

Flesh and Spirit – Part II – Whatcha Thinking About?

1. Review

- a. Paul wrote letters dealing with the flesh and the spirit to Collosea, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, and Galatia.
- b. Ray Stedman writes that
 - i. "FLESH is openly arrogant, overbearing, boastful, lustful, cynical, proud. . When it is driven by the Spirit into a corner it can assume a garb of righteousness and become pious, religious, scrupulous about morals, zealous in church work, indignant over wrongs, provokingly evangelical! The righteousness of the FLESH is always counterfeit righteousness. It is centered in self, and therefore it is always self-righteousness...The FLESH can memorize Scripture. The FLESH can teach Sunday school. The FLESH can distribute tracts, give large gifts of money, give a stirring testimony, teach a Bible class, sing solos, or preach a sermon. It can even apologize (after a fashion), and repent (to some extent), or suffer (with a martyred air), but there is one thing that FLESH will never do. It will do anything to survive, but one thing: It will never give in it will never surrender, it will never change, it will never give up, never! It is a slippery, elusive thing; and, when we back it into a corner, it simply takes on a different disguise and appears in a different form, but it is the same old, deadly, evil FLESH

2. Background

- a. Your flesh (meaning your old, fallen nature) will rule your life unless you continuously surrender your life to the Spirit of God and reckon it crucified each day. Even so, once you are a Christian, you now have a choice about who will rule your life...

3. Passage:

- a. Romans 8:1-15 *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*
- b. *9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*
- c. *12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- 13 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. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father*

4. Exposition of Passage

- a. **IN CHRIST:** V1: *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*
 - i. No condemnation for those who are “IN” Christ Jesus.
 - ii. This statement “in Christ” occurs 47 times in the NT>
 - iii. What does it mean?

1. We were once “in Adam.” The bible says that was our state of existence. We inherited his rebellion against God. What he did we do. It is our nature because we have Adam’s nature.
 2. Example: \$20.00 bill in a book. Whatever happens to the book happens to the bill in the book. The bible says that we were in “his loins” or lineage. So whatever happened to Adam happened to me.
- iv. How do we become “in” Christ?
1. By placing our faith in Him by responding to His invitation to forgiveness and eternal life.
 2. When we are joined to Christ, the bible says that our position is changed. We are no longer “in Adam” but now are “in Christ.”
 - a. Noah’s ARK is a picture of Christ Those that entered the Ark were protected by it and the faith that believed God. Those that enter Christ by faith are safe from judgment.
 - b. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*” 2 Corinthians 5:17
 - c. When I am “in Christ” I am crucified with Christ, I am risen with Christ. In fact, I am seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus
 - d. There are wonderful promises too:
 - i. (Ephesians 2:4-6) *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*”
- v. Paul is not basing his declaration of no condemnation upon our conduct, but upon our position (in Christ).
1. While it is true that those who are in Christ should not and do not consistently walk according to the flesh, this is not a condition for their status of "no condemnation"
 2. Once IN Christ, there is no basis for accusation. Our position is in Christ.
 3. While our practice of life must catch up with our position, the position is irreversible if true.
- vi. There is no condemnation by God. There is no condemnation by the Holy Spirit. There can not be even self-condemnation. Don’t speak badly of yourself, you belong to God. **Because you are in Christ, God sees you as complete in Christ!**
- vii. This does not only describe our present state but our permanent position. We are placed beyond the reach of condemnation. You will never be condemned if you are IN CHRIST!
- b. **2 LAWS:** *2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death*
- i. “THE SIMPLEST child knows something of the law of gravitation. What gravity is to matter, the downward-pull of the flesh is to the spirit. There is not any of us, who is seeking to live the better life, that is not conscious of this downward-pull. The laws of gravitation in the natural world have their counterpart in our inward experience.
 - ii. There is always a down-pull to the centre of gravity, i.e. to self--what I like, what I choose, what I prefer! The fall of the soul toward the flesh--or self-life--becomes increasingly rapid, so that every time we yield it becomes easier to yield, and the velocity becomes headlong. The child of God would fall with velocity equal to that of the depraved sinner if it were not for the law of the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus which makes him free from the law of sin and death.”¹

