

3/8/26

**The Solution For The Flesh**  
**Gal. 5:16-18**

The Galatians were attempting to accomplish in the energies of the flesh what can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is not a new principle.

1. The prophet Zechariah wrote the words of God that were directed to him, “So he answered and said to me: “This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” Says the LORD of hosts.” Zech. 4:6

2. Jesus said, “But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Paul had already pointed this out by asking the Galatians some questions.

1. “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” Gal. 3:2

2. “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” Gal. 3:3

3. “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal. 3:5

Paul has been telling the Galatians to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made them free. Gal. 5:1

He also told them that having been called to liberty, they were not to use their opportunity for their sinful nature, but rather to love one another. Gal. 5:13

The apostle is dealing with the practical Christian life that is to be lived out here on earth with all its fallenness and the contrasts are very clear:

1. Faith versus law.
2. Grace versus works.
3. Spirit versus flesh.
4. Freedom versus bondage.
5. Love for others versus love for self.

So, Paul gave the Galatians the solution to a flesh dominated life, characterized by three things. Gal. 5:16-18

**I.** The counsel to the believer. vs. 16

**II.** The conflict of the believer. vs. 17

**III.** The conquest of the believer. vs. 18

**I. The counsel to the believer. vs. 16**

**A.** The apostle Paul declared the proclamation. vs. 16a-b

\* “I say then: Walk in the Spirit.”

1. The proclamation is an exhortation to the Galatians. vs. 16a

- a. The exhortation looks back to the previous verse. vs. 15
  - 1) This is the preventative measure to not bite and devour one another. vs. 15a
  - 2) This is the preventative measure that they beware lest they be consumed by one another. vs. 15b
- b. The exhortation is Paul's, "I say then".
  - 1) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:1a
  - 2) Paul, the one who loved them enough to confront them of being bewitched. Gal. 3:1
  - 3) Paul, the one who came to them in sickness. Gal. 4:13
  - 4) Paul, the one who did not hesitate to expose the selfish motive of the Judaizers. Gal. 4:17
  - 5) Paul, the one who was agonizing over their situation. Gal. 4:18-19
- 2. The proclamation is an exhortation to walk in the Spirit. vs. 16b
  - a. Paul using the word walk "paripateo", means to walk about, having the idea of ordering one's behavior and conduct. human responsibility.
    - 1) Before Christ, all the Galatians once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince and power of the air, being children of wrath by nature. Eph. 2:2

- 2) They were now born again, made alive and were to walk as children of light. Eph. 2:1; 5:8
- b. Paul specified their manner of walk, it was to be "in the Spirit", divine enablement.
  - 1) The preposition "in" is really "by", the dative case, stressing that only through the Spirit's work is the exhortation possible.
  - 2) The tense is the present active, literally keep on walking in the Spirit.
  - 3) The word for Spirit is "pneuma" and used for different things; the context will determine the exact meaning.
  - 4) The word can be used of wind. Jn. 3:8
  - 5) The word can be used evil spirits. Acts 19:13, 15, 16
  - 6) The word can be used for the spirit of man, that is made alive by the new birth. Gal. 6:1, 18  
\* Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the **Spirit** is **spirit**." Jn. 3:6
  - 7) The word is used for the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, 16 times in Galatians.
- c. Paul in exhorting them to walk in the Spirit is exhorting them to walk in love,

which he told them was the fulfillment of the Law. vs. 14

- 1) That would be the only way they would stop biting, devouring and consuming one another. vs. 15
- 2) The believers spirit is made alive by the new birth and can manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit is agape love, if they yield. Gal. 5:22a

3. What walking in the Spirit does not mean and what it does mean is important.

- a. What walking in the Spirit, does not mean.
  - 1) It is not the Holy Spirit living for you without your cooperation.
  - 2) It is not the Holy Spirit absorbing your personality.
  - 3) It is not being mystical or mysterious.
- b. What walking in the Spirit does mean.
  - 1) It is the new man in agreement in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
  - 2) It is inner man yielding to the will and purposes of the Holy Spirit.
  - 3) It is a spirit conscious life, being a new creature, the new nature being uppermost, as Adam before the fall.

