

## Battleground: Flesh Vs. Spirit-2

Last week we began the section in Galatians on the deeds of the flesh. We saw that there was a conflict in all believers between the flesh and the Spirit.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit,  
     and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.  
<sup>17</sup>For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit,  
     and the Spirit against the flesh;  
     for these are in opposition to one another,  
     so the you may not do the things that you please.  
<sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.  
Gal. 5:16-18

Here Paul shows the internal conflict that exists between the flesh and the Spirit.

The use of 'Spirit,' speaks of the new nature that we receive when the Holy Spirit enters our hearts. The 'flesh' refers to the sin principle or old nature.

If we walk in the Spirit then we will have victory over the desires of the flesh. According to the false teachers, known as the Judaizers, the answer to all our problems would be to go back to the Law and obey all of its ordinances. But Paul answers these objections to Christian liberty, which they say would lead to licentiousness, is to be led of the Spirit, so that we will not be under the Law's condemnation.

Then Paul goes on to explain the lower nature, also called 'the flesh.'

<sup>19</sup>Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are:  
     immorality, impurity, sensuality,  
<sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger,  
     disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envying, drunkenness, carousing,  
     and things like these,  
     of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you,  
     that those who practice such things  
     will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Gal. 5:19-21)

### I. The Clash Within.

The deeds of the flesh reflect the sinful desires of unredeemed humanness, which are in spiritual warfare against the desires of the Spirit.

Paul writes that they are *evident*. – unmistakable, clear, obvious, plain, apparent.

Jesus said that man's problems weren't from without him, but from within.

“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man”  
(Mark 7:20-23).

The Bible teaches:

Man is inherently corrupt and depraved in every aspect of his being.

People are born with wicked hearts and *'No one outgrows depravity'*.

Paul's list of the deeds of the flesh cover three general areas:

- sex, religion, and relationships.

### 1. Sexual Immorality

***Immorality*** – porneia– all illicit sexual activity.

***Impurity*** – akatharsia – “unclean”

– used medically to refer to an oozing wound.

Nakedness is associated with unclean spirits.

***Sensuality*** – aselgeia – any excess or lack of restraint – sexual excess.

“It refers to uninhibited sexual indulgence without shame and without concern for what others think or how they may be affected (or infected).”

### 2. Man-made religion

**Idolatry** – worship of man-made images of any sort.

**Sorcery** – pharmakeia – Occultic practices in which drugs were used to induce supposed communication with deities –witchcraft and black magic.

All false religions are based on self-righteousness, pride and deception.

Sometimes there are supernatural experiences: visions, altered sights (seeing circles or highlights around people or plants) When Moses went to Pharaoh to demand that he let God's people go, he did miracles which Pharaoh's magicians duplicated.

### 3. Human relationships.

Relationships thrive in the fruit of the Spirit but don't survive in the flesh. The flesh lives for self gratification and is utterly evil. The Galatians were having all kinds of relationship problems. Even though they were fulfilling the rituals and rules of the Law, they couldn't produce the love of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

**Enmities** – hateful attitudes

**Strife** – bitter conflicts (wrong attitudes bring wrong actions).

**Jealousy** – a form of anger and hateful resentment caused by coveting for oneself what belongs to someone else.

**Outbursts of anger** – sudden, unrestrained expressions of hostility toward others – sin of an uncontrolled temper.

Bad attitudes or motives lead to evil actions

**Disputes, dissensions, factions and envyings** – animosities between individuals and groups. – feuds can fester for generations.

*Many of these are in the plural.*

**Drunkenness and carousing** – orgies common characteristics of pagan worship. Drunk – rowdy, boisterous, and crude behavior.

**And things like these.** – Paul's list is representative and not exhaustive.

❖ **The outcome of practicing the deeds of the flesh:**

Paul's warning:

***those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***

**Practice** – present, ongoing participle of *prasso* -- *ongoing action*.

- Continual, habitual practice of such things marks a person as unregenerate.

Scripture always assesses a person's character on the basis of his common, habitual actions, not his occasional ones. People who habitually indulge in sin show themselves to be enemies of God whereas those who habitually do good show themselves to be His children. The unregenerate person occasionally does humanly good things, and the regenerate person occasionally falls into sin.<sup>1</sup>

John writes,

<sup>4</sup>Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup>No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. <sup>7</sup>Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; <sup>8</sup>the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. <sup>10</sup>By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:4-10)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

**Believers no longer practice these things:**

“And such were some of you;  
but you were washed,

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, p. 163.

but you were sanctified,  
but you were justified  
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and in the Spirit of our God” (v. 11).

❖ **The deeds of the flesh manifest when we give in to temptation.**

James writes,

“...each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

(James 1:14-15)

Frank and Ernest cartoon:

Two characters are standing before a priest and Frank asks, “How come opportunity knocks once, but temptation beats at my door every day?”

Satan is the tempter. The source of temptation is the flesh.

***“...each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust...”***

Like a candle that only burns with wax (fuel) and a wick (catalyst)  
Temptation is a catalyst creating a flame fueled by the desire of the flesh.

***Enticed*** – a fishing term, meaning “to bait.”

Swindoll writes,

“So, a lure gets dropped into our lives – something external. That, in itself, is not sin. Our problem is that deep within us a hunger stirs, a desire to take the bait: lust. Through persuasion of curiosity mixed with a big dose of rationalization, we find ourselves drawn toward the lure, motivated by our own desire to have.”<sup>2</sup>

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a courageous German theologian who was put to death for standing against Hitler’s evil regime, put this process of temptation into words,

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<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s New Testament Insights: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), p. 34.

“In our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh. All at once a secret, smoldering fire is kindled. The flesh burns and is in flames. It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money, or, finally, that strange desire for the beauty of the world, of nature. Joy in God is in course of being extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Temptation > lust > sin > death

As the fish gives in to his desire, he gives up his freedom for a fish fry.

### ❖ **The Cure for the Deeds of the Flesh:**

How do we overcome the flesh?

<sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

- We must crucify the flesh.
- We must live by the Spirit.

Our old nature was crucified with Christ.  
Rules cannot overcome the flesh, only death.

Our new nature is risen with Christ.  
By faith we can experience continual freedom and victory over sin!

Salvation is moving from living death to deathless life.

#### **Channels Only**

<sup>1</sup>How I praise Thee, Precious Savior, that Thy love laid hold of me;  
Thou has saved and cleansed and filled me that I might Thy channel be.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me, a clean vessel in Thy hand;  
With no power but as Thou givest Graciously with each command.

<sup>4</sup>Witnessing Thy power to save me, setting free from self and sin;  
Thou who bought me to possess me, in Thy fullness, Lord, come in.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit hearts that full surrender know;  
That the streams of living water from our inner man may flow.

Channels only, blessed Master, but with all Thy wondrous power.  
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us every day and every hour.