

The Spirit of God
Week 11
The Flesh versus the Spirit

LBC 14/1/04

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Galatians 5:13-17

Introduction:

ILLUSTRATION – How thrilling was the night of my salvation! All my fears and burdens rolled away. How happy I was! I wanted to love God, and learn about Him, and serve Him. But, as I started down the road of Christian growth, a terrible thing happened: **I SINNED!** I was **devastated** – how could a **Christian** do such things? Evil thoughts, harsh words, spiteful anger, etc. etc. I got very discouraged with myself. I did not yet understand the struggle that I faced as a Christian: the battle of the **FLESH** against the **SPIRIT**.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Why, as a born-again Christian, do I sin so easily, when I don't want to sin?

Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

The Christian life is a constant struggle, a contest of **the flesh versus the Spirit**.

**** Let me teach you tonight about the flesh versus the Spirit:**

1. Every person is born with a sinful nature.

Psalm 51:5 “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

ILLUSTRATION – The struggle of training Azure to do right!

What kind of nature were we born with?

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

According to Galatians 5:19-21, the works of the flesh are:

- Adultery
- Uncleaness
- Idolatry
- Hatred
- Emulations (jealousy, envy, or anger)
- Strife
- Heresies
- Murders
- Revellings (rioting)
- Fornication
- Lasciviousness (filthiness)
- Witchcraft
- Variance (to be contentious or argumentative)
- Wrath
- Seditions (divisions)
- Envyings
- Drunkenness
- And such like...

Our fleshly nature is **contrary** to everything that is good, godly and right.

2. We receive a new nature at salvation.

When you are born again, you are changed from within. You are a new creation:

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

When God saves you, He places His Spirit within you, and your spirit is made alive. You now have a **new nature**, a new set of desires. This is also called the **new man**:

Ephesians 4:24 “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

ILLUSTRATION – I love to study the Bible. But, 17 years ago, I had no interest in reading or studying the Bible. Why the change? I have a new nature – a new set of desires.

3. The Spirit does not eradicate the flesh.

This is where a lot of Christians get confused and discouraged. Just because you are saved DOES NOT mean that you have lost your sin nature. You will NEVER lose that sin nature until Heaven.

Why do you still sin after you get saved? You live in the body of your flesh. You still have a sinful, selfish nature. God did **NOT** remove the flesh when He placed His Spirit within you.

Galatians 5:16, 17 “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Romans 7:18-23 “¹⁸For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. ¹⁹For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ²⁰Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ²¹I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ²²For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

1 John 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

ILLUSTRATION – The contention between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15 (concerning John Mark). Even great Christians struggle with their flesh!

4. The Spirit and the flesh are in a constant battle.

You have two natures, two sets of desires. In a way, two people live within you:

- The Spirit desires to please God and do right.
- The flesh desires to please self and do wrong.

Because these two natures dwell in your breast, you experience a daily battle – a constant struggle between your old man and your new man. **And it ain't fun!**

Romans 7:22, 23 “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

- Half of you wants to pray – the other half wants to sleep in.
- “ “ “ “ “ give – the other half wants to take.
- “ “ “ “ “ go to church – the other half wants to stay home and rest.
- “ “ “ “ “ read the Bible – the other half says you're too busy.
- “ “ “ “ “ be patient and kind – the other half wants to be impatient and cruel.

- “ “ “ “ “ “ forgive – the other half wants vengeance.
 - “ “ “ “ “ “ love – the other half wants to hate.
 - “ “ “ “ “ “ argue – the other half wants to give in.
 - “ “ “ “ “ “ speak – the other half wants to listen.
 - “ “ “ “ “ “ witness – the other half wants to be a coward.
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5. This struggle is for life.

When will the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit be over? When you are in Heaven!

Romans 8:21-23 “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

6. This battle is an evidence of salvation.

Many Christians get discouraged over this battle between the Spirit and the flesh. Some Christians get so discouraged that they begin to doubt their salvation. **BUT**, the battle between the flesh and the Spirit is not evidence of being **lost** – it is a clear evidence of **salvation!** The lost man does not have this battle because he only has one nature – the flesh. You are in a constant struggle because you have a new nature, and that new nature is evidence that you **ARE** saved.

ILLUSTRATION – Was the Apostle Paul saved? Of course! Yet he had the very same battle with the flesh that we have. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

7. This battle CAN be won.

How can you win the battle of the flesh versus the spirit? You live victoriously by walking in the Spirit:

Galatians 5:16 “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? We shall study this in great detail later, but for now:

1. Take responsibility for your actions; you have **NO EXCUSE** to sin.
2. Recognise that you **CAN** have victory in the battle.
3. **FEED** the Spirit, and **STARVE** the flesh.
4. **YIELD** yourself to the Spirit and get busy serving God.

Romans 6:11-13 “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Romans 12:21 “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Review / Discussion:

ILLUSTRATION – The Indian native who had two dogs fighting inside of him.

REVIEW the 7 points.