

The truth about sexual lust; Part 3.



Every *Man's Battle* is a popular Christian book demanding that all married men purge themselves of all sexual thoughts at all times for anyone but their wives, and that all single men purge themselves of all sexual thoughts at all times for *anyone* on the planet who does not have a penis. How this allows for single men to even desire a wife, the authors don't say. Men who fail to discipline their eyes, their mouths (from hanging agape in awe of beauty) their noses, their sacs and their disobedient penises, have compromised their relationship with Christ.

Yours truly has written a book (still in manuscript form) refuting the unscriptural and unnatural insanity of *Every Man's Battle*. My book is titled, *The Lie of Every Man's Battle*. In last week's installment I quoted extensively from one of the co-authors of the book, Stephen Arterburn, showing you how Stephen used the Mosaic law as his guide while writing the book, which certainly explains the conspicuous lack of grace throughout.

This week we investigate the regrettable religiosity of the other co-author, Fred Stoeker. Just when one might hope that maybe Fred Stoeker gets a glimpse into the grace of God—a glimpse eclipsing that of Stephen Arterburn—one discovers that Fred is in fact the worse off of the two. The only people worse off than Stephen and Fred are the poor souls cajoled into reading what amounts to the Law of Moses on steroids, minus testosterone.

Let us continue.

* * *

Fred Stoeker's very first section, titled, "WALL OF SEPARATION," is about the wall between God and Fred that has been created by ...
Fred—



Fred's friends no doubt tried to tell him that Christ had paid the price for his sin. Christ had suffered and died the most horrible death imaginable for the sake of Fred's failure with the newspaper ads. Fred must have known this intellectually. Everything else in Fred's life was pure and perfect—according to Fred. We can only assume this, since this thing with the bras and panties in the newspaper was the only flaw truly troubling Fred. It was this one, continuing, nagging flaw that beset him and ruined everything else in his life that was so perfectly aligned to a righteous God. It was this *one flaw* keeping Fred's relationship with God from being everything God hoped it could be. It must have been so frustrating for Fred to be such a small step away from perfection. So near, and yet so far—one step away from a life of obedience that would at last allow him to look his heavenly Father in the eye with confidence—

Every week I said I wouldn't look at those ad inserts, but every Sunday morning the striking photos compelled me ... The distance from God grew wider ... my impurity still ruled ...

His friends gave up. It was Christ Who ruled, but Fred could not get it out of his head that his own impurity trumped that. I know Fred's friends gave up, because Fred ended up co-authoring a book with Stephen Arterburn called *Every Man's Battle*, offering men a step-by-step pro-

cedure for engaging in a lifelong battle against an enemy that Satan, not God, had set up for men to conquer.

What did his friends know, anyway? They were weak and compromising. They had settled for mediocrity. Where they had failed, Fred would succeed.

Fred was at a crossroads. He could listen to his friends who had surely become the voice of Satan in his life (how ironic; Fred's inner dialogue to perfect himself was the true voice of Satan), or he could go his own way and answer the call to "total purity"—

Since Christians don't read their Bibles very often, many men have no clue about God's standard for sexual purity. —pg. 45.

* * *

Fred's is a classic example of a man struggling against law. Like everyone else in history who has received a whiff of the glory, perfection and righteousness of God, Fred became acutely aware of what he considered to be sin in his life. Some people are murdering people and raping women, but at least Fred was only looking at lingerie ads. I am not belittling him. I am pitying him. I think we can all feel his pain. Fred was a failure to God, and knew it. Whatever a man thinks is sin, it is sin to that man. "Now everything which is not out of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

We have all felt this way at one time or another. It is called the conviction of sin. We know we are big fat losers as we stand before a righteous God. It's a terrible feeling.

The apostle Paul struggled just like Fred. Paul's cry and Fred's sound hauntingly similar.

Fred writes on page 19 of *Every Man's Battle*—

Every week I'd vow to avoid watching R-rated "sexy" movies when I traveled, but every week I'd fail, sweating out tough battles and always losing. Every time I gazed at some glistening jogger, I'd promise to never do it again. But I always did.

Paul writes in Roman 7:17-23 (from *The Message*)—

For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

Like Fred, the apostle Paul had discovered a connection between his failures and his distance from God. This is where Paul and Fred part company, however, for they reach radically different conclusions as to what that connection is. Paul discovered the problem to be—

... the power of sin within me ... something has gone wrong deep within me.

