year old Emily, to 86 year old Abraham. I do not know how close on the stammbaum what the nexus is whether they are cousins, or kissing cousins, but I can tell you one thing. On the Last Great Day there is going to be a least one landsman to meet them, if God gives me the permission. I want to greet every one of them, hug them, and say that their ashes did not blacken the Polish skies in vain.

In commenting upon taking responsibility upon ourselves, Henry David Thoreau gave the following analogy:

There is some of the same fitness in a man building his own house that there is in a bird's building of a nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are engaged?

But alas! We do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built and cheer no travelers with their chattering and unmusical notes.

To conclude this message we need to look at the example of our Elder Brother Jesus Christ who learned from what He suffered. He did not live our lives for us, but gave us an example that we should follow (Hebrews 5:8).

In the words of the former Secretary of Agriculture and 13th President of the Mormon Church, Ezra Taft Benson (he was the unofficial chaplain for Dwight David Eisenhower and in my studied opinion probably the most moral and ethical man who ever lived in Washington) said:

The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take the people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of the people and then they take themselves out of the slums.

The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment; the world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human behavior.