

I. Prevailing Principle:

A. Religious activity without genuine heart and life change is worthless before God.

1. From Isaiah
 - a. **Isaiah 1:10-20**
2. From Jesus
 - a. **Matthew 23:23 (ESV)** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*
3. From Paul
 - a. **Romans 8:8-9 (ESV)** ⁸ *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* ⁹ *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
 - b. **1 Corinthians 3:1-4 (ESV)** ¹ *But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.* ² *I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,* ³ *for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?* ⁴ *For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?*
 - (1) Paul is not condemning them as unbelievers
 - (2) Paul is pointing out to them that their conduct is inconsistent with their confession.
 - (3) They call themselves spiritual, Spirit-filled people, and so they ought to be given the work of Christ among them, but they are acting as though they are still “of the flesh”
 - (a) KJV - “carnal”
 - (b) NIV - worldly
 - (c) NASB - men of flesh
 - (d) ESV - of the flesh

B. Summary

1. Saved people (elect, justified, redeemed, regenerated) are filled with the Spirit
2. **Genuine Christians conduct themselves as spiritual not fleshly people.**

II. Problem with the Flesh

A. Define “flesh”

1. Not
 - a. Not body/muscle tissue
 - b. Not the sum total of life experience in the body
2. Means
 - a. “Flesh” that which arises out of the sinful nature and is characteristic of this world and its attributes

- b. “Flesh” refers to
 - (1) that which is valuable to pride and motivates boasting
 - (2) the attitude of pride that elevates things like skills, talents, wealth, education, anything in life, other than God, which a pride motivated man uses as a measure of himself and others
- c. “Flesh” is all that upon which sinful man puts his trust that is not God
- d. “Flesh” is the slave master from which only the power of God can save us
- e. **“Flesh” - the being of man which is determined, not by physical substance, but by his relation to God.**
 - (1) Flesh is that character within us that rejects God and keeps us distant from Him
 - (2) Flesh is that nature that relies on self, exalts self, protects self (even from grace!)
 - (3) Flesh is me sitting on the throne of my heart making the decisions of life with little regard for the sovereign God

B. Problem with the Flesh

1. **Romans 8:5-13 (ESV)** ⁵ *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* ⁶ *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* ⁷ *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.* ⁸ *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* ⁹ *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* ¹⁰ *But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* ¹¹ *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* ¹² *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.* ¹³ *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
2. Problem with the Flesh
 - a. Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh
 - b. To set the mind on the flesh is death
 - c. The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God
 - d. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God
 - e. If you live according to the flesh, you will die
3. Summary
 - a. The flesh constitutes every feeling, desire, interest, and motive that aims not at the glory of God, and the good of our neighbor, but at gratifying self.
 - b. Life lived in the flesh leads to death.
 - c. So, **live by the Spirit and let your conduct measure up to your confession.**

III. What can a Christian do about the flesh?

A. You have the mind of Christ!

1. Fanny Crosby, "Take the World but Give Me Jesus"
2. Make that the active motto and strategy of your life: Give Me Jesus
- 3.

B. Give me Jesus

1. Give me the commitment of Jesus
 - a. **Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)** ⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
2. Give me the heart of Jesus
 - a. **Matthew 15:32 (ESV)** *Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."*
3. Give me the mission of Jesus
 - a. **John 4:34 (ESV)** *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."*
 - b. God's mission in the world: *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*
4. Give me the hope of Jesus
 - a. **Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)** ² *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
5. Give me the devotion of Jesus
 - a. **John 17:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*
6. Give me the death of Jesus
7. Give me the resurrection of Jesus

C. Choice

1. You can live by faith in Jesus Christ empowered led by the Holy Spirit, a life which leads to eternal life.
2. Or you can live according to the flesh, using the sinful principles of this fallen world as your guide, and you will die, you will be separated from God, from love, from all hope for all eternity.
3. You choose.