

In the Flesh

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Straight Paths Bible Church

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

2 Corinthians 5:15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

- I. Just as there is much confusion when it comes to living and walking after the Spirit, there is just as much confusion about the flesh.
 - A. Although the Scripture makes a clear distinction between being “in the flesh” and “walking after the flesh” most teaching does not make it clear.
 - B. 28 times the Bible mentions “in the flesh.”
 - 1. 2 times in the Old Testament and 25 times in the NT.
 - 2. That is almost exactly the same amount of mentions as “in the spirit” gets.
 - 3. “After the flesh” is mentioned 14 times, and only in the NT.
 - C. To be “in the flesh” generally means to be in this earthly physical body.
 - 1. As long as we are alive in this world we will be in a body of flesh.
 - 2. But that does not mean that as long as we are in this body of flesh that we will live and walk “after the flesh.”
 - 3. Some Scriptures use the phrase to mean the same and to walk after the flesh, but it is made clear in the context:

Romans 8:8-9 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.

- D. To walk after the flesh means that the prevailing influence over your thoughts, your affections, your decisions and choices, and your actions is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.
 - 1. More simply put: carnal lusts, covetousness, and pride.
 - 2. To walk after the flesh is to live in pursuit primarily of only those things that please or agree with your selfish interests and pride.
 - 3. To walk after the flesh is to view everyone else as a threat or a potential threat to your indulgence or your pride.

2 Peter 2:10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

- E. The reality of this matter is that we are either “in Christ” or we are “in the flesh.”

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

- II. If we are still living in our body in this world we are walking “in the flesh” but not “after the flesh.”

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

Philippians 1:21-24 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

1 Peter 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

1 Peter 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

- A. All that we experience in this world we experience through this flesh that we are “in.”
- B. Without this body we could not experience this physical world.
- C. Because we are in this body in this world the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, until he is born again of the Spirit of God.
- D. When we are truly born again we begin a new life and a new way of living in, and experiencing this world.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

- E. Although he is still “in the flesh” as far as being in his body he is not living “in the flesh” anymore, but in the Spirit.

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.

- F. The “old man” is dead.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Ephesians 4:21-24 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Colossians 3:9-10 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

- III. So, all this being true, we must understand thoroughly what it means to be crucified with Christ, or to die to oneself.
- A. Somehow the concept we have of this matter is that we die to ourselves at the moment of salvation and it is a one-time thing that is done and finished.
 - B. Then most people go on living and walking after the flesh thinking they have done what they needed to do because they had an experience where they humbled themselves and submitted to God for a moment.

- C. But being crucified with Christ is a present-tense, continual and on-going thing.
 - 1. “I AM crucified with Christ...” Galatians 2:20
- D. There is more to walking after the flesh than just inordinate lusts, and drinking, and gluttony.
 - 1. Any time we choose to please ourselves without considering God or others, we are walking after the flesh.

Romans 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

PLEASE, v.t.

1. To excite agreeable sensations or emotions in; to gratify; as, to please the taste; to please the mind.

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

- 2. Anytime we covet anything we are walking after the flesh; money, things, envying others in what they possess, or in the circumstances of their life.
- 3. Anything we do that is motivated by our pride we are walking after the flesh.
- 4. Anything we feel or think that is generated by our pride, or because someone has hurt our pride is walking after the flesh.

DYING TO SELF

When you are forgotten or neglected or purposely set at naught, and you sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ – that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take all in patient loving silence – that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, or any annoyance, when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility, and endure it as Jesus endured it – that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any attitude, any interruption by the will of God – that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown – that is dying to self.

When you see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances – that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart – that is dying to self.

(Bill Britton, "Dethrone the King: Dying to Self," The Heartbeat of the Remnant, July/August, 2002, 19)

- E. So how are we doing in this matter of walking "in the Spirit" and not walking "after the flesh?"
- F. Do you understand a little better why God's people should love one another and be of one mind and one accord?
- G. Do you understand more about why there should be no strife, no envy, no conflict between people who are walking "in the Spirit?"
- H. Do you really understand that all strife, conflict, fighting, envy, malice, backbiting, maliciousness, as well as fornication, murder, wickedness, and covetousness are all evidence of walking "after the flesh?"
- I. When we find ourselves offended, hurt, slighted, done wrong, whether it is true or not, we need to examine ourselves to see if we are walking "after the flesh."
- J. That is what is important to each of us; we cannot do much about what other people do.
 - 1. If they want to walk after the flesh and do not care or will not recognize their error, the only thing we can do is make sure that we do not start following their example.
- K. We cannot walk after the Spirit if we are walking after the flesh.
 - 1. Do not deceive yourself about your soul.
 - 2. This is the struggle of the Christian life, and this is what this spiritual warfare is mostly about.
 - 3. How much do you matter to yourself?
 - 4. Is that the final issue with you? How others treat you? That you get the respect you deserve? That no one gets away with slighting you or wronging you?
 - 5. If you cannot honestly say that you have victory in this matter you should examine yourself to see if you be in the faith.
- L. If we had an altar we should all be at it tonight.
 - 1. Since we do not in this crowded place, you can make one where you are at.
 - 2. If you do not make one here you better get somewhere and put yourself on that altar and let the fire of God consume all of you so that there is nothing left in you but Christ and his Spirit.