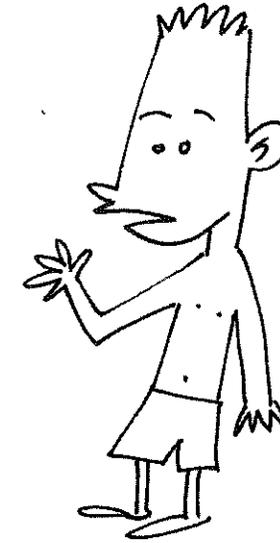


bodies free from sin and all its corrupting effect. “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

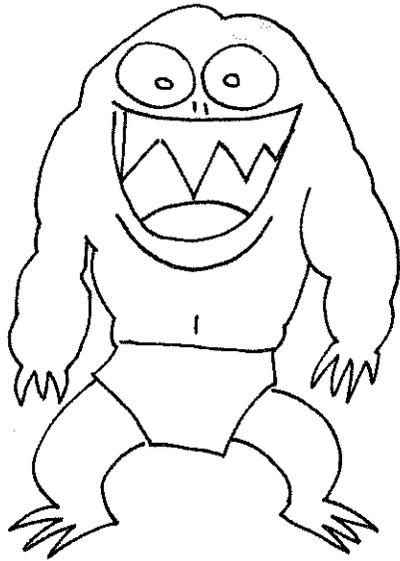
We’ve been changed. But we’re still changing. And yet we’re also waiting to be changed.

Until the final day, until we’re changed and freed forever from our struggle against sin, we have to deal with the ongoing presence and influence of sin—what theologians call *indwelling* or *remaining sin*. *Indwelling sin* refers to the fact that even as Christians we can still be enticed and tempted by our old desires, what the Bible often refers to as “the flesh.” Galatians 5:17 says, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

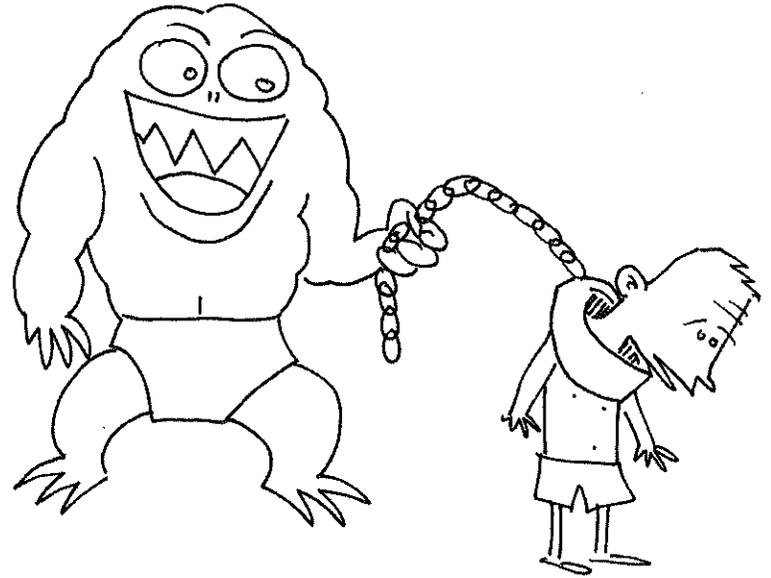
Romans 13:14 says, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Once when I was working on a sermon on Romans 13:14, I started doodling on my notepad (a habit that helps me think but that sometimes annoys other people when I’m supposed to be paying attention in a meeting). Anyway, I drew some cartoons to try to illustrate the Christian’s relationship to the flesh. My kids liked the pictures, so the following is my first-grade-friendly explanation of “the flesh.” (Feel free to color.)



1. **This is you.** Or us. We’re humans made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26–27). Ladies, sorry you have to identify with a little guy. And I’m not sure why he doesn’t have on a shirt. That’s just how I drew him.



