



The Cud...a little something to chew on.

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A Tired Hitman

Being a contract killer is wearing me out. The "tired hitman" genre is more than just a Hollywood plot device – it actually happens. Killing is demanding. And sometimes I feel like it's all I can do just to take out my next mark.

You may think I'm kidding about the killing, but I'm not. God saved me and then contracted me into the assassination business. Ironically, I'm the hitman *and* the target.

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry"
(Colossians 3:5).

"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – 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"
(Romans 8:12-13).

Christians are commanded to be slaying in the Spirit, not slain in the Spirit. Putting to death the deeds of the body is our sacred duty.

The word "flesh" in the Romans passage above, doesn't refer to my physical flesh so much as it refers to the part of my humanity that is prone to sin. It refers to the part of me that wants no part of God. Before Christ, I was enslaved to the flesh. Godless inclinations dominated me. Through Christ, I have been liberated and no longer have an obligation to the flesh and its godlessness. But while the power of sin has been broken, unfortunately the presence and persistence of sin remains.

The "deeds of the body" Paul refers to are those attitudes and actions which violate or ignore the will of God. If you want a detailed description of your particular fleshly deeds I suggest asking your wife, your husband or your assistant. If you're not that brave, you can always take a peek at Galatians 5:19-21.

And although sin expresses itself through my body, my body itself is not to blame. That's why self-flagellation does nothing to curb my sin problem. My body is merely the agent for the "flesh". It's my fleshly conduct, my sins, that I'm contracted to kill.

And kill them I must. In fact, it's kill or be killed. I'll never tame the flesh. I won't rehabilitate it. I don't dare make excuses for the deeds of the flesh by saying, "Well, I'm only human". I have to terminate the deeds of the flesh. The Spirit of God is unambiguous in His choice of language and figures of speech – He says in effect, "Kill 'em. Kill 'em all."

There's only one weapon lethal enough to put sin out of its misery: The Spirit endowed "no". That's what it takes. One clean shot with a resolute "no". No, I won't dishonor God. No, I won't waver in unbelief. No, I won't fear the future. No, I won't be directed by my emotions. No, I won't be driven by my passions. That's how I kill the deeds of the body – a .44 Magnum "no".

Getting to "no" takes some planning, some preparation and a healthy measure of precaution. Saying no to sin requires me to face my potential to indulge myself, to deceive myself and to defend myself. Saying no takes practice. And there's no shortage of fleshly targets on which to practice. Most of all, saying and staying at "no" demands a perpetual reliance on the Holy Spirit.

But here's the rub and the reason I'm whipped – the deeds of the flesh don't stay dead. They wiggle back to life like B movie zombies. The terminating business is interminable. I feel like I'm in my own version of the movie *Groundhog Day*. The very sins I killed yesterday, are clawing at my door again today.

Walking in the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the flesh, is relentless, repetitive and exhausting. And it's the norm. You can search for an easier version of the Christian life, but it won't be authentic. It'll be a cheap knock off and it will fail you in the end. God has contracted us into an armed conflict without leave, without let up and without alternative. It's an unremitting slog until we die. And yes, I realize I won't be selling many books off the concept.

Remember that old movie, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, where pod creatures were replicating and replacing humans? In the version I recall, the aliens conquered people in their sleep and so their only chance of survival was to stay awake. I know it's a stretch, but for me, it puts a picture to Paul's exhortation in **1 Thessalonians 5:6**, "...so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober." And **Romans 13:11**, "Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

Fatigue will tempt us to compromise and to negotiate with the flesh. Fatigue will, as Lombardi said, "make cowards of us all". We cannot rest from the violence. Not even for a day. The deeds of the flesh must be assassinated over and over and over again. "You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Hebrews 10:36). "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Galatians 6:9).

The killing goes on and on. Until that day.

By His grace and for His glory,

David

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