

FLESH

WHAT IS IT ??

FLESH=NO GOOD THING

Romans 7:18 "For I KNOW that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me but; how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." [in my flesh=v. 18]

Note the difference between I (v. 22) & me. I refers to who I really am but me refers to my flesh. Flesh is my physical body but also the actions, attitudes, and feelings that the body produces. Some of these we call natural but most are influenced by

INDWELLING SIN (Romans 7:21-24; "*I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man [the born again spirit where the identity of the believer is]: But I see another law in my members [of the body], warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity of the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* [our physical body which is under the penalty of sin-Romans 6:23a "*For the wages of sin is death*")"

Dr. Charles Solomon compares the flesh with an octopus which he states has a head with a cavity that it can draw it's 8 tentacles into and it can get into very small spaces. It can change its coloring to help it blend into the surrounding area. It is highly intelligent. The suctions on its tentacles are very strong and difficult to dislodge once it grasps something.

We humans like to think that we can do good things with our flesh. I recall that during the Vietnam war several Buddhist Priest set themselves on fire in protest of the war but it simply sent them from a body of physical suffering into a place of greater suffering in Hades [Luke 16:23-24;] because there is only one way to Heaven and that is the Lord Jesus Christ [John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12;]. It did not profit them we are told in I Corinthians 13:3 because they did not know the true source of Agape Love which is Almighty God [I John 4:8, 7-10]. No doubt they were sincere but sincerely wrong. Many today in the Islamic religion are sincere but they are sincerely wrong and if they die in that condition they will go to Hades also. Only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is there salvation and eternal life. Many wealthy people give much money to what we call good causes but it will not take them to Heaven. Isaiah 64:6 informs us that all our righteousness's [good deeds combined are like filthy blood soaked rags] in the sight of God because they are stained by our sin. Ephesians 2:8-9 state "*For by grace [God's underserved favor] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" Titus 3:5 "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration [cleansing from sin in our spirit], and the renewing of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit].*

The flesh is limited when it comes to spiritual matters. In Matthew 16:15-18; Jesus was asking the disciples "whom say ye that I am?" and Peter answered "Thou art the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God". Jesus replied that flesh and blood had not revealed this but God the Father in heaven had revealed it. This is true of humanity also. The world does not know who Jesus is. II Corinthians 4:3-4 informs us that Satan has "*blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ ... should shine unto them.*" Only God the Father through the Holy Spirit opens the spiritual understanding of the lost to whom Jesus truly is as verse 6 explains "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (at creation-Genesis 1:2-3;) hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" (Note=the glory of God man comes short of [Romans 3:23] is in Jesus Christ). In John 6:44 Jesus states "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*" Thus, the word of God explains that understanding who Jesus is cannot be understood simply by flesh and blood but it is revealed by the supernatural power of God. That is why the majority of people only see Jesus Christ as a prophet, a good man, or a great teacher. Flesh and blood does not recognize Him as God revealed in human form.

The flesh is weak when it comes to spiritual matters like "watching" for the Lord's return or being faithful to pray and walk in obedience to the Lord. In Matthew 26:41 Jesus told the disciples who were with Him in the garden of Gethsemane to "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: (because) the spirit indeed is willing(to watch and pray), but the flesh is weak.*" (Mark 14:38;) Thus, we must be aware of this weakness of the flesh when we face temptation. The disciples were sleepy after eating the Passover meal and thus they yielded to the flesh rather than bringing the flesh into subjection of the spiritual need to pray. How often we as believers do the same when we know we should take time to pray. We allow fleshly activity to gain first place rather than taking time to fellowship with our Lord in prayer. Our old flesh with indwelling sin (Romans 7:13-14;) does not want to spend time in prayer. The flesh is why so many things that need attention are brought to mind when we know we need to take time to pray. The flesh will do all it can to keep us from prayer and to tempt us to do other things, even good things just to keep us from spending time with our Lord in prayer.

In John 3:6 Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus about spiritual matters but Nicodemus did not understand because he was thinking in physical terms. Jesus explained "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" Flesh can only produce more flesh. Flesh does not comprehend or grasp spiritual truth. In I Corinthians 2:14 we read "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" The natural man is the man of flesh. Only the spirit of man can grasp spiritual truth

when revealed by the Holy Spirit after salvation. II Corinthians 4:3-4 explains *"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* To really comprehend and understand spiritual truth, one **"MUST BE BORN AGAIN"** John 3:7. Being "born again" is a work of the Holy Spirit John 3:6b *"and that which is born of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) is spirit (of man)." When one believes in and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, it is the Holy Spirit who does the work of Salvation in our Spirit and indwells the believer.* Ephesians 1:13-14 *"In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom (Jesus Christ) also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest (guarantee) of the inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."* The full redemption of the purchased possession will be when we receive our glorified body that is described in I Corinthians 15:35-57 and I John 3:1-2. Luke 24:39 Jesus speaking to His disciples after His resurrection. They were terrified (v. 37) thinking that He was a spirit but He replied *"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."* Christ in His glorified body had flesh and bones but it is indicated that He did not have blood like our physical body now has. Today the life of the flesh is in the blood. Leviticus 17:11 *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."* v. 14 *"for it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off."*