¹ Found on Precept Austin web site.
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- iii. The Law of “Sin and Death” and the law of the “Spirit of Life.”
 - 1. The laws of the universe are never repealed by God. But one can be overruled by a higher law.
 - 2. The “LAW” (rules and regulations) couldn’t save us..
 - 3. But the sacrifice of Christ could through the “Law of the Spirit of Life.”
 - 4. **ILLUSTRATION:** The characteristic principle of the Holy Spirit is to empower believers for holy living. The characteristic principle of indwelling sin is to drag a person down to death. It is like the law of gravity. When you throw a ball into the air, it comes back down because it is heavier than the air it displaces. A living bird is also heavier than the air it displaces, but when you toss it up in the air, it flies away. The law of life in the bird overcomes the law of gravity. **So the Holy Spirit supplies the risen life of the Lord Jesus, making the believer free from the law of sin and death.**²

- c. **WEAKNESS OF THE LAW:** V3-4: *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
 - i. Phillips translation 8:3 - *The Law never succeeded in producing righteousness - the failure was always the weakness of human nature. But God has met this by sending his own Son Jesus Christ to live in that human nature which causes the trouble. And, while Christ was actually taking upon himself the sins of men, God condemned that sinful nature.*
 - ii. **The Law urges us to obey God, but it does not provide power for obedience.**
 - iii. "There are certain things that the law cannot do.
 - 1. The law is just but it cannot justify (Rom.7:12; 3:20).
 - 2. The law is holy but it cannot sanctify (Rom.7:12).
 - 3. The law can tell me that I am a sinner but it can’t make me a saint!
 - 4. The mirror can show me my dirt but it cannot cleanse me!
 - 5. What the law could not do, God did! What the Law could not do, the Lamb could!"
 - 6. The law can only reveal sin, it can never redeem from sin.
 - 7. It could condemn, it could never save.
 - 8. **The law is like a ten foot pole. You could never say to a ten foot pole, "I want you to make this man to be ten feet tall." A ten foot pole can't do that. All it can do is measure a man's height and reveal how far short he is from reaching the ideal height. In the same way the law could never save, it could only reveal how far short we fall.**³
 - iv. Christ became our sin offering by coming in the flesh, walking according to the Spirit, and sin was condemned, the penalty paid by Jesus on the Cross. When we become Christians and we are “in Christ” that promise applies to us as well.
 - v. **Note carefully that Paul does not say the requirement is fulfilled "by us", it says "in us"!**
 - 1. This is something God does in me by His power and by His Working and by His Spirit!

- d. **MIND OF FLESH & SPIRIT:** v5-8 *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the*

² Found on Precept Austin Website.

³ Ibid.

mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

- i. Paul is stating a spiritual equation, not a spiritual consequence in this passage. Many people will point to this passage and say that see, you can become hostile to God. But Paul is pointing out that because unredeemed men are already spiritually dead, their minds are set on the flesh.
- ii. The unsaved person is a spiritual corpse and consequently is completely unable, in himself, to respond to the things of God.
 1. Unless the Holy Spirit intervenes by convicting him of sin and enabling him to respond to God by faith and thus being made alive, the unsaved person will be unresponsive to the things of God⁴
 2. The word for mind here refers to one's "way of thinking".
 3. It is this key component of our life in Christ that Paul speaks of in Romans 12:1 when he tells us to "be transformed by the renewing our mind" or our way of thinking.
 4. When we come to Christ, our entire perspective is changed. No longer are we at the center of the universe, but rather, Christ is. Our goal becomes not to please ourselves but Him.
 5. That is why preaching a prosperity gospel is so dangerous. It places us at the center of the universe and makes Christ our servant.
- iii. **The unbeliever can live only in the flesh, but the believer can live in the flesh or in the Spirit.**
 1. Are you still flesh and blood? Is it saying that because you are flesh and blood that you are not in Christ?
 2. No, he defines "being in the flesh" as being "under its control" and under the control and rule of sin and self.
 3. **Believers although capable of behaving quite "fleshly" are strictly speaking no longer "in the flesh" even though the flesh still remains in us. It is a fact that a residual of the flesh nature inherited from our first spiritual father, Adam, still remains in our physical, mortal bodies. But you say "Yes, I know that's true because I still sin. But at least the flesh is better than it was when I was saved 10 years ago." Wrong! Your flesh and my flesh is no less corrupt, evil, depraved and wicked than it was before our regeneration. "So what's changed?" you ask. Well, what has changed is that flesh now no longer rules in your mortal, physical body like it did when you were "in the flesh". When you were unregenerate in Adam, the flesh was the reigning king. But when you were regenerated, being born from above by the Holy Spirit, the flesh or Old self (old man) was "dethroned" and put to death.**
- iv. Those who live according to the flesh allow their lives to be basically determined by their sinful human nature. They set their minds on – meaning they are most deeply interested in, constantly talk about, engage and glory in—the things pertaining to the flesh, that is, to their sinful self-oriented, human nature.
- v. Those who live according to the Spirit, and therefore submit to the Spirit's direction, concentrate their attention on, and delight in whatever is at the heart of God.
 1. "Separation" from the world (sanctification) takes place as we "cooperate" with the Spirit (under control of or continuously being filled with the Spirit...like a "drunk" man...what fills him controls him.)
 2. Amish Separation – fallacy

