

Flesh Under Control
Part II
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I shared with you last week a whole mountain of bad news about our great enemy, the flesh.

We did not, in any detail, get to the actual solutions of how we can successfully get our flesh under control.

We learned that:

There are some behaviors, desires and tendencies of the flesh that must be eliminated completely.

There are other behaviors, desires and tendencies of the flesh that cannot be completely eliminated but must be kept under control.

There are still other behaviors, desires and tendencies of the flesh that for some must be eliminated and for others may be controlled.

Today we are going to talk about how that controlling some of this fleshly behavior can actually be accomplished.

Last week I left you with three things that we Christians can do to actually get our own flesh under control.

The first one was, “learn to walk in the Spirit”.

That is our subject today.

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

Last week was about “what needs done”.

This week is about “how to do it”.

As the message wound down, I shared with you three things that we as Christians can actually do that will help us defeat this great enemy.

Three times in Matthew and Luke, Jesus told us to love our enemies; I find it ironic that the one enemy we all seem to love is our flesh.

The real solution to getting our flesh under control is that we learn to walk in the Spirit.

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

This is no lightweight undertaking; today we're going to learn how to get started.

The first thing we need to address is what it means to be:

I. In the Spirit.

A. "In the Spirit" means that you are saved, you are born again, redeemed, forgiven, justified and many other terms which all refer to what God did when you placed your trust in Jesus to save you from your sins.

1. **Romans 8:9** But ye are not in the flesh, but **in the Spirit**, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

2. Certainly no one can walk in the Spirit if you are not first "in the Spirit".

3. Galatians 5:16-18

16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

17 *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.*

18 *But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

4. How many of you here today either prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to save you or got baptized, or joined a church, or were a part of some organized religion before you truly understood the gospel and actually placed your trust in Jesus to save you?

5. Nearly everyone here. Without the Spirit of God dwelling in you, what did you have to lead you? That's right, just your flesh.

6. Most people still are where you were then; there is nothing more frustrating or doomed to failure than someone who is not really saved trying to live for God; it cannot be done!

7. You probably remember what that was like.

B. Therefore the first step in getting your flesh under control will always be to make sure that you really are saved.

1. We can help you with that.

2. Being saved transformed your spirit, gave your spirit eternal life, made you alive inside and more; however, getting saved did absolutely nothing for your flesh!

3. **John 6:63** It is the spirit that quickeneth; **the flesh profiteth nothing**: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

4. Saved people know they are saved and we can tell you how we know that we are saved!

5. **1 John 5:13** These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have eternal life...**

6. Our salvation is provable, and furthermore, we are commanded to prove it!

7. **2 Corinthians 13:5** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

6. Contrary to most religious practice, knowing and proving you are saved is not something that can properly be done in five minutes at the front of the Church; if you will allow us, we will spend the time to teach you and you will know it for sure!

Once you are truly “in the Spirit”, now God says:

II. Walk.

A. I will try to make this simple and easy to understand:

1. As a Pastor, I have been blessed with an amazing and beautiful wife who stands with me in the work of the Lord and helps me in many ways; some you probably don't know about.

2. One particular talent with which God has blessed our partnership is her high level of literary skill.

3. She is the best proofreader you've ever met!

Spelling and grammatical errors stand out to her like they were highlighted.

4. When preparing to deliver God's message, I try always to use just the right word that most accurately conveys the proper thought; I often run those things by my wife.

One time as I was writing the introduction to a sermon, I asked Lisa, “What is the definition of irony?” She said, “It's the opposite of wrinkly”. (That was cute but it wasn't much help).

5. Walk is the opposite of “stand still”.
6. It is the transition from standing still to running.
7. It is moving!
8. It is doing!
9. It is active, not passive.
10. It is forward motion, it is positive movement.
11. “*Walking in the Spirit*” is walking, moving, going and doing in and under the leadership of the Spirit of God.
12. And just so you don’t get Spirit leadership mixed up with all the deceitful feelings of the heart; we have the Bible, of which the Holy Spirit is the author, to check and make sure what that leadership is!

B. Walking in the Spirit works just like another similar but even more often mis-taught and misunderstood term:

1. That term is, “*praying in the Spirit*”.

Ephesians 6:18 **Praying** always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

2. There is an entire movement out there based on the idea that praying in the Spirit is “praying in tongues”, or in a language that the one praying does not understand.
3. Back when the gift of tongues had not yet ceased but was being grossly misused in the Church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul said this:

1 Corinthians 14:12-15

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I [*were to*] pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? [*Answer; unfruitful*] I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

4. How come nobody in those churches wants to sing in tongues?

5. Based on what we surely know about our own flesh and the Devil, when you pray, you had better know exactly what you are saying!

6. Praying in the Spirit is nothing more complicated than praying according to the known will of God; recorded for us in the Word of God, which was delivered to us and for us by the Spirit of God!

There is a third factor to walking in the Spirit that we must should surely address:

III. What to Avoid.

A. As we walk; even walking in or according to the Spirit, there are many destructive forces to avoid that may not easily be detected.

1. For example: Everyone has besetting sin(s). These are sins that trouble you more than any other.

2. **Hebrews 12:1** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and **the sin which doth so easily beset us**, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

3. You will be praying, "Lord, take this evil from my life; please Lord, save me from this horrible besetting sin"; and mean it with all your heart. Then even before you finish praying you will have made plans for the next time or place or involvement in it.

4. You are praying 'take it away' while you are actually, at the same time, driving to the party or the liquor store or to the drug dealer or lighting up!

5. Every saved person here knows exactly what I am talking about; the more you pray about it the more you do it.

6. Why is this? It is because as

Proverbs 23:7 states: **For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:**

7. **Ephesians 2:3** says that we go about "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind".

Your flesh follows your mind. Whatever your mind is on; even if you are praying about it or thinking about how much you hate it; that is where your flesh is wont to go.

8. Your solution is to get your mind on something else; something good that will replace the evil.

9. We would be far better off to never pray about or even think about the things we shouldn't be doing.

10. What is the best way to deal with your besetting sin? **Forget about it!** God has! Just get busy doing right things and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh!

11. I understand that chemical dependencies; those sins that have evolved into an actual physical disease, need to have that side addressed as well.

B. Forgetting your sin is not so easy, that's why you need a plan.

1. **Proverbs 16:3** tells us: **Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.**

2. We need to get busy and stay busy doing good things and get in the practice of thinking about and focusing on those good things we are doing.

3. Serving the Lord should always be at the top of our "to do" list but this requires much more than just the spiritual or religious things.

4. Working your job, mowing your grass, changing your oil, art, painting, music, fixing stuff; why do you think that the Bible commands us to work with our hands?

a. **Ephesians 4:28** Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, **working with his hands** the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

b. **1 Thessalonians 4:11** And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to **work with your own hands**, as we commanded you;

5. Clean recreation like hunting, fishing, boating, camping, shooting, archery; sports like softball and pickleball, even golf; all these things are great as long they are in balance and do not place you in the position of being influenced and led down the very road you are trying to avoid.

In Conclusion: Getting your flesh under control is a proactive endeavor. Walking in the Spirit is a proactive endeavor.

Many Christians; perhaps some of you, have become complacent living a defeated life just waiting for Jesus to come when you could be living a victorious life, walking in the Spirit.

If you are "in the Spirit", don't just sit there, get up and walk in the Spirit!

As a matter of fact, we could even run!

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and **let us run** with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.