

Don't Feed the Bears

Sermon #0924
1961

Study given by W. D. Frazee—March 25,

There is somebody here who is going to get a problem solved. Take notes, because perhaps tomorrow or next week or next month you will be facing the problem I am going to study this morning.

I go the way I choose to go. Some people imagine that the Christian life ought to be everything in the mind and heart pulling one way. But life is not like that.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" Genesis 3:15.

God has put into the human heart enmity against sin. And I am so glad that in our hearts this morning we feel desires against sin and for God.

We have all felt those desires. That is why we are here this morning. No one would be here this morning unless somewhere we had desires to do right, desires to follow Jesus, desires to be true.

But there is something else in these hearts of ours.

"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" Romans 7:23.

Did you ever have any of those desires of the wrong man, the bad man? Were you ever tempted to eat something that was not good for you?

I heard a woman say once, "I know this isn't good for me, but I want it. So, I am going to eat it anyway."

Well, she was honest and said what a lot of people would do without saying.

We have desires to sometimes eat what is not good for us. We have desires to speak angry words. We have desires for all kinds of things. And many people imagine that being converted means that you are at the point where you never have any of those desires.

So the problem is that people recognize they have desires to do wrong, and they wonder if they are converted or not. The answer is that the converted man has two kinds of desires. He has desires that pull him toward God, and he has desires that pull him toward the Devil. He got the desires that pull him toward the Devil from his natural disposition. He was born with that.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" John 3:6.

But these desires we get toward God and toward the right side are the gift of Jesus. They are the work of the Holy Spirit working upon our hearts. And let me say that if we will listen, God's Spirit is pleading and wooing and drawing every one of us.

Now I come to something else very important. We can feed either of the two sets of desires, and make them grow. Which one are you feeding? Do you feed the good desires or the bad desires? Do you feed the desires to do right, or do you feed the desires to do wrong?

You say, What do you mean?

Think a minute. You know what I mean.

Are there some kinds of reading that feed good desires? Yes. When you read the Word of God and kneel down and pray, you almost always get up feeling more like going with God. The same when you read the Spirit of Prophecy. Likewise when you read some book about a man or woman who has lived for God. Doesn't it stir in the heart the desire to walk with God like them. Sure.

But is there a kind of reading that stirs other desires? Yes. There are impure books that awaken impure thoughts. There are romantic books that awaken romantic thoughts. There are books of warfare that stir in the soul the desire to get out and be a soldier with a gun. There are books of adventure that stir in the soul the desire to do something and make a name for self.

You can decide which will be the stronger in pulling you.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" 2 Corinthians 3:18.

So it is by beholding that we become changed. And which set of desires I feed grows stronger. If you don't want the fleshly desires, don't feed them. Don't read the things that stimulate them. Don't listen to the things that arouse those desires.

Here is a man who has given up cigarettes, but he still has a great desire to smoke. Would it be a good thing for him to go around where people are smoking every possible chance he gets?

No. When he smells that tobacco smoke it increases the desire. And if he knows God doesn't want him to smoke because it is poison, the thing for him to do is to avoid everything that would increase that desire. In other words, don't feed it. When you read, listen, look, do the things that will feed the good desires.

Be honest with yourself. Play fair with God. You can usually tell better than anyone else what the effect of certain things are. Sometimes people will argue, What is the harm in doing that, and down in their souls they know that it feeds the wrong desires. That is why they are arguing for it. They don't want to let go. They hate to turn loose. They want to play around with it.

Oh, my dear friends, let's settle this morning that we want to go with God. What do you say? Eventually you are going to do what you want to do. Don't forget it.

Judas did. He loved money. Following that desire, it eventually led him away from Jesus. He sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. He did what he wanted to do. He had certain desires all the way along to be like Jesus. He yielded to them to some extent. But he never let himself go all the way with Christ. He was always feeding that love of money, that selfishness, that covetousness.

We will be surprised, and those around us will be surprised, how rapid the progress can be made in the Christian life when all our food is given to one set of desires. But our difficulty is that we are like a zoo keeper. We give a little bit to the wolf and a little bit to the tiger. And when we get through all the animals are getting something to keep them going. None of them are starving to death.

There are some animals in our human zoo that ought to be starved to death. Did you ever hear anyone talking who sounded like a wolf or a bear? It has happened. I am sorry to say that I saw somebody like that once in the mirror. And I don't like it.

I am so thankful that God has made provision to get rid of the wolf and the bear, the tiger and hyena in us. He has made provision to get rid of this evil temper; this selfish burst of human passion.

