

6/7/98

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

Paul the apostle has demonstrated to the Galatians the folly of their wanting to live by the law and return to bondage.

They were now sons of Abraham and children of the free woman.

Therefore Paul exhorts the Galatians to recognize their freedom for which Christ had made them free and to stand fast and not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage, as he moves from the doctrinal section to the practical section. 5:1

1. If they became circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing. vs. 2
2. If they became circumcised they would be obligated to keep the entire law. vs. 3
3. If they insisted on these things for justification, they would be separated from Christ and removed themselves from the benefit of grace. vs. 4

So Paul gives to the Galatians the solution for a flesh dominated life and consists of three parts. 5:16-18

- I. The counsel to the believer. vs. 16
- II. The conflicts of the believer. vs. 17
- III. The conquest of the believer. vs. 18

**I. The counsel to the believer. 5:16**

**A. The Proclamation.**

\* "I say them: Walk in the Spirit". vs. 16a-b

1. Paul gives his counsel to the ones he had evangelized and brought to Christ.
  - a. His authority has already been establish as being from God and not man. even as God gave him the gospel by direct revelation. 1:11-12
  - b. His courage to confront when someone was wavering from the gospel truth without respect of person was demonstrated when he confronted Peter at Antioch. 2:11-14
2. Paul tells them to walk in the Spirit.
  - a. The word walk "paripateo" means to walk about, to order one's behavior and conduct.
    - \* This focuses on the human responsibility.
      - 1) Walking speaks of progress.
      - 2) Walking speaks of having direction and knowing where you are going.
        - a) They once walked according to the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air. Eph. 2:2

- b) They had been inverted back to be spirit, soul and body rather than body soul and spirit.
- b. The word Spirit refer to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity.
  - \* This focuses on the Divine side!
  - 1) Paul uses the word “pnuma” eighteen times in Galatians and sixteen times it refers to the Holy Spirit, only two refers to men's spirit. 6:1, 18
  - 2) He first mentioned the Spirit by asking if they had received it by the law or the hearing of faith? 3:2
  - 3) He called the Spirit the Spirit of God’s Son Who He sent into their hearts. 4:6
  - 4) He is going to go on to tell them to be led, manifest the fruit of the Spirit and live in the Spirit. 5:18, 22, 25
    - \* They had been made alive by the Spirit and were to walk as children of light. Eph. 2:1, Eph. 5:8

## B. The Promise

\* “And you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh”. vs. 16c

1. The promise is directly related to the command proclaimed, to walk in the Spirit.

- a. If a person does not walk in the Spirit they will fulfill the lust of the flesh.
  - b. If they walk in the Spirit they will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.
2. The promise is for their future, “shall not”.
    - a. The past can not be undone or redone.
    - b. The choice is personal by every individual.
    - c. No one makes us do anything we do not want to do.
    - d. We are willing participants or persuaded participants.
  3. The particular phrase Paul uses is, “fulfill the lust of the flesh”.
    - a. The word lust simply means a strong desire or craving, which can be something good or bad, the context will determine it.
    - b. The word flesh “sarx” can also be used in a good sense or a bad sense.
      - 1) It can be used for the mere physical body of man.
      - 2) It can be used for the nature of man apart from the Spirit of God.
      - 3) It can be used for the sinful passions of the old nature of sin.
        - \* This is how Paul is using it in the context!

- 4) The word flesh appears eighteen times in Galatians as the word Spirit!  
\* These are two key words in the epistle!
- 5) The personal avoidance is to not fulfill “teleo” not bring to pass or completion the sinful passions.  
Rom. 13:14

### **Illustration**

The seeming impossibility of a heavy airplane to stay up in the air despite the law of gravity is accomplished by the greater law of aerodynamics but if the pilot pull back on the throttle to cease the law of aerodynamics, the law of gravity will demonstrate that it is still present and destroy that plane, so wit our lives in the Spirit!

### **Application**

1. What walking in the Spirit doesn't mean.
  - a. It is not the Holy Spirit living for you without your cooperation.
  - b. It is not the Holy Spirit absorbing your personality.
  - c. It is not being mystical or mysterious.
2. What walking in the Spirit means.
  - a. It is the new man in agreement in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
  - b. It is inner man yielding to the will and purposes of the Holy Spirit.

