

***"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." ~ Romans 8:6***

*"For to those whose outlook is formed their human nature, death is the result. For those whose outlook is spiritual (pneuma), life and peace are the results."*

## **I. Introduction:**

**Why aren't we more godly than we are right now if we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit?**

**Satan uses the world's system, a counterfeit kingdom, to energize our "flesh" to promote his evil ends in attempting to thwart God's design for us to glorify Him.**

**But the flesh itself stands in opposition to God for it seeks to please itself against God's purposes.**

**God's purpose to reproduce Christ in the child of God is achieved as one allows to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.**

**If one is controlled by the flesh, one is carnal. If one is controlled by the Holy Spirit, one is spiritual.**

## **II. What is the Flesh?**

### **A Definition of Carnality:**

~ J. Dwight Pentecost: "Any thought, word, or action that is generated by the flesh, motivated by the flesh, and indulged in to gratify or please the flesh, is carnality. It is not always what a man does that marks the difference between being carnal or spiritual, but rather what or who controls that action. Any action of mine that is energized by the flesh is carnal; anything I do controlled by the Spirit cannot be carnal. The flesh produces carnality; the Spirit produces spirituality." p. 241.

### **What is the Flesh?**

(Gr. word *sarx*)?

Most of the occurrences of this word refer to the (1) physical body (Luke 24:39; Acts 2:31; 1 Cor. 15:39; Phil. 1:24; 1 Tim. 3:16) (2) humanity in general (Matt. 24:22; Luke 3:6; John 17:2; Acts 2:17; Rom. 3:20) or (3) ethically to the sinful nature that characterizes fallen humanity (Rom. 7:5, 18; 8:1, 4-8; 13:14; Gal. 5:13-24; 2 Peter 2:10, 18; 1 John 2:16). This last usage that appears most frequently in Paul's epistles; it is the "bane" of the believer's life.

### **Three Descriptions of the "Flesh":**

(1) Spiros Zodhiates: "As implying weakness, frailty, imperfection, both physical and moral; ... As implying sinfulness, proneness to sin, the carnal nature, the seat of the carnal appetites and desires; of sinful passions and affections whether physical or moral." ~ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT.*, 1280.

(2) Mark I. Bubeck, "The flesh is a built-in law of failure, making it impossible for natural man to serve God. It is a compulsive inner force inherited from man's fall, which expresses itself in general and specific rebellion against God and His righteousness. The flesh can never be reformed or improved. The only hope for escape from the law of flesh is its total execution and replacement by a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ." ~ *The Adversary*, 28.

(3) Merrill F. Unger, "Mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence prone to sin and opposed to God; accordingly it includes in the soul, what is low, debases, tending to ungodliness and vice."

~ *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 370.

## **III. What is the Flesh like? IV. How does "Flesh" Operate?**

1. Incurably hostile to God & His law (Rom. 8:7);
2. Incapable of pleasing God (Rom. 8:8);
3. Morally bankrupt & devoid of any good (Rom. 7:18);
4. Associated with death & serves as its agent (Rom. 8:6);
5. Morally weak & ineffectual in producing a genuinely changed life (Rom. 6:19; 8:3; Gal. 3:3);
6. Vies with the Holy Spirit for the control of the believer & is unrelenting in its opposition to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:17);
7. Produces a wide variety of evil fruit that is individually destructive & socially divisive (Gal. 5:19-21);
8. Characterized by lust & passion (1 John 2:16);
9. Adept at using that which is good for evil purposes (Rom. 7:13; Gal. 5:13);
10. Indulging the flesh gives the devil "squatter's rights" (Eph. 4:27; 2 Tim. 2:22, 26).
11. Capable of enslaving the believer who attempts to live for God apart from the enablement of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:25).

**Even though the believer is no longer "in the flesh" as the ruling authority (Rom. 8:9), the "flesh" is still present whether as an active force in the believer (Rom. 7:14; 1 Cor. 3:3)**

*"The flesh cannot be tamed, reformed, or improved. It is so totally bad that it had to die. This terrible force is within us and even after we have by faith counted him dead, he will attempt to spring to life again and control us."*

~ Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary*, p. 28

*"The Scriptures are exceedingly clear in teaching that the flesh with its sin nature is still living, vital part of every believer and that he will continue in possession of the flesh and its fallen nature until the body is redeemed at the coming of Christ or until he leaves this earthly frame behind in death." ~ Lewis. S. Chafer,*

*Systematic Theology*, 7:155.

**The decision to choose yield to that which is carnal is within our range of possibilities: Rom. 6:12-16. Because of our identity in Christ, the issue is not our capability to yield to God, but our willingness in moment-by-moment spiritual living. The flesh reveals its evil character through what it produced. As a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit, the flesh has its own "fruit." Paul catalogs both in Galatians 5:19-23. The fruit of the Spirit is spontaneous in the believer and generated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. By contrast, the final products of the flesh are works produced by self-effort.**

**What are the Works of the Flesh? Galatians 5:19-21:**

***"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, self ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like..."***

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**How do we overcome the "flesh"?** (1) Know your identity in Christ (Rom. 6:1-6). (2) Depend upon the Holy Spirit in moment-by-moment living: "I say then, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.'" Gal. 5:16. **How do you walk by means of the Holy Spirit?** Know that you are crucified with Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20). (2) Acknowledge the Holy Spirit's presence in your life & invite His control always & in every circumstance (Gal. 5:25). **Other spiritual disciplines necessary for intimacy with God in daily living include:** (1) Operate by faith (not feelings) in dealing with the flesh. Trust the truths of Scripture (Eph. 5:18). (2) Mortify sinful propensities & fleshly appetites (Col. 3:5; Rom. 8:13). (3). Confess specific sins (1 John 1:9; Eph. 4:25-32; Col. 3:5-9); (4). Be careful to avoid tempting situations (James 1:13-15). (5) Flee temptation. To linger is to lose the battle (2 Tim. 2:22; Prov. 4:14-15). (6). Consciously imitate Christ; allow Christ to occupy your life (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 5:1-2, 15-20; Col. 3:10-17). (7). Intimately know Scripture (Psalm 19:7-11; John 17:17; Col. 3:16). (8). Be actively involved in a healthy Bible teaching, Christ-centered church where evangelism, discipleship, & accountability are taken seriously (Pastoral Epistles). (9). Reflect upon the vaporous condition of your life & live for what matters most (Ecclesiastes); (10). Deep, abiding, consistent prayer life.