

Simply Christ
Gospel Newsletter
Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

November 12, 2024

Flesh and Spirit – Part 1

When the Apostle Paul writes of being *“in the Spirit,”* he is speaking of a person who has been born of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, the phrase *“in the flesh”* almost always refers to those who have never been born again. Jesus told us *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* John 3:6. Every person born into this world is *“in the flesh”* until they are born of God’s Spirit. When that new birth takes place, they become a spiritual creation, and their life exists in a spiritual realm we know as being *“in Christ.”*

Those who are *“in the flesh”* are natural creations, but those who are born of God are *“spiritual”* creations just as Christ was a *“spiritual man.”* The Bible tells us, *“The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (Jesus Christ) was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.”* I Corinthians 15:45-46. The words, *“last Adam”* are speaking of Jesus Christ. The next verse confirms this, saying, *“The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.”* I Corinthians 15:47. We are all like one of these very different men. The Apostle Paul continues, saying, *“As is the earthy, such are*

they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” I Corinthians 15:45. According to this passage, every person is a “*natural*” creation, or, “*a living soul,*” until they are born of God. Their only dwelling place is “*in the flesh.*” In the new birth, however, we become “*spiritual*” beings, and we live “*in the Spirit.*”

The “*natural*” person may be very religious, but they are still “*in the flesh*” and cannot know or receive the things of the Spirit of God. The Bible says, “*...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. But he that is spiritual judgeth (discerns) all things...*” I Corinthians 2:14-15. The spiritual person, one who is born of God, has “*the mind of Christ*” I Corinthians 2: 16, and can “*...know the things that are freely given to us of God.*” I Corinthians 2:12.

Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a person is born of the Spirit, they can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God. John 3:3, 5. Paul adds to this, saying, “*Because the carnal (flesh) mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*” Romans 8:7-8. Until a person is born of God’s Spirit, their mind is at war with God and can never be subject to the law of God. Because of this condition, it is impossible for the person who is still “*in the flesh*” to ever please God. No amount of religious teaching or effort can change this. They must be born again! John 3:7.

In Galatians, Paul describes the vast difference between *“the flesh”* and *“the Spirit.”* He says, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* Galatians 5:17. Some mistakenly teach this as internal struggle in a child of God. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In this passage, Paul is explaining how different these two conditions are. The one who is *“in the Spirit”* longs for completely different things than the person who is *“in the flesh.”* For this reason, a person who walks in the Spirit cannot do the things a person who is in the flesh can do.

In his letter to the believers at Rome, Paul reminds the Jews among them Romans 7:1 of what it was like under the Law as they attempted to serve God before they came to Christ. 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. The *“motions of sins”* he speaks of is the turmoil a person finds themselves in as they attempt to carnally serve God. They try to do good, but they discover evil is still present in their heart. Romans 7:21. It seems the harder they try the worse this problem gets. They do not understand that the carnal mind can never please God. Yet, until they are born of God’s Spirit, the carnal mind is all they have to offer. The entire 7th chapter of Romans is describing the futility of trying to serve God with the carnal mind. Paul’s concluding statement in Romans 7 tells us that as long as a person attempts to serve the law of God through the

carnal mind, they will always end up serving sin with their flesh. Romans 7:25.

Vast multitudes of people have been led to believe that a confession, baptism, or a discipleship program has made them to be a child of God. None of these things have the power to save anyone. Only a visitation of the Spirit of God can bring a true *“born again”* experience. It is no wonder so many people find themselves in a fleshly struggle with sin in their heart as they try to serve God. As Paul reminds us, “...***they that are in the flesh cannot please God.***” Romans 8:7-8.