**B.** The apostle Paul declared the promise. vs. 16c

\* “And you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

1. The promise is based on obedience to the exhortation.
  - a. The Galatians were free moral agents, alive by the Spirit of God, not robots.
  - b. The Galatians would have to submit and yield to God.
2. The promise was the only guarantee for the Galatians to not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
  - a. The lust of the flesh describes the fallen nature of man.
    - 1) The word for lust “epithumia”, is a noun meaning a strong desire or craving, good and bad.
    - 2) The word flesh “sarx”, can mean a mere physical body, that is not evil in itself or the fallen nature of man that produces sin and evil.
    - 3) Not all desires are evil, but certainly can be abused and misused, making them evil.
  - b. Our context for both of these words is evil, that which is forbidden by God.
  - c. The benefit is in the negative, “not fulfill the lust of the flesh”.
    - 1) The word fulfill “teleo”, means to bring to pass, complete or finish.
      - a) The word is used by Paul of having finished his course, as he is ready to die by execution. 2Tim. 4:7
      - b) James uses it for being a doer of the royal law. Ja. 2:8

- 2) The Spirit life would result in a positive benefit in the believer's life.
- 3) The Spirit life would also result in the negative result to their old sin nature.
- 3. What fulfilling the lust of the flesh means.
  - a. It means living for yourself.
  - b. It means living on the animal level of fallen man.
  - c. It means trusting oneself, rather than the Holy Spirit.
  - d. It means not yielding to God.
  - e. It means not pleasing God.
  - f. It means not fellowship with God.
  - g. It means you are not living out the truth of God.
  - h. It means a person is again in bondage to sin.

### Illustration

As the law of gravity is overridden by the law of aerodynamic, a plane is able to stay in the air, so the believer, who depends on the Holy Spirit will override the influence and power of the flesh!

### Application

- 1. The body needs of man were created by God, all of them.
  - a. The breathing drive.
  - b. The thirst drive.
  - c. The hunger drive.
  - d. The sleep drive.

- e. The sex drive.
  - \* "I will praise You, for I am **fearfully** and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well." Ps. 139:14
- 2. The fall brought about a corruption and distortion of the natural drives through sin nature.
  - a. Man abuses the thirst drive and sits at home, in a bar or a night-club and drinks alcohol and destroying his happiness, health and home.
    - \* People do not drink because they are thirsty!
  - b. Man abuses the hunger drive and eats more than he needs or too many of bad foods, bringing about physical consequences to his health and life expectancy.
    - \* Years past too much was made of thinness as we saw the destruction brought upon many young women, due the ideal of models and magazines, now we are on the opposite end!
  - c. Man abuses the sleep drive by being lazy, indifferent and having no motivation to do anything but laying around.
    - \* Not enough sleep is no good, your body will break-down, but too much sleep is also no good, hurting your health in many ways!
  - d. Man abuses the sex drive, thinking it is for mere entertainment and self-fulfillment, degrading the gift of God for a man and woman within marriage.
    - \* The pornographic industry, the amount of call girl services, the willful debauched life-style

of the average young and old person in America is sad!

3. The New Testament says much about our walk.
  - a. “Let us **walk** properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.” Rom. 13:3
  - b. “For though we **walk** in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.” 2Cor. 10:3
  - c. “If we live in the Spirit, let us also **walk** in the Spirit.” Gal. 5:25
  - d. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk** worthy of the calling with which you were called” Eph. 4:1
  - e. “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer **walk** as the rest of the Gentiles **walk**, in the futility of their mind,” Eph. 4:17
  - f. “And **walk** in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Eph. 5:2
  - g. “See then that you **walk** circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.” Eph. 5:15
  - i. “That you may **walk** worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Col. 1:10
  - j. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk** in Him,” Col. 2:6
  - k. “**Walk** in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” Col. 4:5

- I. This can only happen by being constantly filled with the Holy Spirit. Eph. 5:18

*The counsel to the believer was to walk in the Spirit to not be dominated by the flesh life!*

## II. The conflict of the believer. vs. 17

- A. The apostle Paul pointed out the presence of the two clashing natures. vs. 17a-b
  - \* “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”
    1. Paul tells the Galatians what they already knew, their old sin nature was and is forever lusting against the Spirit. vs. 17a
      - a. Paul provides the reason for the exhortation to “walk in the Spirit”
        - 1) The conjunction “for” “gar” introduces the reason.
        - 2) This is the explanation for the needed council to “walk in the Spirit”.
      - b. The lust of the flesh marks the depraved sin nature of man, due to the fall.
        - 1) God created Adam with the capacity to not sin.
        - 2) Adam through the fall passed sin nature, the propensity to sin and death to every man and women.
        - 3) Man became a slave to his fallen nature, resulting in a bent towards sin and self.
    - c. The flesh is being personified.

