

# The Struggle of Flesh and Spirit

Galatians 5:16-18

**Gal 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

**Gal 5:13-15** For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

**Gal 5:16-18** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

## I. The struggle of the flesh and the spirit

**Gal 5:16-18** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

### A. What is flesh?

**Eph 2:1-3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of **disobedience**— 3 among whom we all once lived in the **passions of our flesh**, carrying out the **desires of the body and the mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

**Tit 3:3** For we ourselves were once **foolish, disobedient**, led astray, **slaves to various passions and pleasures**, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

**1 John 2:16-17** For all that is in the world—the **desires of the flesh** and the **desires of the eyes** and **pride of life**—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**James 1:13-14** Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But **each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.**

**Galatians 5:16-18** 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 **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.** 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

## B. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit?

**John 3:5-6** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

**James 1:18** Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

**Ephesians 1:13** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

**1 John 3:9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

**1 John 2:29** If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

**1 John 5:1** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

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**Romans 7:22-24** For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

**Romans 8:22-23** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

## II. The victory of the Spirit over flesh.

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### A. Walk by the Spirit

**Galatians 5:16-18** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-5** For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

- **Submitting our thoughts to Christ**

**Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**John 8:31-32** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

**Joshua 1:8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

- **Submitting our feelings/emotions to Christ**

**Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

**Philippians 2:4-5** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 **Have this mind (feelings?) among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.**

**John 15:9-11** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- **Submitting our desires to Christ**

**Galatians 5:16-18** But I say, **walk by the Spirit,** and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 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. 18 But **if you are led by the Spirit,** you are not under the law.

**Psalms 1:1-3** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-19** Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 **Do not quench the Spirit.**

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is a temple **of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?** You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

**Ephesians 4:29-30** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

## B. Be led by the Spirit

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**Galatians 6:8** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

**2 Peter 2:18-19** For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. 19 **They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption.** For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

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### Concluding points for prayer:

- If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit lives in you.
- Your flesh always desires what is contrary to the Spirit.
- Sanctification begins with a submission of one's thinking to the Word of God.
- This happens through the reading, listening, meditation, and sharing of the Word.
- To the extent our thinking is obedient to the Word, we gain the ability to submit our feelings to Christ. Our life is then filled with Christ's peace and joy.
- Thoughts and feelings transformed by Christ will produce in our heart God's desires and actions.
- This is the victory of the spirit over flesh.