What are the works of the flesh? Galatians 5:16-25; "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, raveling's, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-17 "This I say then Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other so that you should not do the things that ye would,"

Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28; "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust

after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This is the sin of pornography which is destroying so many homes of even Christians today. It is a trap or snare that becomes an addiction in the life of the one who is caught up in it. It brings one into bondage and destroys a man’s respect for women making them into objects for self-gratification. It is a terrible snare of selfishness which causes husbands to become hardened to kindness or thoughtfulness of their wives. The longer one devotes themselves to it the greater stronghold it builds into one’s life. Also there are other sins connected with this addiction. There is lying and deception trying to cover up the bondage that one is in because of the addiction. There is the sin of greed because it causes one to crave more and more of the pornography trying to satisfy the craving and cause more excitement connected with the addiction thus bringing one into deeper bondage. It makes one who is a Christian to become a hypocrite trying to pretend to be above such sin. It may even cause one to do what they consider good things trying to make up for the disgust they have for being addicted to this thing that they may even hate and try to overcome only to fall into it even more deeply than before. Or because of stress at work they may justify the addiction by saying I deserve this and it will help me perform my job better. The deception not only affects their trying to cover it up but it also may affect their own thinking by deceiving them into thinking it is OK to do this. My friend, what we all deserve is Hell and the Lake of Fire because *“in my flesh dwells not good thing”* but indwelling sin which is why this body has to die as Romans 3:23 states *“the wages of sin is death!”* The cry of flesh is “Give me, Give me, Give me what I crave for.”

Thus the deceptions of the flesh are many and it is very prevalent in the church today. I think this was one of the things that is pictured in the parable Jesus told about the different types of soil that the gospel falls upon. Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; describes this soil which can cause a person to appear to be saved by the seed of the gospel but it is not genuine salvation. I believe there are many in the church who think they are saved but are trusting in something other than Jesus for salvation. A person may pray the sinners prayer, appear to be saved but when problems arise fall away because they were not truly born again. Some trust in church membership, or baptism, or some other form of good works and even appear to have the joy of salvation but it is flesh rather than true salvation. My mother as a young girl came into the kitchen one morning expressing how wonderful she felt and her mother told her you have been saved. For many years she thought this was true and even became a pastors wife and taught Sunday School in Tabernacle Baptist Church in Crane, Texas, when she realize she had never been born again and so she acknowledged she was a sinner and placed her trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation even though she was a pastor’s wife and had to humble herself in acknowledging she was lost. She was then baptized which only then had meaning. One of our sons made two professions of salvation and was baptized twice before being truly born again. I remember a Sunday School teacher in San Angelo, Texas, who had taught Sunday School for 17 years who realized she was not born again and I remember the day she went

forward on a Sunday morning to receive the Lord Jesus as her Savior. A person may appear to be a believer, learn the Christian way of speaking, do what we might call good works, even give to the work of the church and do things like even casting out demons in the name of the Lord but are not known to the Lord as His own as He said in Matthew 7:22-23; *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity."* Like the octopus which can change its color to match its surroundings so the flesh can put on Christian appearance when not truly born again. I believe this is the cause of many church problems where there are unbelievers who think they are saved but are tools of Satan who cause trouble and do not even realize how they are being used of Satan. They are like the tares among the wheat that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 13:24-30; that will be separated in the time of harvest.

Another form of the flesh is false prophets and religion which are being used of the devil to lead people astray and are involved in the church for their own gain. The word of God tells us in II Corinthians 11:13-15 *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their works."* This was a problem in the church even in Biblical times when there were teachers that one had to be circumcised and were requiring the new Gentiles Christians much confusion.

Flesh reveals itself by "carnal cravings, deceitful desires, lustful longings, wicked wants, sensual sins, impure imaginations, evil envying's, liquor longings, destructive drugs, gossip grief, pompous pride, aggravating anger, lying and unforgiveness leading to bitterness as well as doing religious things in the energy of the flesh which are just a few ways flesh operates. When one is under attack of a fleshly desire, craving, or attitude it can be very powerful drawing one into an evil activity that one knows is wrong but yields to it anyway. The more one yields to it the stronger it becomes thus becoming a strong hold in a person's life like pride, pornography, anger, jealousy, greed, alcohol, lust for power, money, possessions, drugs, food, etc. Flesh may cause one to feel justified by being angry, or yielding to eating to excess causing one to become fat and making the refrigerator their best friend, or having a judgmental attitude looking down on others and comparing one's actions to what another person's weakness causes them to do. Remember like the octopus, flesh can blend into many so called good places or actions and be very deceptive. Flesh is full of hypocrisy and wearing a mask to hide its real self. When yielding to and living under the control of flesh one will likely keep something going like music, TV, texting, phone calls, business to keep one from having to face the truth. Flesh has many devious ways of keeping one from having to face the truth. Flesh is very deceitful. Galatians 5:19-21 reveals the works of the flesh "Now the works of the flesh are

