

## “Life in the Spirit”

### INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote to followers of Jesus in the city of Galatia. They were struggling to understand this new concept of salvation by grace. Some false teachers were trying to convince them that they needed to keep the law in their own energy in order to grow in their newfound faith. Paul spent the first two chapters of his letter affirming his authority to set the record straight regarding the true Gospel.

*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! Gal 1:6-9*

He affirmed that he personally received the true Gospel from the resurrected Jesus.

The next section of his letter presents the true concept of salvation by grace.

*You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Galatians 3:1-5*

Paul took the last part of his letter to describe what a life directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit looks like.

### I. Life in the Spirit

#### A. It is a life of true freedom.

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Gal 5:1*

*For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. Galatians 5:13-15*

Freedom is not the liberty to do whatever I want and desire. Freedom is the ability to do what I ought. Paul carefully warned the Galatians that freedom from the penalty and power of sin was not an excuse to continue to feed the old fleshly desires but a motivation to truly love.

#### B. It is a life of competing passions. Spirit vs. Flesh

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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. Galatians 5:16-17*

A war rages inside every believer. This passage acknowledges that war, but also holds out the hope of victory. We also have a war with the world and Satan. This war is up close and personal. It rages inside us. It is a war between “the flesh” and the Holy Spirit indwelling our spirit. The identity of the Holy Spirit is pretty clear. He is the third person of the Trinity. He is not a force or power although He is powerful but a person with all the aspects of a personality with the same attributes and the Father and the Son. Our spirit is the God conscious aspect of our being brought to life at conversion. It is the core of our new identity in Christ. The old self was crucified with Christ and a new self was raised with Christ. It is the implantation of divine nature in the core of our being. It includes the capability of thought, emotion and choice.

*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:11*

It is the immaterial part of us that graduates into the presence of God while our bodies rot in the ground awaiting a glorious resurrection at Christ’s return. God’s plan of redemption includes all aspects of our being -- Body/Soul/Spirit. God starts with the regeneration of the spirit at conversion. Out of this new transformed

core, we cooperate with the Spirit in the renewal of the soul. Finally, at the return of Christ our actual bodies will be transformed.

The mortal body will be resurrected to an immortal one.

*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit (spirit regeneration and soul renewal), even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. Romans 8:23*

Now to tackle the more elusive enemy - "the flesh". The term referred to the literal flesh of a person or animal or a simple reference to the human body. The sinless Jesus took on "flesh"; that is, a human body. It also can refer to the unredeemed selfish passions inherited and cultivated by the unredeemed person. It is used some 151 times in the New Testament.

Vincent wrote in his word study, *"The flesh is the human nature without the divine Spirit; the state of the creature before or in contrast with his reception of the divine element, whereby he becomes a new creature in Christ. Flesh is the whole being of man as it exists and acts apart from the influence of the Spirit. It properly characterizes, therefore, not merely the lower forms of sensual gratification, but all — the highest developments of the life estranged from God, whether physical, intellectual or aesthetic.*

God created us with certain capacities. We were given the capacity to relate on a physical level though the five senses interpreted by our brain. (Material body) We were given the capacity to relate on a soul level including thought, emotions and choice. We were given the capacity to relate on a spirit level with God who is Spirit. The intricate interworking of these three capacities remains a mystery. At the "Rebellion", man lost the integration of all these capacities to live in vital relationship with God. Man lost the capacity to live life from a spiritual perspective and was limited to live life only a fleshly level.

*For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:5-8*

All those born since Adam are destined to live according to the selfish desires of the flesh.

*knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers... 1 Peter 1:18*

*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Ephesians 2:3*

We not only inherited these selfish passions but personally cultivated them throughout our life before conversion. These became patterns embedded in our brain and physiology. It is not just the brain involved but emotions and choices intricately connected to physiological patterns and addictions. These addictions are just not a matter of patterns developed in the brain, but our actual physical body came to crave certain things and respond in certain ways. All of us grew up with addictive or compulsive behaviors imbedded in our system. Some experience instant deliverance at the moment of salvation. Most of us still continue to fight the residue of those things even now.

Sugar, various foods, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sensuality, moral impurity, insecurity, fear, anger, reaction to people, selfishness, phobias, propensities toward any number of issues.

We picked up many of our hang ups, fears, bad ways of thinking, bad ways of relating by the way we were raised. Many of these things seem to drive us against our will. We don't want them there. We feel bad when they dictate our behavior. We, like Paul end up doing what we actually don't want to do. It is not our old nature (which was crucified) but the passions embedded in our flesh. The flesh does not just function in regard to sinful behavior but often succeeds in keep us from doing the things we really want. I really want to read my Bible more but something seems to prevent me. I really want to stop unhealthy eating. I really want to stop wasting time on things of no value. I really want to exercise more. I really want to pray more. These are all legitimate desires flowing out of our redeemed core, but something prevent me from following though.