⁴ MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press)
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3. We too, like Paul, have to continually, daily die to the flesh, first saying "yes" to Jesus (arising each morning and choosing to present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices - Romans 12:1) and then we are much more likely to say "no" to the flesh. Then the Spirit of Christ can live His life through us. It is not us living "like Jesus" trying to do for Him, but Christ actually living His life through us - this is the key to the Christian Life.
- e. **Holy Spirit:** Explains it more in v9-11 *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you*
- i. This is one of the most critical passages in the New Testament for sorting out the Life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times in this chapter!
 1. He states that in v. 9, that if the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are not IN the Flesh, but IN the Spirit.
 2. Here is the definition of whether you are in Adam or in Christ: if the Spirit of God dwells within you.
 3. And, he states that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
 4. So according to this passage, when does someone receive the Holy Spirit?
 - a. When he places his faith in Christ.
 - b. You cannot be "saved" without the Holy Spirit.
 - c. You cannot get saved at the age of 12 and get the Holy Spirit at the age of 20.
 - d. One of those events or the other is not true in your life.
 - i. You may have experienced the Holy Spirit in a fresh way in your life, but don't base your theology on your experience...you might also notice that it the apostles experienced the Holy Spirit in a fresh way several times as well.
 - ii. **The personal experience of Holy Spirit is not a one-time experience in the Christian life.** He is meant to be experienced over and over again in what he is doing.
 - iii. That is why the bible calls it "walking in the Spirit" and not just an "awakening in the spirit."
 5. There is no scriptural basis for a second work of grace subsequent to salvation.
 6. At salvation either we have all of the Spirit of God or we have none of Him. There may be a time subsequent to salvation in which the Spirit of God gets more of us, but there is never a time when we get more of Him.⁵
- f. **WALKING BY THE SPIRIT:**V12-14 *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- 13 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. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*
- i. He boils it down here. We are not under obligation to live according to the flesh, but we are to the Spirit. If we live according to the flesh's demands, we MUST die.
 - ii. Spirit empowered self denial - are you a "slave" to your body? Does your body give the orders?

⁵ (Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson)
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- iii. *“but if by the spirit you are PUTTING TO DEATH (actively) the deeds of the body you will live.”*
- iv. “For all who are LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, these are the sons of God”
 - 1. How are we led?
 - 2. The OT often comments that God “led” Israel thru the wilderness
 - 3. God desires to lead you through life as well.