- c. It is a spirit conscious life, being a new creature, spirit being uppermost as Adam before the fall.
3. What the Scriptures say to the believer about walking.
  - a. We are to walk in God's works. Eph. 2:10
  - b. We are to walk worthy. Eph. 4:1
  - b. We are to walk in love. Eph. 5:2
  - c. We are to walk in the light. Eph. 5:8
  - d. We are to walk circumspectly. Eph. 5:15
  - e. We are to walk in Him. Col. 2:6
  - f. We are to walk in wisdom. Col. 4:5
  - g. We are to walk honestly towards other. 1Thess. 4:12
  - h. We are to walk in the light. 1Jn. 1:7
  - i. We are to walk in the truth. 3Jn. 3

*The counsel to the believer is to walk in the Spirit!*

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

- A. The presence of the two natures.
  - \* “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. vs. 17a-b
  - 1. This in affect is the reason for Paul giving his proclamation to walk in the Spirit.
    - a. The believer has an old nature that is sinful through his or her natural birth. Jer. 17:9

- b. The believer also has a new nature, a divine one by their new birth. 2Cor. 5:17
- 2. Some people have denied this truth in the past as well as in modern times but neither Scripture nor experience bear up to such teaching.
  - a. It may be that some people are so passive that they confuse their personality for none existence of evil in them.
  - b. Other are just mere liars, passing themselves off as more spiritual than they really are.
- 3. Paul didn't believe it for he is writing to Christians in Galatia.
  - a. He is shocked that having received the Spirit of God, they would choose to act contrary to it. 3:1
  - b. He is addressing the very problem of the two nature in this verse.
  - c. Paul himself confessed the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit. Rom. 7:14-24  
 \* But he focus in Roman is not the “warfare” rather on “willful frustration”, by attempting to do in the flesh what can only be done in the Spirit!

## B. The Power Struggle

- \* “And these are contrary to one another”.  
vs. 17c
- 1. The word contrary “antikimai” means to be opposite to, to be an adversary or to withstand.
  - a. The word is used for false doctrine opposed to sound doctrine. 1Tim. 1:10
  - b. The apostle has just plainly said that the flesh lusts “against” the Spirit. vs. 17a
  - c. The apostle will later declare the possibility of reaping to either nature, depending on the choice and warns them. 6:7-9
- 2. The Galatian’s conflict was evidence that they belonged to God.
  - a. Prior to their new birth, they were serving those who were by nature no gods. 4:8
  - b. After receiving Christ they had received the blessing of freedom and were so appreciative of Paul. 4:15
  - c. Then the Judeaizers came and they embraced the law which brought conflict with God’s Spirit, who was in them, due to the fact that they were turning to weak and beggarly elements, desiring to be in bondage again. vs. 4:6, 9

3. Ishmael became Isaac's adversary only after he was born.
    - a. So with each person who is born again of the Spirit.
    - b. So we live in tension and conflict as long as we are in this body.
- C. The personal reality
- \* “ So that you do not do the things that you wish”. vs. 17d
1. The believer experience is that he or she can not do what they which.
    - a. This is evidence that we are not our own, now there is someone else running my life. 1Cor. 6:20
    - b. This is evidence that I am no longer on the throne of my life, Jesus is.
  2. The believer experiences that he does not always do the things he wishes. 17d
    - a. This goes for the things that please God, for the believer fails at times through the weakness of the flesh or sin nature.
    - b. This goes also for the things that displease God, we don't always obey God.
 

\* Paul said, “ How to perform what is good I do not find”, it was not within him, in his natural man!  
Rom. 7:18
  3. The believer knows three things about his freedom in Christ.