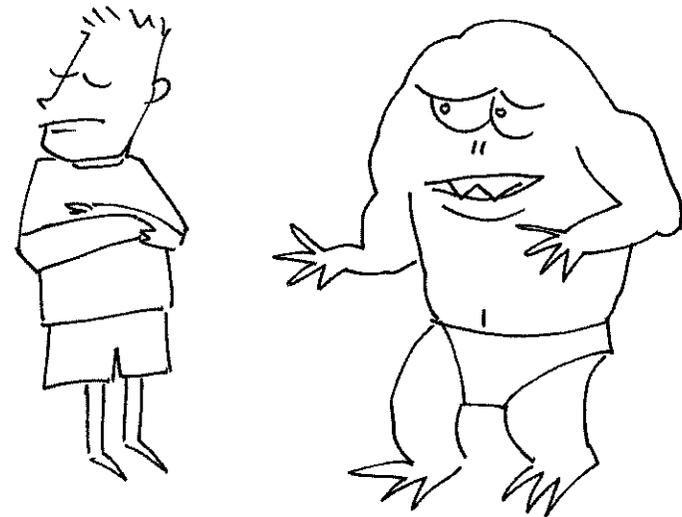
2. **This is the flesh.** He's kind of Jabba the Hutt meets WWE wrestler. The flesh represents the sinful, corrupted desires of our hearts. It's not a reference to our bodies—our bodies are created by God and are good. And though my cartoon can't do this justice, the flesh isn't something outside us or just a part of us. It's who we are apart from Christ. The flesh represents our sinful cravings to live for ourselves and disobey God's laws and commands (Romans 7:18).



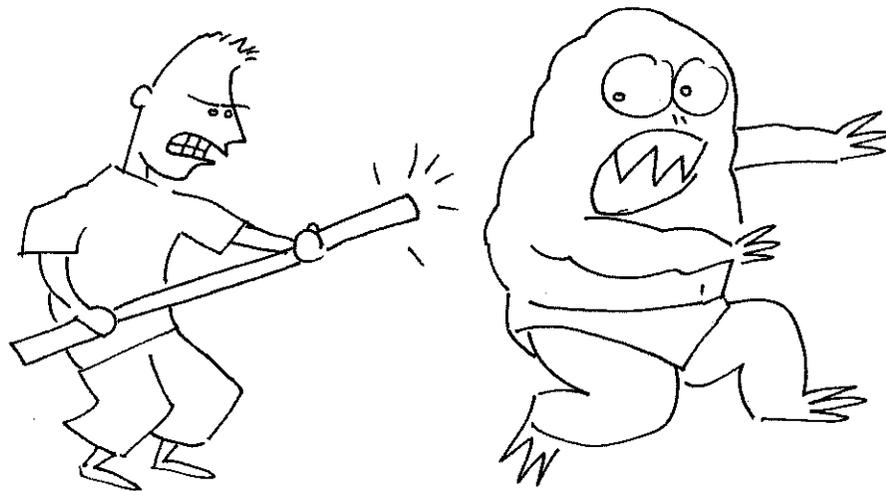
3. **Before Jesus saves us,** we all relate to the flesh this way. The Bible says we are slaves to our sinful desires (John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:19). Our flesh is boss. It controls us (Proverbs 5:22). Even the good things we do are stained by sin and selfishness.



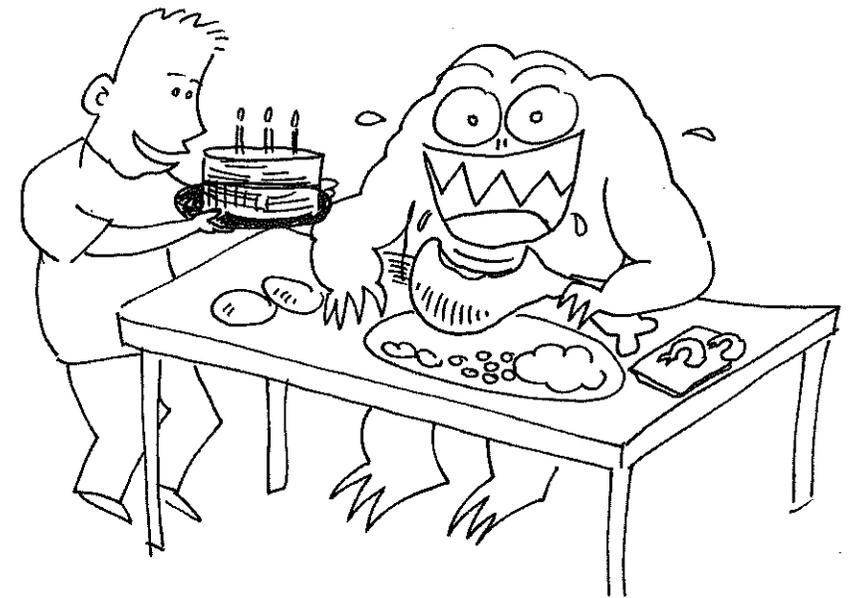
4. **This is what happens when we trust in Jesus.** Because Jesus died on the cross and conquered sin and rose again, we are freed from the power or dominion of sin (Galatians 2:20). It no longer dominates us (Romans 6:22). It's no longer our boss. See how the chain is broken? And we get clothes, which is really great.