5. Walking by the Spirit as opposed to walking by the flesh.

- a. Step one is given by this passage.
 - i. **An essential component of living (or walking) according to the Spirit is based upon what we set our minds upon.**
 - ii. Do you think about yourself a lot? Hmm, maybe you are setting your mind on self.
 - iii. **Becoming oblivious to “self” is essential to walk in the spirit.**
 - 1. Self-consciousness is actually flesh consciousness. It is paying attention to how well the flesh is doing.
 - iv. When our eyes, our attention is upon our Savior, our Lord, wonderful things happen.
 - 1. We stop being depressed.
 - 2. We stop being overly concerned with our performance.
 - 3. **Being filled with the Spirit is NOT taking a glass of water, drinking it down and then hurrying back to Church on Sunday and getting it filled up again so you'll have some more to drink. To be filled with the Spirit is like knocking the bottom out of the glass, taking the glass and putting it in the river and letting the river flow through it. (in Jn 7:38 Jesus prophesied that from our "innermost being shall flow rivers of living water"). That's what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.**
 - 4. **The more you learn to turn your attention to Him, the more you learn to get up under grace & not under the Law and performance & the more you will learn to trust Him that He is Who He says He is and that only the Spirit of Christ in you can live the Christ life - the more that the "river" that is in you will be able to flow forth through your mortal body.”⁶**
 - v. The Christian life however is not a matter of stopping some things and starting some other things. Paul is saying that now we have experienced a radical transformation and are to order our steps by an entirely new regulating principle, the principle of the Holy Spirit
- b. Have you ever watched a baseball game?
 - i. **Every batter wants to get to first base. But to do so the batter does not look at first base. He watches the ball. He focuses all his energy in concentrating on hitting the ball as it is pitched. In a sense the “righteous requirements” of the Law are first base to us. We yearn to get there. But too many believers focus their attention on first base—and constantly strike out! **What Paul said was keep your eye on the ball—on Jesus Himself—and you will discover that you arrive on first base (a righteous life) without even trying.****
- c. Dr. Ryrie call Romans 8:13 the most important single verse on the spiritual life in the New Testament. He liked it because it contains a beautiful balance. There is God’s part—“if by the Spirit”—and there is our part—“you put to death.”
- d. **Spiritual growth comes when we do our part as we rely upon the Holy Spirit’s enablement.**
 - i. True spirituality is neither entirely passive (“Let go and let God”) nor entirely active (“I’ve got to do this all by myself”).
 - ii. This verse balances a moment-by-moment dependence upon the Spirit with a tough-minded attitude toward the flesh. Is the spiritual life dependent upon God or upon me? The answer is Yes! **I cannot do it without God. God will not do it without me.**

⁶ Found in Austin Precept website.
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- iii. Jesus Christ does not demand that I give up just the wrong things in life, but the right, the best I have for Him, eg. **my right to myself.**
 - 1. Will I agree to go through my “*white funeral*” and say I deliberately cut out my claim to my right to myself, deliberately go to the death of my self-will?
 - 2. If I will, instantly the Spirit of God begins to work, and slowly the new mind is formed.
 - 3. God cannot crucify your old man. He has done all He will do for you at the Cross.
 - 4. He nailed your old man there, but until you believe it sufficiently to act like it, to reckon it so, you will live like the old man is still alive.
 - 5. Cut out your claim to yourself, your rights, your needs, your wants.
 - 6. Make a deliberate choice

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6. Closing Illustration:

- a. Compare a car with a subway train. Have you ever ridden a subway? The ones that ride on electric tracks?
- b. Well, your car operates on the storage principle (You put gas in the tank and you drive it. You burn the gas and when you're out of gas, you stop, you get more gas, you run it again, you burn it, you get more gas, you keep on driving until you run out. You're constantly running and stopping, running and stopping, filling and refilling.)
- c. The subway operates on the contact principle (You have the two rails on the outside and the electrified third rail in the middle. What is it that keeps the elevated train going? As long as the train stays in contact with that third rail in the middle, it will go and go and go and never stop.
- d. Too many people think that walking with the Holy Spirit is like riding in a car. You get filled with the Holy Spirit and you get run down and you get filled up again and you get run down.
- e. So they're constantly up and down, up and down, being filled and emptied, being filled and emptied. That's not the Christian life of the New Testament.)
- f. The Christian life operates on the contact principle. Just as the train moves forward as long it stays in contact with the third rail, even so your spiritual life moves forward as you stay in constant contact with the Holy Spirit.
- g. The whole question of the Spirit-filled life resolves itself into this: Are you keeping in contact with the Holy Spirit?
 - h. Your job—your only real job as a Christian—is to stay in contact with the Spirit -- Day by day. Hour by hour. Moment by moment...How well have you been staying in contact with Jesus?

I want to ask you this morning to evaluate if you have been trying to live the Christian life according to the flesh. If so, I want to invite you to dive into the stream of living water. The water that Jesus offers that will never run dry but that wells up to everlasting life. If so, won't you respond to Christ's invitation to place your faith in Him and become a brand new Creation? I will be down front with Jennifer to pray with you during our ministry response time, and the kneeling rails are open for you to return to contact with Jesus.