

The Struggle is Real

Love is the Key

Galatians 5:16-26

Intro: Today we start a new series from Galatians 5 where we read about the war within each of us between our flesh and the Holy Spirit. We've entitled it "The Struggle is Real" because there is no greater struggle in all of life than this one.

"You are pulled about by two contrary forces: You are dragged downward by the flesh, and you are drawn upward by the Spirit. They will never agree."

Charles H. Spurgeon

The Flesh: When the scriptures refer to "the flesh" it's a reference to our sin nature.

The Spirit: This is the Holy Spirit who renews and regenerates us by giving us a new nature and then remains in us.

"The flesh stands for what we are by natural birth, 'the Spirit' what we become by new birth, the birth of the Spirit...the conflict between them is fierce and unremitting." **John Stott**

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." **Galatians 5:16-26**

Main Idea: The Struggle Is Real, but Love Is the Key to Victory.

Three Roles that Love Plays in the Struggle of the Flesh and Spirit:

I. Love Is Primary in the Fight

*"And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'" **Matthew 22:35-40***

"Love is first in the list of fruits of the Spirit because in some respects it is best. First, because it leads the way. First, because it becomes the motive principle and stimulant of every other grace and virtue. You cannot conceive of anything more forceful and more beneficial, and therefore it is the first." **Charles H. Spurgeon**

II. Love Must Be Practiced as a Discipline

Love is a choice, it's not an event.

Love is an action, it's not a feeling.

Love is a sacrifice, it's not an impulse.

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Colossians 3:14

III. Love Is a Present to Be Received from God

"Now the works of the flesh are...But the fruit of the Spirit is..."

"When you think of 'works' you think effort, labor, strain, and toil; when you think of 'fruit' you think of beauty, quietness, the unfolding of life. The flesh produces dead works, but the Spirit produces living fruit. And this fruit has in it the seed for still more fruit."

Warren Wiersbe

Conclusion: Because this is all from God, the fruit of the Spirit cannot be produced by the works of man.

You cannot give the love of God until you have received the love of God.

You cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit until you have been made alive by the Spirit.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." **John 15:5**

The struggle between the flesh and the Spirit is a uniquely Christian experience. If you have not been made alive by the Spirit, you have no hope of overcoming the deeds of the flesh. If you have, then love is the key to victory!

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." **1 John 4:10-11**

Receive the Love of God
Reflect on the Love of God
Display the Love of God

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities

NAC: Galatians – Colossians – Max Anders (1999)

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