

A 60-day plan of transformation into Christlikeness

Day #14: The Spirit versus the Flesh (Part 2)

For the latest pdf edition of this article, see Day 14– The Spirit versus the Flesh (Part 1) at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-14.pdf>

A. SOLITUDE WITH GOD.

1. A recommendation for today’s spiritual practice of solitude: For about 30 minutes, turn off all technology . . . your smartphone does have an off button. Make a good cup of coffee or tea. Find a comfortable place to sit. Open your Bible and read out loud slowly, repeatedly and prayerfully Psalm 139:23-24 and Matthew 6:9-13. Then, be still. No journaling. No talking. Nothing. If possible, take a walk and spend time in prayer with the LORD as you reflect on concepts in these passages, your concerns, creation, your love for and life before the LORD.
2. If you only have 30 minutes, and the above takes up the entire time, this is all you need to do for this day of transformation. You can always review the lesson below at another time—later in the day or on a day that I do not provide a lesson.
3. “Solitude with God” is a spiritual discipline/exercise that makes time and a place so that God can transform you. It was practiced by saints in the Old Testament and New Testament and by our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing legalistic about it if practiced with the intent of getting closer to God for much needed grace to be who He wants you to be—Christlike.

B. THE SPIRIT VS. THE FLESH (Part 2)

1. This lesson is a continuation of the examination of the nature of the flesh and the need and nature of life in the Holy Spirit.
2. Read Galatians 6:8. Paul’s analogy here is instructive. A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for growing the grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain. This is the way with the spiritual disciples—they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. By themselves, the spiritual discipline can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. God ordained the spiritual disciplines as a means by which we place ourselves where He can pour His grace into us and bless us. A person who takes the time for spiritual disciplines of prayer, studying Bible doctrine, Scripture reading, solitude with God, etc., puts himself in a position whereby God can transform him by His grace. In these disciplines, we sow to the Spirit by orienting and thus sowing to the Spirit rather than the flesh (flesh = orientation to human activity alone).

3. On our battle with our flesh, consider read slowly and repeatedly 1 Peter 2:11; 5:8. Satan seeks to devour us like a “roaring lion” and apart from the protection of God by surrounding ourselves with the grace of God, he will succeed. We access His grace by living before God, with God, and after God—and spiritual disciplines are ways of doing this.
4. Read Galatians 5:13 and note the two orientations in life. The latter is always the way of the Spirit.
5. Read Colossians 2:23. Note that the primary issue is dealing with the flesh is not simply dealing with the flesh with the flesh. In other words, if you gain control over your flesh in regard to sense appetites, it does not mean a thing unless you are living in the Spirit. It is always more about living in the Spirit than simply denying the flesh—even if denying the flesh is a door that leads to access into life in the Spirit. If you gain more control over the flesh by the flesh, like controlling your intake of food or alcohol, apart from life in the Spirit, you will become proud, which will manifest itself in bragging about it and looking down on others who do not appear to have self-control. This is as fleshly as being a glutton or a drunk.
6. While the flesh includes sense appetites, it also includes other aspects of human activity; for example, lack of time or interest to serve others. The flesh (human nature considered apart from God) does not want to be inconvenienced by the poor or marginalized. And if the flesh is moved to help the poor, it wants honor and recognition. The flesh may whine about the inconvenience of serving others, but it screams against unrecognized service. The flesh always wants attention—“look what I did” is the attitude of the flesh. The spiritual discipline of serving/helping others in the Spirit and power of God’s transforming grace is one of the most effective ways of transforming our selfish desires of the flesh. It is far more effective than control of our sense appetites for food, because with regard to control over food, it is easy to focus on our health benefits. Moreover, in the flesh, one can control his food intake, it is hard to see how someone could sacrificially help others and be satisfied if there are no immediate fleshly benefits or recognition by anyone but God.
7. The extent of temptation of the flesh. Read 1 John 2:16. We generally fail to see the extent of this passage because of the tendency to relegate it to sexual sins. “The lust of the flesh” refers to the failure to control/discipline natural human passions. The “lust of the eyes” refers to the tendency to be captivated by outward show. The “pride of life” is nothing but egoism. In each case, we have the same problem: infatuation with natural human power and abilities without any dependence upon God. In each case, flesh is in operation, and the flesh is the deadly enemy of humility. To overcome the flesh requires that one see every day as an opportunity to develop genuine humility in the LORD.

8. The power of the Holy Spirit to overcome flesh-orientation. Read Galatians 5:16. In this passage we have a double negative (οὐ μὴ), which means that if we walk by the Spirit, we will by no means fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Read Paul's list of sins of the flesh in Gal 5:17-19 and note how many of them are not strictly "fleshly"—e.g., many deal with mental/immaterial attitudes.
9. On the fruit of the Spirit, read Galatians 5:22-23. This 9-fold fruit dominates the life of a person who lives by the Spirit rather than the flesh. They are also inseparable from each other; they are all part of one fruit. You will never find a person who lives by the Spirit who is not loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and have self-control. You will never find a person who is loving who is not joyful and peaceful. You will never find a person who is joyful and peaceful who is not also loving.
10. The Holy Spirit is key to spiritual formation into the image of Christ. It is the Spirit's work, in the Spirit's way, and in the Spirit's time. The Spirit keeps us free from being dominated by the flesh. Holy Spirit is the key to fruitfulness. When we draw our life and strength from the Holy Spirit, we are freed from sinful desires that arise from human weakness. When we are led by the Spirit, we are freed from the need to earn and perform (read Gal 5:18). We are even freed from trying to be virtuous by the guarantee of fruitfulness (Gal 5:22). And we are free from the opinions and politics of others as we live in the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17).
11. In sum, one can live by the Holy Spirit by living for God and enjoy the supernatural fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 or one can live by the flesh and thus live an unfulfilled and chaotic frantic fleshly (humanly) life described in Galatians 5:17-19. Again, as we live in and for God's Kingdom, we live in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit with His divine fruit of righteousness, joy, and peace imparted into us—read Romans 14:17.

C. SCRIPTURE MEMORY.

Galatians 5:16, *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not by any means fulfill the lust of the flesh."*

D. The 60-day transformation of the mind, heart, and emotions into Christlikeness

- Day 1 – A life that lacks nothing (Psalm 23), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-1.pdf>
 Day 2 - Satan, the enemy (1 John 2:15-16), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-2.pdf>
 Day 3 – Review, reflect, journaling, and Psalm 19, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-3.pdf>
 Day 4 – The six areas of inner transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-4.pdf>
 Day 5 – The Word of God, Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-5.pdf>
 Day 6 – 2 warnings & promise of transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-6.pdf>
 Day 7 - Solitude, Disciplines, Transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-7.pdf>
 Day 8–VIM (Vision-Intent-Means) & transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-8.pdf>
 Day 9–Solitude with God and Christ's transformative yoke, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-9.pdf>
 Day 10– Discipleship-1, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-10.pdf>
 Day 11– Discipleship-2, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-11.pdf>
 Day 12– The Life-giving Power of the Holy Spirit, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-12.pdf>

Day 13– The Spirit vs. the Flesh (Part 1), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-13.pdf>
Day 14– The Spirit vs. the Flesh (Part 2), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-14.pdf>

*Under the discipleship of Jesus Christ,
Pastor Don*