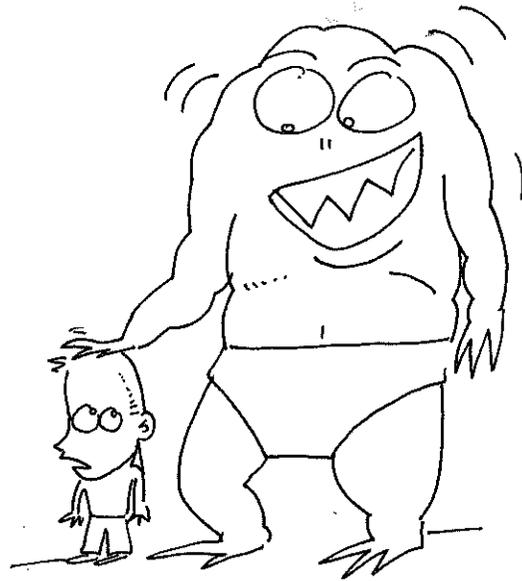
5. **But our flesh doesn't disappear.** It no longer reigns, but it's still a reality (Galatians 5:16–17). It still hangs around to entice us. After we become Christians, we're no longer slaves to sin, but the flesh can still tempt us. We can choose to give in to temptation and indulge the flesh. Jesus broke the power of sin, but until we're in heaven, we still live with the presence and influence of sinful desires. Don't think it's a stalemate. The Holy Spirit indwells believers and empowers us to say no to the flesh. He is at work in us, transforming us to be like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18).



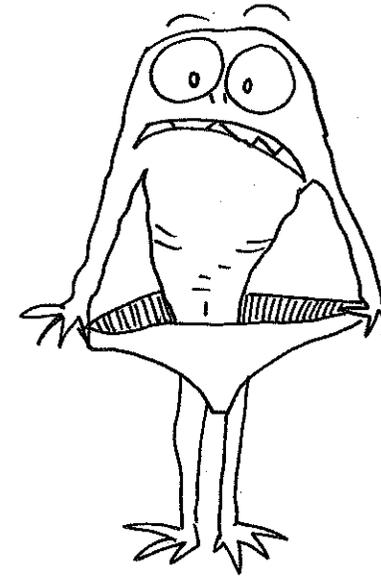
6. **That's why the Bible is full of encouragement to fight our fleshly desires.** We can't live at peace with the flesh. We have to attack it and deny it and kill it (Romans 8:13; 13:12). In hindsight, I guess drawing a sword of the Spirit would have been a bit more biblical. Oh well. This is the "stick" of the Spirit.



7. **The problem is that too often Christians make friends with their flesh.** In fact, they *feed* their flesh. That's what "making provision" means (Romans 13:14). We feed our flesh when we do things that encourage or foster our old sinful desires. This is choosing to live like who we used to be. Giving in to temptation, dwelling on sinful thoughts, and spending time with people and in places that celebrate sin are like giving our flesh three well-rounded meals a day with snacks and dessert. We might think that since we've been freed by the Cross, it's okay to indulge the flesh, but that's not true (Galatians 5:13, 24). And there's a real problem. When we feed the flesh...



8. **Our flesh can grow!** And before we know it, the flesh is bigger and stronger than we are and starts to push us around (Romans 6:12). This is why even genuine Christians, who are no longer wearing the chains of sin, can feel like their flesh is bullying them (Galatians 6:7–8). That's why Paul tells us in Romans 13:14 that we need to...



9. **Starve our flesh!** This is what we want our flesh to look like. We want the flesh gaunt and feeble (2 Corinthians 7:1). We should never expect it to be completely gone until Jesus returns and forever frees us from the presence of sin. Even a weak, wimpy flesh can try to trip us up (1 Corinthians 10:12). But when we starve the flesh, it's easier to resist temptation and walk in obedience.