

What It Means to Walk After the Flesh

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For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 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. **Rom. 8:5-9**

- I. We are seeing again the separation into two camps those who are lost and those who are saved.
 - A. Those that are “in the flesh” refers to those who are not saved and are living after their own lusts and desires and do not submit to God, but rather resist Him.
 1. The end of all who live after the flesh is “death.”
 - B. Those that are after the Spirit live according to God’s righteousness.
 1. They have yielded themselves to God and have submitted to his law and his authority about what is right and wrong.
 2. They no longer demand anything for themselves, realizing they deserve nothing but eternal punishment, and are therefore happy to live and rejoice in God’s mercy and love and forgiveness.
 3. The end of all who live after the Spirit is eternal life and eternal reward.
 - C. No one can be in both of these states at the same time.
 1. Every person is either living “after the flesh” or “after the Spirit.”
 - D. Living after the flesh is what all the world is doing – it is very plain for us to see and to define it by simply observing what life is about to them and what their highest desire is about, AND what they think of God.
 - E. If we live for the same things as the rest of the world and spend our life and strength in pursuit of the same things, we are walking after the flesh.
 - F. We have to provide for our families, and we have to work to obtain the things we need, but that is not the highest purpose of our life, and we do not count our labor as the means by which we live.
- II. We are born with basic natural desires.
 - A. These natural desires are directly related to sustaining life.
 - B. God made the world with man in mind, and when it was finished He put man in it.
 - C. Man was to have dominion over all the earth, and every other creature in it.
 - D. So to enjoy the blessings of life in this world is not to live after the flesh.
 - E. Everything was perfect until sin entered in and then everything was ruined and turned upside down.
 1. Adam did not have to toil for his bread.
 2. He was to dress and keep the garden of the Lord and to walk with the Lord in the cool of the day.
 3. He was to live joyfully with the wife God had given him of his own flesh.
 4. Eve did not have to cook for them to eat.
 5. She did not have to clean or dust or wash clothes.
 6. She was to help Adam in what he did and enjoy life with her husband and God.

7. God said about this arrangement that it was “very good!”
 8. So we cannot say they were living after the flesh, at that point.
- F. So the entering in of sin has made it very hard (or rather impossible) for a person to live in this world without making self the highest purpose of their life.
 - G. Natural desires are not sinful in themselves – it is when we forget God and start living to fulfill our desires that we cross that line over into a life that is after the flesh.
- III. After we are born we create unnatural desires from our interaction with the world around us.
- A. We set our attention upon some object and we develop a desire for it.
 - B. Not all these desires are bad or sinful. (our favorite foods, pastimes, etc.)
 - C. These desires and affections that we develop are not the result of our individual tastes and preferences, but are the result of the environment and atmosphere that we are subject ourselves to.
 1. No one is born a sports fan or an avid hunter; that is learned and acquired from others.
 2. No one is born loving any certain kind of music; they are influenced by what they are around and what they want to identify themselves with.
 - D. No one 100 years ago had a desire for rock music – because it didn’t exist except in the jungle cultures.
 - E. No one 50 years ago experienced a desire for rap music because there was no such thing.
 - F. No one was a “gamer” 40 years ago.
 - G. No one wanted to put a ring in their nose and tattoo their body years ago.
 - H. So any desire that is not a basic natural desire that we are born with is learned and acquired behavior.
 - I. To acquire these desires from the sinful world around us is evidence that we are walking after the flesh.
 - J. When it ceases to matter to us what effect the indulgence of our desires has on other people we are walking after the flesh.
 - K. This is basically where natural and unnatural desires become sinful.
 - L. This is basically where walking after the flesh begins.
- IV. This matter is basically about the highest purpose of your life.
- A. What do you live for? Why do you exist?
 - B. What is really your greatest desire?
 - C. Being “after the flesh” is not only about undisciplined physical lusts and desires – it is much more and much deeper than that.
 1. It is more about self-assertion and stubbornness about our opinions and prejudices.
 2. It is more about our determination to have our own way and impose it on others.
 3. It is more about me fighting for the right to myself, and my rights before others.
- V. Once we have developed a desire we then justify the thing simply based upon the fact that we desire it.
- A. Justifying ourselves always accompanies the desire.
 - B. Just the fact that we desire it somehow makes it right in our mind for us to have it.

- C. We convince ourselves that there can't be anything morally wrong with it since we have this desire in our heart for it.
 - D. This is always true of every sin: from staying home from church to adultery, drugs, drunkenness, thievery,.
 - E. It is also true of every desire for things: new gadgets, fads such as tattoos and body piercing, games, movies, and music.
 - F. We see it, we desire it, and then we justify ourselves in getting it or experiencing it.
 - G. I must have it, and I must have it now – this defines lust and to be under the control of this thing is to be carnally minded, and to be carnally minded is death.
 - H. If we live in this manner we are carnal and not spiritual; this is the way of a lost person – not a saved soul.
- VI. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (v. 7)
- A. Desire is stronger than our convictions or our commitment, and it will also cause us to disregard the law of God.
 - B. Rationalizing and justifying will not only set aside the law of God in the matter, but will usually turn it around and try to use it in justifying the transgression.
 - 1. The devil did this in tempting the Lord.
 - 2. He also did it in tempting Eve.
 - 3. The strange woman in Proverbs attempts to put a religious spin on her adulterous affair. (I have paid my vows)
 - 4. The woman at the well also tried to pretend to be religious.
 - 5. Adulterers who profess to be Christians almost invariably turn it all around in their minds so that what they are doing is approved of by God.
 - C. So it is clear that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, or it would simply submit to the law and deny the desire.
- VII. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (v. 8)
- A. This does not mean “they that live in a body of flesh.”
 - B. This would contradict all the rest of the Bible and all the commandments of God.
 - C. Jesus did “always those things that pleased his Father,” and he was in a body of flesh.
 - D. The meaning of this is that those who are carnally minded cannot please God.
 - 1. Those who walk after their lusts and desires.
 - 2. Those who are always looking and coveting and developing desires for everything around them and then seeking a way to justify them when they contradict the law of God.
- VIII. 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. (v. 9)
- A. This statement proves that it isn't the body that he is referring to when he talks about being “in the flesh.”
 - B. He is again contrasting the two courses of life: walking after the Spirit or after the flesh.
 - C. One is walking with God and the other is setting yourself against him as his enemy and walking with the world.