- 1) Paul is not repeating himself, telling the believer, “you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” vs. 16c
  - 2) Paul in context is depicting “flesh” our sin nature as a person lusting against the person of the Holy Spirit.
  - 3) The word lust “epithumeo” as we have seen means a strong desire, a craving but it is in the form of a verb. vs. 16
  - 4) The tense is the indicative present active, it never stops, it is clashing face to face.
2. Paul again tells the Galatians what they already knew, their new divine nature is forever “lusts against the flesh. vs. 17b
- a. The person believing the gospel message of repentance of their sins is born again.
    - 1) Their sins are forgiven by believing and trusting the atoning work of Christ, personally.
    - 2) The person becomes a new creature; old thing pass away, and all things become new. 2Cor. 5:17
  - b. The regeneration by the Holy Spirit in a person brings about a regenerated spirit in direct conflict with their sin nature.
    - 1) The old man is still present.
    - 2) The new man is now present also.
  - c. The Spirit is personified just like the “flesh”.

- 1) Paul depicts “Spirit”, our divine nature, as a person against the flesh, our old sin nature.
  - 2) This is continuous and never stops, the conflict is part of the process.
  - 3) The two natures live side by side in a Christian, in conflict with each other.
- B.** The apostle Paul pointed out the power struggle of the two natures. vs. 17c  
\* “And these are contrary to one another.”
1. Paul now progresses his thought,
    - a. These two natures are not just opposed to each other, as the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.
    - b. But they are antagonistic in a power struggle.
      - 1) The word contrary “antikimai”, means to be opposite to, to be an adversary, to withstand.  
\* Much like Ishmael, who became Isaac’s adversary only after he was born, so with our new birth.
      - 2) The word is used by Paul telling the Philippians not to be terrified by their adversaries, who opposed them in the gospel. Phil. 1:28
      - 3) It is used for false doctrine antagonistic to the truth of the gospel. 1Tim. 1:10
  2. The power struggle is not of equals.

- a. The concept of good and evil as two equals is known as dualism.
  - 1) The conflict will determine which is more powerful.
  - 2) One should never think of the two nature as such.
- b. The old nature of man is strong and powerful.
  - 1) It kept man dead in trespasses and sin. Eph. 2:1
  - 2) It blinded man to the things of God, “having their understanding **darkened**, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Eph. 4:18
- c. The new nature of the believer is stronger, than the old nature of sin.
  - 1) The divine nature is able to override the old sin nature.
  - 2) The divine nature is in a real power struggle, but just like Satan is in a real power struggle against God, they are not equals, God is more powerful!
  - 3) The power struggle is between the two natures, not the Holy Spirit, sin nature has no chance against the Holy Spirit.
  - 4) The victory of the new nature over the old nature occurs, only if it depends on the Holy Spirit.

- C. The apostle Paul pointed out the personal reality of the two natures. vs. 17d
  - \* “So that you do not do the things that you wish.”
    - 1. The persons being addressed are the Galatians.
      - a. The personal pronoun “you” identifies the Galatians.
      - b. The Galatians were born again, experiencing this adversarial struggle.
    - 2. The Galatians were personally familiar with failure in this adversarial struggle.
      - a. The flesh lusting against the Spirit attempts to keep the believer from doing the things he wished.
        - 1) The things that you wish, indicate the good of the new nature.
        - 2) The next verse makes this very clear, “But if you are led of the Spirit”.
      - b. Therefore our verse is declaring the victories over the flesh, in the power struggle, that is contrary to the Spirit.
        - 1) The tense is the present active subjunctive, literally that you may not keep on doing the things of the Spirit.
        - 2) The problem is not the power of the new nature, lies not in the intellect, but in the will of man!
        - 3) This is normal spiritual warfare!
    - 3. The Galatians were being deceived by the Judeizers.

- a. Telling the Galatians the law how to overcome the flesh, instead of the Spirit.
- b. The Judeaizers were void of the Spirit.

### **Illustration**

Morality may make a person smug and keep them from thinking they need church, but only the power of the Holy Spirit can keep you from living by your sin nature that will lead you to hell.

### **Application**

1. There are those who deny that there is any conflict at all after being born-again.
  - a. The evidence in the Scripture rejects such a teaching or belief.
  - b. The evidence in a Christians daily experience denies it altogether.
  - c. Paul didn't believe it for he is writing to Christians in Galatia.
  - d. Paul himself confessed the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit, due to trusting self, rather than the Spirit. Rom. 7:14-24
    - 1) "If we say that we have no sin (nature), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1Jn. 1:8
    - 2) "If we say that we have not sinned (The product), we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." 1Jn. 1:10
2. Those who deny the conflict are liars and are wanting to appear more spiritual than they are.