It is a war over control of the territories of our life.

Satan wants to use our members for his use.

God wants to use our members for His purposes.

We need to take back territory controlled by flesh.

*Therefore stop letting sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and stop presenting the members of your body to sin as weapons of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God. Romans 6:12-13*

Like a drug addict who wants to stop using but something demands that next fix. Even though we may have initially decided to use, the inflamed flesh which is not me, demands satisfaction.

Scripture does not even have a word for “sinful nature”. It is always some translator’s option for translating the Greek word for “flesh”. Paul cataloged some behavior or deeds of the flesh in our passage.

*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, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21*

The longer we took to come to Christ, the more patterns became embedded in our system.

The whole world system appeals to the selfish passions of the flesh.

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 1 John 2:16*

God created us with natural desires.

He created us to experience pleasure.

He created us to enjoy possessions.

He creates us to experience prominence or empowerment.

However, these were all to be fulfilled through dynamic (ever growing) relationship with Him.

After the “Rebellion”, mankind pursued these things longings apart from God.

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly lived according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 2:1-2*

Now the whole world system operates on the pursuit of these things apart from God.

Watch any commercial. On what basis do they market their product? It’s ability to make me feel good. It’s desirability to have, It’s ability to make me look good or important,

The flesh is all about driving us not directing us. We are driven people. We are driven by our unbridled passions.

James asserted that we get into trouble when those fleshly passions go unchecked and bump into an opportunity (temptation) and give birth to sin and sin lead to death.

*But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. James 1:14-15*

It only becomes a temptation when we have not addressed the flesh. I do not have a craving for coffee. I cannot be tempted with coffee because my system does not crave it. These embedded evil passions lay at the core of all manner of disorder and evil thing.

*If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? James 3:14-16; 4:1*

Conversion is all about the “old man” being crucified with Christ and the establishment of a new person, a divine nature on whose heart God imbeds new longings.

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, he has become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— Colossians 3:9-10*

*knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be rendered powerless, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin Romans 6:6*

*However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— Romans 8:9-12*

The true follower of Jesus Christ is no longer IN the flesh. The true follower of Jesus Christ is IN Christ. Even though we are no longer IN the flesh, we can still live fleshly. We can allow those passions to dictate our daily behavior. Paul didn't say that the Corinthians were IN the flesh.

In fact, he opened his letter with these words.

*I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:4-8*

He did however say that they were acting like those who were still IN the flesh.

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3*

Paul expected that because they were made new, they should be acting differently. There is no such expectation to those still IN the flesh and cannot please God. We all still fight the old patterns imbedded in our mortal bodies but that is not who we are. With a new core comes a set of new desires and longings. Even though we continue to struggle with the left over programming our heart longs for God. God implants these new desires in the core of our being.

Here is how Paul described it.

*For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Romans 7:15-23*

Paul does not identify with the evil fleshly passions still raging in the body.

When he says, “Nothing good dwells in me”, he clarified that he referred to the flesh and not his new core that passionately wanted God's will in his life. He acknowledged that evil still lurked about in the members of his body waging war against his regenerated self. If he believed in a bad Paul and good Paul, he would not have made the distinction.

At its core, this seems to be a form of Dualism which asserts that there is an equal good force and evil and force (Star Wars “Dark Side” and “Light Side”). Whichever nature you feed wins.

Paul made his true passions clear throughout. Our new self continues to struggle with the passions leftover by old self. But we are under new management. It simply takes time to reorganize and reprioritize the company. It is a fight to live life according to our new longings.

Eventually however, new patterns become more prominent than the old. The choice to do right becomes easier. It is God at work within us both to will and do His good pleasure. We mature from Paul's struggle to do what he really wished to actually doing it.

The fight is real and horrific, especially at first. In addition to the flesh Satan's sorry soldiers reinforce the fleshly passions to the point of temporary insanity.

*with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:25-26*

Paul said it felt like carrying around a dead body. He also affirmed that deliverance from the flesh comes through relationship with Jesus Christ.

*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh (not MY evil nature) the law of sin. Romans 7:24-25*



- Life is a **Belief** → **Energizing** → **Behavior** in the Spirit life of true freedom to

live according to God's ways.

- Life in the spirit is a life of conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh.
- Life in the spirit is a life of godly fruit or behavior.

**C. It is a life of godly behavior.**

Just as we are able to discern when the flesh is in control by our behavior, we can discern when we are living by the direction and enabling of the Spirit by our behavior. Next week we will explore the specific behavior associated with live in the Spirit. Is there hope? Next week we will also give you tools to live differently

because we are different. There are five Biblical instructions in regard to living above and eradicating the old passions still lurking in our members. The core of it is in this passage.

*But I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:16*

He didn't say stop gratifying the desires of the flesh so you can live by the Spirit.