But don't forget that the human still has at times the desires that did not come from God, and will not lead to God. You have to live with it for the time being. But my advice is, don't feed them. Let them starve to death.

It is surprising how long it takes. But never mind. The longer it takes, the more important it is to start this starving process. And the longer it takes, the more important it is not to give in and say, Oh well, it has been a whole week since that bear had anything to eat. He looks so hungry I think I will feed him a little.

Don't be surprised if he starts to growl and make you and your friends wonder what has happened to your Christian experience.

Don't feed him. Don't do the things that encourage him. Don't give him a new lease on life. Starve him. Put him in the pit and don't give him one morsel of food, not one drink of water.

Cruel, isn't it? But the Devil deserves it. It is the only way to deal with that sort of thing.

We grow not only by eating and breathing, but by exercise. Suppose I have the power to control the matter, and one gets all the exercise and the other one doesn't get any. What is going to happen to the other one? It will get weaker. The more I exercise one the stronger it will get, and the more I don't exercise the other one, the weaker it will get.

How do you exercise a desire? Give it what it wants. That's all. When you have a desire of the Spirit, do it, and it will be stronger when you do it. When you have the desire to do the wrong thing, just say, No. You don't get any exercise. Stay in the pen. No food, no exercise. That's the program.

Somebody might say that sounds like righteousness by works. No friends, that is righteousness by faith. Do you know what faith is? Faith is believing God. The only way to believe God is to know what God says. To believe something is not necessarily faith at all. It might be rank presumption.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" James 4:7.

Your mind must choose to go with God's mind and against the Devil. You must make up your mind that you may from time to time feel those prompting of sin, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit. But the spirit lusteth against the flesh, keeping a constant warfare (Galatians 5:17).

Thank God, you and I are on the winning side with Jesus if we will understand what the plan of battle is. And we do not need to yield. Everything depends upon the right action of the will.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16.

Which way do you go? You go the way you choose to go. There are strong desires that are pulling you to Jesus and heaven. Feed those desires. Learn by experience everything that makes those desires stronger, and give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts.

If you find certain people who help you by just being around them, be around those people as much as possible. If you find certain people who make you feel silly or wicked or impure, stay away. Why pick out as a special friend someone who is going to drag you down?

Thank God, you have a choice.

Every time you let that bear out for exercise, and let him rampage over the neighborhood, he comes home stronger and better able to put on the same program tomorrow. Starve him. Leave him in his pen chained up. And don't let him out under any circumstances. Don't do it.

But feed and exercise those pure and holy and righteous desires.

In doing that, of course, you have to have the help of God. Pray to God. But all the prayer in the world will not take out suddenly and forever all the wrong desires. No. The One who knows tells me that there are thoughts and feelings aroused and inspired by Satan that annoy even the best of men.

Paul said, "I die daily." Every day he had to say to that bear, you are dead. You don't run around today. I am not going to feed you and I am not going to exercise you.

How long is it going to take? I don't know how long it will take with you. It is taking a long time with me. But God has been patient. And I am persuaded that He which has begun a good work in me will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus appears, thank God, I am going to be a lamb like Him instead of a wolf or dragon like the Devil. And my natural disposition is going to be left down here in this world for the Devil to carry around for a thousand years.

Thank God, the beautiful, sweet disposition of Jesus is going to be mine through eternity.

But God will be eternally sure that is what I want, because if I have it for eternity it will be because day after day, the same every day, I chose that disposition. Not on and off again. That will never do it.

Don't misunderstand me. We might fail. But I mean that we must keep choosing again and again. Consecrate yourselves to God in the morning. Make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, Take me, O Lord, as I am. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service.

Depend on Jesus. And remember that Jesus is strong to draw you to heaven. Satan is strong to draw you to the things of this world. You decide which way you will go. If you choose to go with Satan, all the power of the Devil is there to pull you the way you have chosen to go. And God will not force you.

On the other hand, get the beautiful promise. If you choose to go with God, all the power of heaven is drawing you, and the Devil cannot overcome it.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" 1 Corinthians 15:57.

As we work with God, God works with us. As we yield to God, God gives us strength. As we starve and do not exercise the earthly desires, they gradually shrivel, and finally they will die. And we are to count them dead all the while.

By the power of God's grace, those heavenly desires will be so strong that one day we shall be drawn up with Jesus, literally through Orion to the center of the universe. There will be nothing left in this world to tie us to this earthly sinful life. I praise God for that glorious goal.

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