

Are All Carnal Acts Sin?

The word "carnal" in Rom. 8:7, 8; Heb. 9:10 is from the Greek word *sarx* meaning flesh; the meat of an animal; the body of any living creature; and mere human nature, or the earthly nature of man. We have shown in points given above that human nature was originally created perfect and sinless, but since becoming one with Satan and partaking of his spirit and nature, it is by nature sinful and controlled by evil spirits. Christ had perfect, sinless flesh and human nature by virtue of not being under the control of sin (Rom. 8:3. See Point III, 8, above). Thus *sarx* does not necessarily mean that all flesh is sinful. It is used of the "flesh" of all creatures (1 Cor. 15:39). In Rom. 8:7, 8 it is the "mind" of the flesh that is sinful because of being controlled by sin (Eph. 2:3). In Heb. 9:10 it is used of "carnal ordinances," which are not sinful, for they were part of the law which is "holy, and just, and good, and spiritual" (Rom. 7:12,14). They are "carnal ordinances" because they were imposed upon and executed by natural men.

The word "carnal" in Rom. 7:14; 15:27; 1 Cor. 3:1-4; 9:11; 2 Cor. 10:4- Heb. 7:16 comes from the Greek word *sarkikos*, which is derived from the root word *sarx* above. Paul speaks of himself as "sold under sin," as being "carnal," because of being under the control of the animal appetites, which are controlled by Satan and spirit forces. In Rom. 15:27 and 1 Cor. 9:11, the word "carnal" means the natural things necessary to sustain life, and the idea could not include sin at all. It means natural or human without the idea of sin.

The same idea is expressed in 1 Cor. 3:1-4, where preference in preachers by "sanctified" people (1 Cor. 1:2) is called "carnal." It is perfectly natural and human and is not sinful to prefer hearing one preacher above another unless one makes sin out of it. Such preference only becomes sin when it is carried to the point of division and strife and refusal to accept the same gospel by a less preferred man because of personal feeling or dislike. There is no "sanctified" man, regardless of how many works of grace he has had, but who has some preferences of this kind. It is natural to have such preferences, and this is why it is not spiritual. It is like eating food. It is not spiritual to eat food. Neither is it sin unless one overindulges, and, then, this intemperance is sin. The idea of "carnal," in 2 Cor. 10:4, is that of human weakness in contrast to divine power. The idea in Heb. 7:16 is that of natural or human lineage and birth. No sin is involved in this idea, for it is natural and sinless to have offspring according to the law. This Greek word is translated "fleshly" twice: first, of natural wisdom and knowledge contrasted with grace (2 Cor. 1:12); second, of fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11).

Thus when we use the word "carnal" we must keep in mind that sin is not always involved. Where sin is involved, that is always clear. There can be sinless carnal traits and manifestations, and then the same traits can become sinful, when they transgress the law. The following carnal traits which are seen in human lives, show

the misuse of human faculties in transgressing the law. These faculties are not sinful in themselves, but become sinful when used to break the law. The unlawful yieldedness of human faculties to commit such things constitutes sin or "transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). The spirit and nature of the devil are working constantly to cause man to yield to the following traits of carnality:

(1) To feel a secret pride in his success or position in life; in his training and appearance; in his natural gifts and abilities; and in his general standing in life; to feel an important and independent spirit; stiffness, preciseness, and faultlessness; to feel an unpleasant sensation in view of another's success or position; overanxious as to whether every thing will come out all right; and to feel bitterness over the past or over what someone has said or done.

(2) To manifest formality; deadness and dryness in spirituality; indifference to souls and the needs of others; lack of power and spiritual desires; no hunger for God; stirrings of anger; impatience; a touchy, sensitive spirit (and worst of all, to call it nervousness or holy indignation); sharp, heated flings at another; self-will; selfishness; stubbornness; an unteachable, talkative, harsh, sarcastic, unyielding, headstrong, driving, commanding, peevish, fretful, man-fearing, deceitful, proud, malignant, whispering, backbiting, surmising, hateful, boastful, spiteful, disobedient, unmerciful, devilish, and lawless spirit; a desire to attract attention to self and to say and do things that will appeal to the opposite sex; a desire to dress, act, and be as much like the world as possible; love of ease and good things, even at the expense of others more needful; lustful stirrings; unholy actions; undue affections towards those of the opposite sex; uncleanness in thoughts and desires; unnatural and abusive acts to self and to others; a dishonest, deceitful and evasive spirit; a covering up of real faults and leaving a better impression of self than that which is strictly true; hypocrisy; false humility; exaggeration; straining the truth; unbelief; doubts; fears; lack of confidence in God; worry; constant complaining in pain, poverty, and trials; a desire to quit trying to do right; a dogged determination to deal with others regardless of the outcome to God's cause and the souls of men in eternity.