The apostle is so despairing of his ability to please God that he arrives at the low point of his dilemma when he finally says—

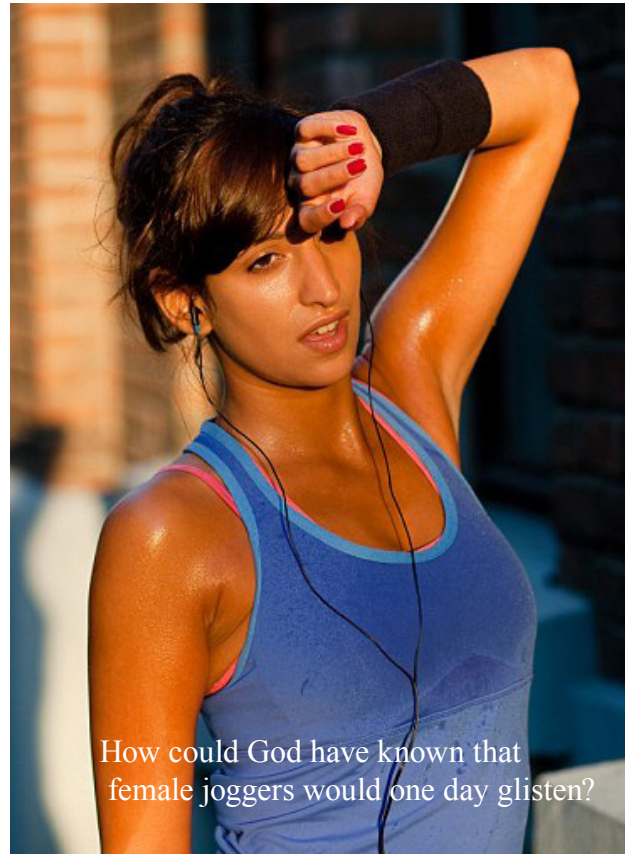
I realize that I don't have what it takes (vs. 18).

Fred does not quite see it as that deep of a problem—

I'd merely found a middle ground, somewhere between paganism and *obedience to God's standard* (pg. 19).

Rather than giving up—as Paul does—Fred hears a battle cry. If only Fred can obey God's standard, then

everything will be restored. If Fred can just overcome the lingerie ads, he will probably at the same time overcome the R-rated movies and the glistening joggers. If only he can overcome these things, he will at last be able to regain confidence in his prayers, and will finally be able to look God in the eye. He will finally have attained obedience to God's holy standard.



How could God have known that female joggers would one day glisten?

Like Paul, Fred had tried everything. Nothing helped. Like Paul, he eventually came to the end of his rope. When Paul came to the end of his rope, he asked one of the most pertinent questions a human can ask. Listen to the cry of the apostle in verse 24 of Romans, chapter 7, again from *The Message*—

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

That *is* the real question! It is the most important question that can be asked. *Is there no one who can do anything for me?* The answer to this question is vital to our lasting peace. The apostle Paul reaches a profound answer. The question, again, is: "Is there no one who can do anything for me?" Here is Paul's answer, in verse 25—

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

The *Concordant Literal New Testament* has—

A wretched man am I! What will rescue me out of this body of death? Grace! I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Fred also answers the question, *Is there no one who can do anything for me?* Or, as the CLNT has it: *What will rescue me out of this body of death?*

At stake with both Paul and Fred is nothing less than God's acceptance of them. At stake is nothing less than the ability to look God in the eye with peace and settled assurance.

Paul realizes his condition is not only desperate, but hopeless. Looking deeply, he finds nothing within himself to answer the bell for another round of struggle against sin. This surrender and lack of self-confidence is a shocking confession from an ex-Pharisee who once testified concerning himself—

And am even I having confidence in flesh, also? If any other one is presuming to have confidence in flesh, I rather: in circumcision the eighty day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in relation to law, a Pharisee, in relation to zeal, persecuting the ecclesia, in relation to the righteousness which is in law, become blameless. But things that were gain to me, these I have deemed a forfeit because of Christ. But, to be sure, I am also deeming all to be a forfeit because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, because of whom I forfeited all, and am deeming it to be refuse, that I should be gaining Christ (Philippians 3:4-8).

In his own eyes, Paul used to be blameless. In those days of self-imagined purity, however, Paul had not even begun his walk of grace. Interesting that the same place of self-delusion ("blameless") from which Paul launches to appreciate true freedom, Fred makes his goal. This is what Fred *wants* to become: blameless. Fred's dream is to land at the place Paul now considers garbage ("refuse," Philipians 3:8) in light of the greater revelation, which is grace.

"A wretched man am I! What will rescue me out of this body of death? Grace! I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Paul's revelation causes him to laud Jesus Christ rather than his own successes against sin. He exalts in the answer to his personal trauma: "Grace!" To Paul, the battle has ended. He is still pulled by the influence of sin, but Christ has set things right in spite of his sin, and now Paul looks to Him, Jesus Christ, his Savior.

Fred, however, looks to himself. Paul's answer is "Grace" and "Jesus Christ acted to set things right." Fred's answer, however, is much different than Paul's.

Fred heard his friends' pleas, but in the end decided to go his own way. Distancing himself from the counsel of his associates—that God loved him no matter what ("Christians don't read their Bibles very often," Fred said of his associates)—the "light" finally dawned on Fred. He now knew why God was stonewalling him:

I finally made the connection between my sexual immorality and my distance from God ... I looked pure on the outside to everyone else. But to God, I'd stopped short. I merely found a middle ground, somewhere between paganism and obedience to God's standard.

