

Simply Christ
Gospel Newsletter
Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

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Flesh and Spirit

The Apostle Paul often presented the gospel in terms of “Flesh” and “Spirit.” If human nature, human effort, religious law, or carnal religious activity was the source or cause of it, he called it “Flesh.” If it came from God through the gospel of Christ, he called it “Spirit.” Jesus had already revealed this when he said, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* John 3:6.

“Sinful flesh” is easy to recognize. It is human nature that was polluted with sin through Adam’s disobedience. The *“works of the flesh (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, etc.)”* Galatians 5:19 are the full manifestation of “sinful flesh.” It is this pollutant of sin that Christ came to purge from the heart and nature of all who believe upon him. John 1:29.

Christ was sent to *“condemned (sentenced to death) sin in the flesh”* Romans 8:3. Romans 6:6, and thereby *“save his people from their sins.”* Other passages confirm that *“Christ crucified”* is God’s full remedy for sinful flesh. Paul said those who are in Christ *“...are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in **putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.**”* Colossians 2:11. Paul also confirms this to the Galatians, saying, *“...they that are Christ's have **crucified the flesh** with the affections and lusts.”* Galatians 5:24. These passages describe the work of the cross in our redemption.

It is through the cross of Christ that *“the body of sin is destroyed.”* Romans 6:6.

Just as the forbidden fruit had the knowledge of both *“good and evil,”* flesh has a side that appears to be *“good.”* Paul described how this deceptive *“goodness”* of flesh had once deceived him, saying, *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:”* What was this *“flesh”* he was speaking of? It was everything he trusted in, in the Law of Moses. It was being *“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* Philippians 3:5-6. Yet when Paul saw the glory of Christ, all the *“flesh”* he once trusted became as garbage in his own sight. Philippians 3:8. He finally understood the words of Jesus, who said, *“the flesh profits nothing.”* John 6:63.

The Law was a covenant of *“flesh.”* The Ten Commandments were spiritual Romans 7:14 and God intended for it to be written in the hearts of the people when he spoke them from Mt. Sinai, but the Mosaic Law is a *“carnal ordinance”* Hebrews 9:10 given for unrighteous people. I Timothy 1:9. Paul describes service of God under the Law as being *“in the flesh.”* He says, *“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.”* Romans 7:5. Even today, the blindness of being *“in the flesh”* causes many people to futilely attempt to serve God through carnal *“commandment keeping.”*

A stumbling block for many people is something Paul called *"the righteousness which is of faith."* While it is evident that a person who is content to continue in sin does not even know God, there are others who sincerely aspire to serve the Lord, but attempt to do so through the keeping of carnal commandments, rituals, or ordinances. Those who seek righteousness through "commandment keeping." are laboring *"in the flesh"* for a prize they will never receive. Paul told us that a person *"believes unto righteousness."* Romans 10:10. This does not mean (as some pervert it to mean) that if a person continues in sin, but has faith, God sees them as righteous. *"Believing unto righteousness"* means that the promises of redemption are only received through believing the truth of the gospel. True righteousness is of the Spirit, and cannot be obtained through fleshly means. It is only received through believing the gospel of Christ which has the power to transform you completely.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written to a people who had *"begun in the Spirit,"* but were deceived into believing they would be *"made perfect by the flesh."* Galatians 3:3. The "flesh" they were turning to was the commandments and ritualism of Moses. Many times I have heard those who profess salvation by grace but think they are becoming like Christ through their religious works. Paul's question to such was, *"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"* Galatians 3:3. The same grace that saves us from sin keeps us in his likeness as we abide in the glorious light of Christ!

Jude 24.

The entire epistle to the Galatians is a warning to those who embrace the Law of Moses, or any other religious commandment, as a manner of serving God. These things promise a righteousness, which they can never bring to you. In fact, the opposite awaits you. Those who embrace fleshly religion will end up in *“the works of the flesh.”* The more they cling to the carnal commandment, precept, or principle, the more concupiscence will rage in their heart. Romans 7:8. Those who seek “perfection” by the flesh always end up overcome by *“the works of the flesh.”*

When Paul said, *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”* Galatians 5:16, he was simply telling us to walk in the light of the gospel of Christ. If a person *“walks in the Spirit,”* the lusts of the flesh are the furthest things from their heart, mind, or nature. Paul reiterates that the desires of the Spirit are so opposite and different from the desires of the flesh that it is impossible for anyone who walks in the Spirit to do the things a person does who walks in the flesh. Galatians 5:17. If you are *“born of the Spirit,”* then you *“live in the Spirit,”* so *“walk in the Spirit!”* Galatians 5:25. Simple faith in Christ through belief of the truth is more powerful than any fleshly religious work. **Walk in the Spirit ...and live!**