

The Battle Within: Spirit vs Flesh

Galatian 5: 16 -26

The Spirit versus the Flesh

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I tell you about these things in advance—as I told you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit. ²⁶ We must not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

I. Desires of the Flesh - vs. 16 - 17

Genesis 39:6-12

He left all that he owned under Joseph's authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. ⁷ After some time his master's wife looked longingly at Joseph and said, "Sleep with me." ⁸ But he refused. "Look," he said to his master's wife, "with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority, ⁹ No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do such a great evil and sin against God?"

¹⁰ Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her. ¹¹ Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there. ¹² She grabbed him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything that belongs to the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God’s will remains forever.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

“If there is no element of asceticism (**severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons**) in our lives, if we give free rein to the desires of the flesh (taking care of course to keep within the limits of what seems permissible to the world), we shall find it hard to train for the service of Christ. When the flesh is satisfied it is hard to pray with cheerfulness or to devote oneself to a life of service which calls for much self-renunciation.”

II. Struggles with the Flesh – vs. 19-21

Romans 7:14-8:4

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am made out of flesh, sold into sin’s power. ¹⁵For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but it is the sin that lives in me. ²¹So I discover this principle: When I want to do what is good, evil is with me. ²²For in my inner self I joyfully agree with God’s law. ²³But I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this dying body? ²⁵I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh, to the law of sin.

The Life-Giving Spirit

8 Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, ²because the Spirit’s law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own

Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering,⁴ in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Dwight L Moody

The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible.

III. Walking in the Spirit – vs. 22-26

John 15:1-6

The Vine and the Branches

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. ²Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me. ⁶If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

The Problem of Immaturity

Brothers, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, ³because you are still fleshly. For since there is envy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and living like unbelievers?

Romans 6:19-23

I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to moral impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification. ²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from allegiance to righteousness. ²¹So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death. ²²But now, since you have been liberated from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification and the end is eternal life!