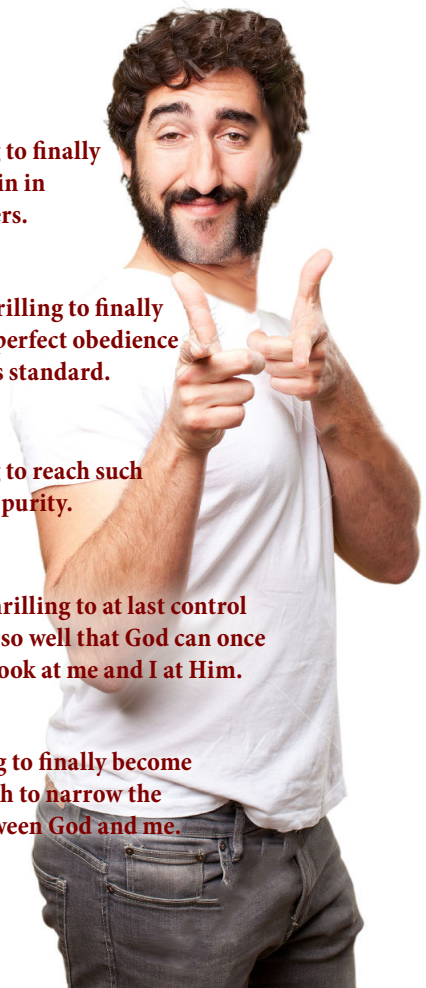
How thrilling to finally find faith again in my own prayers.

How thrilling to finally obtain perfect obedience to God's standard.

How thrilling to reach such a rare level of purity.

How thrilling to at last control myself so well that God can once again look at me and I at Him.

How thrilling to finally become strong enough to narrow the distance between God and me.



There it was, then: “To God, I’d stopped short.” God was expecting so much more of Fred. Fred had not gone far enough! Like the apostle Paul, Fred knew he was at a crossroads. He could either give up and relax in God’s grace, as did Paul, or double-down and push his powers of self-control and asceticism to the brink. To Fred, the choice was easy. He would show his friends what was possible!

Fred found his “deliverance.” Fred once again found the confidence in his own prayers that he used to have before

- ▶ “To aim for obedience is to aim for perfection” (pg. 49).
- ▶ “God is waiting for you to rise up and engage in the battle” (pg. 92).
- ▶ “Let’s put together a battle plan” (pg. 101).
- ▶ “The landing-craft ramps are falling open, and it’s time to hit the beach” (pg. 101).
- ▶ “You’ll be holy when you choose not to sin” (pg. 92).
- ▶ “By winning this war, your life will be blessed in tremendous ways” (pg. 93).
- ▶ “Your victory will recover what was lost through sin” (pg. 93).
- ▶ “Your victory will help you regain and revitalize your relationship with God” (pg. 93).
- ▶ “You can win this battle by training your eyes to bounce” (pg. 125).
- ▶ “If you bounce your eyes for six weeks, you can win this war” (pg. 125).
- ▶ “When your eyes bounce toward a woman, they must bounce away *immediately*” (pg. 125).
- ▶ “So there’s your battle plan. Setting up defense perimeters and choosing not to sin” (Pg. 105).
- ▶ “Looking back at the details of our plan, even we will admit that it all sounds slightly crazy” (pg. 150).



looking at lingerie ads. In the good old days before the ads, Fred had this self-confidence. He knew his prayers went purely to God. He knew it, because he “knew” that there was no sin in his life before the advent of lingerie ads.

“My prayer life was feeble ... I had no faith in my own prayers because of my sin.”

One can only assume from this that Fred’s faith was—“is” rather—in his ability to pray. One can only assume that Fred’s confidence in his own prayers hinged upon eliminating sin from his life.

And this—

“I had no peace ... I was paying a price for my sin.”

Many would see the phrase, “paying a price for my sin,” and think of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fred does not think this way. In not one place in *Every Man’s Battle* does Fred Stoeker even entertain the thought that Christ paid the price for his sin. And neither does Stephen Arterburn. Rather, “By God’s standard of sexual purity, I wasn’t even close to living His vision for marriage ... *to God, I’d stopped short*. The distance from God grew wider ... my impurity still ruled ... ”

From this foundation of sand, Fred instructs the doomed readers of his book—

Slightly? Paul’s revelation caused him to give up, look to a Savior, and shout, “Grace!” Fred’s revelation causes him to gear up for a war with his eyes and shout: “Hit the beach!” (pg. 101).

No wonder the key word in Fred’s book title is, “Battle.” Whose plan would you rather follow—Paul’s or Fred’s? Which plan do you think has a chance of actually working? —MZ (*To be continued.*)

