

# Flesh & Spirit

A contrast is made in the scriptures numerous times in relation to the flesh and Spirit. The flesh and Spirit are opposites. They lie on opposite sides of the overall spectrum. They are against each other. Paul makes this clear in Galatians 5:17 when he says, *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."*

The flesh, according to Thayer, "denotes mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God." It should not be our desire to do the things of the flesh. Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16 to walk by the Spirit. To walk by the Spirit is to walk under the direction of the Holy Spirit as given in the revelation now known as the New Testament and known through oral revelation in Paul's day. This does not imply some mysterious direction separate from God's divine word. The purpose of the Spirit was very clear. He was to teach the apostles all things and was to bring to their remembrance all that Jesus said to them (John 14:26). He was to bear witness of Christ (John 15:26). He was also to guide the apostles into all truth and would disclose to them what was to come (John 16:13).

As mere humans we find ourselves caught between the flesh and the Spirit. Our goal is to be able to distinguish between them and to choose the things of the Spirit. Let's look at some things that have to do with the flesh & the Spirit.

## The Flesh Profits Nothing

Jesus said in John 6:63, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."* Since the flesh profits nothing, it is the words of Christ that we need to be following.

Many people follow after the works of the flesh perhaps without even realizing it. Look at all the things that Paul says are works of the flesh: Galatians 5:19-21, *"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these..."*

Many of these things some people do on a daily basis. It is sad that people participate in these things even with such a clear warning against them. The world would do well to look at these things and endeavor to abstain from them.

## Those In The Spirit Please God

Paul says in Romans 8:8 that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. The opposite of this would be true as well. Those who are in the Spirit are pleasing to Him. Those who are in the Spirit will be doing the works of the Spirit. Paul tells us what these things are. Galatians 5:22-23, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,*

*self-control; against such things there is no law.*" The one who wishes to please God will involve himself in the fruit of the Spirit.

### **Those Who Do The Things Of The Flesh Will Be Lost**

When Paul lists the works of the flesh, he concludes in Gal. 5:21 by saying, *"...that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* What a sobering thing for us to consider. If we participate in these works of the flesh we will not inherit eternal life. Paul makes a similar claim later on in Galatians 6:8, *"For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life."* The flesh equals corruption but the Spirit equals eternal life. The way we live will determine if we are to reap corruption or eternal life. The choice is up to us.

In writing to the Romans, Paul says, *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so"* (8:6-7). If we crave death and hostility towards God, then we can continue to do whatever we like. However, the rest of us who long to please God and inherit eternal life will do good to *"not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness but instead even expose them"* (Eph. 5:11). Only then can we have the confidence that God is with us.

– Shane Williams