(3) To have a secret fondness of being noticed; a swelling after freedom in public work or after some success; a desire to make a fair show in the flesh and to do something big in order to call attention to self; darkness in mind and blindness in heart concerning spiritual things; a conscience deadened and hardened that permits one to commit things which were once given up when first consecrated to God; malice and a "get even" spirit; unforgiveness; a desire for vengeance even to the damnation of one's own soul; unnatural affections; covetousness; maliciousness; emulations; variance; jealousy; envy; evil thoughts; lasciviousness; lustful eyes; blasphemy, foolishness; wrath; strife; seditions; heresies, revellings, drunkenness; a "don't care" attitude toward God and man, toward his responsibilities in life, or when found out in some sin; a shrinking from reproach and duty; reasonings in unbelief

about the truth; a disposition to resent and retaliate when crossed; a compromising attitude in order to please men instead of God; and an inferiority complex.

(4) To be past feeling; unstable in the faith; wandering from church to church always evading any responsibility for God's work in any one place; unsettled, irresponsible, shallow, and stingy; spineless in spiritual things and in the fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil; satisfied to be a dupe of Satan and take part with those who bite and devour one another and destroy the work of God; vain and light in his conversation and manner of life; a joker and a jester; partial to certain persons and classes and in individual dealings; unneighborly, unsacrificing, and unwilling to put self out for anyone else, unless it be to some personal advantage or gain, ashamed of God, Christ, the Bible, his own church and his personal standing in the gospel, or when Christianity is made light of; afraid of spiritual manifestations and of someone getting out of the Spirit and causing certain prominent people to never come back to church, thinking always of what might have been if certain things had not happened, instead of realizing that things could be much worse; unthankful and unappreciative of his lot in life; in constant fear of failure to please God, live right, and walk in the Spirit.

(5) To take an unmerciful attitude in dealing with others who have failed; to take an inferior attitude toward those of wealth or position; and to take a self-righteous holier than thou attitude toward those of a weaker or inferior position. To love human praise and supremacy and to be coaxed and humored to do things in the church and elsewhere (and at the same time feel that he is the one most capable for the job). To come in abandonment to a lesser degree of blessing than others enjoy, and to come short of God's best in life. To pick flaws and criticize when set aside and unnoticed. To find fault with everybody else and in every place. To speak of the faults and failures rather than the virtues of those more appreciated than himself. To gift self up above others, as being above their faults and failures and as having a spotless record. To throw self-respect to the four winds and live a life of selfishness and self-gratification.

It must be kept in mind that the natural man has faculties that can do, the things named above, and does do some of them, without being directly controlled by Satan and demon powers. However, these conditions are generally agitated by these powers. Without such agitation, many would not be guilty of such acts of selfishness and meanness. Just where to draw the line between the influence of these powers and the willful acts of man himself is not always clear. Even saints sometimes are under the influence of Satan and are not aware of it. For example, Satan influenced Peter to try to stop Christ from going to the cross. Jesus said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:21-24). The acts of both Peter and Satan are involved here, and it was no doubt a surprise to Peter to know that he was being used

as a tool of Satan. From Peter's standpoint he was acting purely of love for Christ. It was perfectly legitimate for him to protect his best friend, and ordinarily it is God's will to protect others, but not so in this case. To claim immunity from all satanic influence is to claim full and complete knowledge of the divine mind in every detail of life; and in this respect few, if any, are entirely free from all satanic workings and influences. As to actual sin, it is a different question, for sins are listed and defined in many passages so that every man can know with all times whether he is yielding to Satan or not.

The effect of such devilish operations are seen more or less in all unregenerated man, and, if saved men do not walk and live in the Spirit, those things will become manifested in them again also. These traits are fixed tendencies and habits in fallen man controlled by the spirit and nature of the devil. Salvation is necessary to break these habits and set man free from such bondage and operation of sin and Satan (Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:8-10; 5:1-5, 18).