- a. Jesus said, "He that is without sin, cast the first stone." Jn. 8:7
- b. The authors of the New Testament reveal the conflict is ever present in life.
  - 1) Paul says, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1Cor. 9:26-27
  - 2) James says, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." Ja. 1:14-16
  - 3) Peter says, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1Pet. 2:11-12
- 3. Those so quick to give you a formula for success to insure you never experience conflict are deceivers.
  - a. Paul makes this clear, writing to the Colossians, "Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do

not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” Col. 2:20-23

- b. The believer’s conflict is evidence they belong to God, for these are contrary to one another.
  - \* James says, “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns **jealously**”?.” Ja. 4:5b

*The conflict of the believer is ever present by the flesh life!*

### III. The conquest of the believer. vs. 18

- A. The apostle Paul indicated the solution to the antagonistic conflict.
  - \* “But if you are led by the Spirit.”
  - 1. Paul tells the Galatians they are to make the proper choice. vs. 18a
    - a. The word but “de” is a contrasting conjunction.
    - b. It stands in direct contrast to being led by the flesh, in the previous verse.
  - 2. Paul tells them their choice is willful, of one’s own free will.
    - a. This is conditional by the word “if”.
    - b. The outcome depends on the right choice, it does not happen automatically.

- c. The choice is based on the fact that they had been saved, Paul told them, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Gal. 5:1
- d. Paul told them, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Gal. 5:13
- 3. The believer is to be led by the Spirit.
  - a. The word led “ago”, means to bring, guide, to take with one or drive.
  - b. The idea is of accompanying another.
  - c. The word was used of Jesus being led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. Lk. 4:1
- 4. The Spirit of God leads the believer by his divine nature, in the things of God.
  - a. To overcome sin.
  - b. To not be deceived.
  - c. To study.
  - d. To pray.
- B. The apostle Paul indicated the powerful freedom from the adversarial problem. vs. 18b
  - \* “You are not under the law.”
  - 1. The Galatians were not under the law nor able to have conquest by the law as the deceivers were teaching.

- a. The Law only provokes us to sin. Rom. 7:7-8
  - b. The Law cannot empower us to do and keep the Law, it only accuses us and points out our guilt.
  - c. The Law causes us to trust our flesh for righteousness.
    - \* Jesus said, “The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”, literally impotent to do the things of the Spirit.” Matt. 26:41b
2. The Galatians were under Grace as Paul had preached to them.
- a. Able to be saved, apart from the Law.
  - b. Able to be forgiven, apart from the Law.
  - c. Able to have a personal relation with God, apart from the Law.
  - d. Able to have access to God, apart from the Law.
  - e. Able to live out a godly life, apart from the Law.
    - \* Paul said, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Phil. 2:12e-13

### Illustration

A piece of fly paper may seem to be insignificant to us, but to the fly it makes a great difference what side it chooses, one will kill it, the other will let it to live!

### Application

1. Anyone desiring to come before God or get to heaven by the Law is deceived.
  - a. “Paul said, “For as many as have sinned without **law** will also perish without **law**, and as many as have sinned in the **law** will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.” Rom. 2:12-13
  - b. Paul again said, “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become **guilty** before God.” Rom. 3:19
  - c. Paul declared, “Therefore by the deeds of the **law** no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the **law** is the knowledge of sin.” Rom. 3:20
2. The law was fulfilled by Jesus in order to meet all righteousness necessary for justification before God to be led by the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Paul says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His

forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Rom. 3:21-26

- b. Paul declares, “For the **law** of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the **law** of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Rom. 8:2-4
3. The victory of the flesh or sin nature is not by accident, but by acting in obeying the Spirit and yielding to the divine nature.
  - a. Paul said, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” Rom. 6:14
  - b. Paul said, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” 2Cor. 10:3-5
  - c. “Paul told the Galatians, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows,

that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Gal. 6:7-8

- d. Paul told the Ephesians, “Do not give place to the Devil”. Eph. 4:27
4. How can I be led by the Holy Spirit?
  - a. By feeding the new man and starving the old man. Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:10
  - b. By studying the Word, prayer, serving and fellowship.
  - c. By not denying the conflict or failure by trusting oneself but by crying out to Jesus and yielding to the Holy Spirit. Rom. 7:25-8:17
  - d. By putting on the full armor of God. Eph. 6:10-18

***The conquest of the believe over the flesh life is a choice every day in life!***

### **Conclusion**

Paul gave the Galatians the solution to a flesh dominated life, characterized by three things.

- I. The counsel to the believer was to walk in the Spirit, to not be dominated by the flesh life!
- II. The conflict of the believer is ever present, due to the flesh life!
- III. The conquest of the believe over the flesh life, is a choice every day in life!