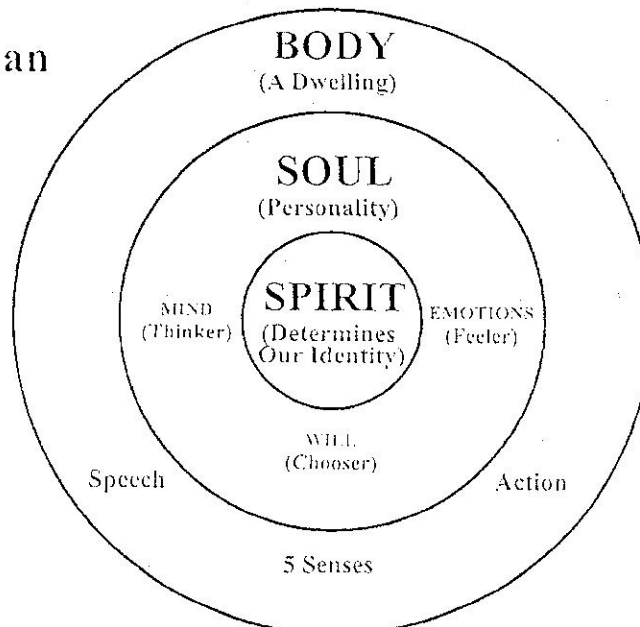
manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like:"

VICTORY HOW? We have read in Romans 7 about the flesh with indwelling sin but then Paul shares the victory the believer can have in Romans 8 through the law of the Holy Spirit of life (8:2) and His indwelling power. The Holy Spirit who comes into the spirit of the believer at Salvation (John 3:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; I Corinthians 6:11, 19;) is mentioned in Romans 8 some 20 or 21 times. Thus as Romans 7 reveals the struggle the believer has with the flesh, Romans 8 reveals the victory the believer can have through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Remember the diagram of man being triune (body, soul, and spirit).

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

A Biblical Picture of Man

Man - A Three-Part Whole



The body has indwelling sin (flesh Romans 7:18) while the spirit of the believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19-20). The soul becomes the battle field between indwelling sin in the body and the indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer's spirit. Thus the believer chooses with the will of the soul which one he or she will yield to and obey, sin or the Spirit. Although indwelling sin is powerful when it seeks to draw the believer after its lusts, the indwelling Holy Spirit has set the believer free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2) so the believer has the power of the Holy Spirit to say NO to indwelling sin! This is what Paul meant in Romans 6:11-14 "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. LET NOT (*it is your choice*) SIN therefore REIGN IN YOUR MORTAL BODY, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. NEITHER YIELD YE YOUR MEMBERS (*of the body*) as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. FOR SIN SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER YOU; for ye are not under the law, but under grace:"

Yielding to the Holy Spirit is what Paul meant in Galatians 5:16-17b when he wrote "This I say then, WALK IN THE SPIRIT, and YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE LUST OF THE FLESH. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other:" This is that struggle between the two that wars in the soul seeking to get the believer to go their way. It is the believer's will that must decide which he or she will yield to. The old song "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you some other to win. Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue, Look ever to Jesus, He will carry you through." is good to remember and bring to mind when tempted.

ALSO God's word is the weapon of the believer to fight against indwelling sin. This is what the writer of Psalms meant in Psalm 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Memorizing scripture is another key to victory over indwelling sin. Hebrews 4:12 states "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." What the writer is saying is that God's word penetrates and convicts us of sin and reveals truth that will enable the believer to fight and stand against evil thoughts and desires. God's word convicts and reveals our motives helping us recognize the deceptions of sin that would ensnare one. Reading God's word daily will also strengthen one's will and help discipline one to yield to the Holy Spirit who will teach the believer (John 14:26) the truth of God's word.

ALSO daily prayer is vital for daily victory. Remember what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 26:41 "Watch and Pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Our enemy=the world system, the flesh with indwelling sin, and Satan with his demons (Ephesians 2:2-3), will do everything they can to keep one from praying. The enemy will cause the phone to ring, a text to come in, something to come to mind that needs attention, etc. to keep one from praying. It takes self-discipline to have a daily prayer time. Make a prayer list starting with (1) thanking the Lord for His many blessings. List a few for which to express gratitude and thank the Lord for who He is. List a few of the Lord's names which describe facts about the Lord "Light of the world", "The way", "The Truth", "The Life" etc. (2.) List people that you know who are lost and pray for their salvation. George Muller prayed for a man for many years who was saved at George Muller's funeral. (3) Pray for your Pastor, Sunday School Teacher, Missionaries, church, etc. (4) Pray for our President and congress, for those who are lost in places of leadership for our nation and for those lost in our military. (5) Pray for friends and believers who are ill, out of church, struggling in their spiritual walk etc. (6) Pray for your family and extended family by name and finally (7) pray for your own spiritual life and personal needs.

This is only a short explanation of the flesh and its deceptive work in the lives and church of the Lord today.