- a. That he or she has been made free from sin. 5:1
- b. That he or she has been made free to fight sin. 5:16
- c. That he or she can use their liberty as a base of operation for their flesh or sin nature. 5:13
  - 1) Those who are so quick to give you a formula for success to never experience conflict are deceivers.
  - 2) Those who deny the conflict are liars and are wanting to appear more spiritual than they are. Ja. 1:14-15, I Pet. 2:11, I Cor. 9:27

### **Illustration**

Two Eskimos were drinking in a bar and the one kept telling the other how these two dogs of his always were a odds and fighting with one another! And the other Eskimo asked him, “Which one wins?” He answered without hesitation, “The one I feed the most!”

\* How true it is our own lives, the one we feed the most is always going to win, be it the old man or the new man!

### **Application**

1. We are born into warfare and for that reason we are given the armor of God, so that we can end up standing. Eph. 6:10-18

2. We are not to give the devil a foothold in any area at any time. Eph. 4:27
  3. We must understand that the conflict is of the two natures but the battle takes place and is lost or won in the mind. 2 Cor. 10:4-5
  4. The problem lies not in the intellect but the will!
  5. We have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness through God's promises and our divine nature. 2Pet. 1:3-4
    - a. Life means all that will ever cross my life!
    - b. Godliness means how I can respond to it!
  6. We should never interpret the jealousy of God for us as selfishness on His part but selflessness, for He know that He is the best thing for us. Ja. 4:5
- \* Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

*The conflict of the believer is the lust of the flesh against the Spirit!*

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

#### A. The Proper Choice.

\* "But if you are led by the Spirit". 18a

1. The conquest is declared to be in contrast to the defeat of the flesh of the previous verse.
  - a. The word "but" points out the sharp contrast.

- b. The word also contrast the Galatians freedom by the Spirit to their prior bondage.
  2. The word led "ago" means to bring or drive.
    - a. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit takes over without my knowing it.
    - b. Nor does it mean that He forces us to do things against our will.
- B.** The powerful freedom
- \* "You are not under the law". vs. 18b
1. The reason being was that they had been born again in Christ and set free from sin and death. 5:1
  2. The other reason was that the law was temporary. 4:2, 4
  3. The law cannot empower us to do, it only points out our guilt. Rom. 3:19
  4. The law only provokes us to sin. Rom. 7:7-8
  5. The law causes us to trust our flesh for righteousness. Phil. 3:8-11
    - a. The believer is not under the law nor able to have conquest by the law. vs. 18b
    - b. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, literally impotent to do the things of the Spirit. Matt. 26:41b

**Illustration**

The young man who ran the stop sign and the country sheriff pulled him over. He declared what was the difference if he slowed down or stopped. The sheriff asked him to get out of the car and proceeded to grab him in a head-lock and beat him with his baton. He said, "Now, do you want me to slow down or stop?"

\* Some people think God has asked us to slow down in our sinning instead of stopping! It is a choice that we are free to make and it will make a big difference!

**Application**

1. How can I be led by the Holy Spirit?

- a. By denying myself, picking up my cross and following Jesus. Matt. 16:24
- b. By resisting the devil and drawing close to God. Ja. 4:6-8

\* But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

- c. By yielding to the exceeding enabling of the Holy Spirit and by being filled continuously. Eph. 3:20-21, 5:18

2. What are some of the things that we can do to nurture our life to be led by the Spirit?

- a. To feed the new man and starve the old man. Eph. 4:20-24, Col. 3:10, 16
- b. To recognize that the word, prayer and the Holy Spirit are our spiritual weapons, along with our armor. Eph. 6:10-18
- c. To serve one another in love and stir up one another to love and good works. Gal. 5:13e, Heb. 10: 24
- d. To reckon the Old Man dead daily. Rom. 6:11
- e. To value the fellowship available to us on a daily and weekly basis in the church God has so graciously provided for us and not forsake it. Heb. 10:25
- f. To attest to the conquest without denying the conflict or failure at times. Rom. 7:25-8:17

*The conquest of the believer is by being led by the Spirit!*

**Conclusion**

Paul gave to the Galatians the solution to a flesh dominated life.

- I. The **counsel** to the believer is to walk in the Spirit and he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh!

- II.** The **conflict** of the believer is the lust of the flesh against the Spirit, which is evidence that we are born again!
- III.** The **conquest** of the believer is by being led by the Spirit and not by law!