

Message Two

The Flesh and the Spirit

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:6; 7:17-20, 24-25; 8:2-13

I. In order to live by the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit, we must see what the flesh is—cf. Rom. 8:6, 13:

- A. The flesh is the corrupted, polluted, and transmuted body:
 - 1. Man's body was originally pure, but through man's fall Satan injected himself into man and man's body has become the flesh—Gen. 3:6; Rom. 7:18a.
 - 2. Our body is “the body of sin” (6:6) and the “body of this death” (7:24); the body of sin is very active and full of strength in sinning against God, and the body of this death is weak and powerless in acting to please God (v. 18).
 - 3. As long as we are still living, until the day of our redemption, the body of sin and death is always with us—cf. 8:23.
 - 4. The word *flesh* refers also to our entire fallen being; man is totally flesh because the fallen being today is under the dominion of the fallen flesh—3:20; Gen. 6:3a.
 - 5. The flesh is the “meeting hall” of sin, death, and Satan; the flesh is a hopeless case and can never be improved—Rom. 7:17-18, 21; cf. John 17:15:
 - a. The flesh is at enmity with God.
 - b. The flesh is not subject to the law of God.
 - c. The flesh is unable to be subject to the law of God—Rom. 8:7.
 - d. The flesh can never please God—v. 8.
- B. Sin is Satan himself in our flesh:
 - 1. Sin can deceive us, kill us (7:11), lord it over us, that is, have dominion over us (6:12, 14), and cause us to do things against our will (7:17, 20); all these activities show that sin is a living person.
 - 2. Sin is the evil nature of Satan, the evil one, who, having injected himself into man through Adam's fall, has now become the very sinful nature dwelling, acting, and working in fallen man—cf. Matt. 16:22-23.
 - 3. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”; in Romans 7:17 he said, “It is no longer I...but sin that dwells in me,” showing that sin is another person within us.
 - 4. In our flesh no good thing dwells, because the flesh is fully possessed, taken over, by Satan as sin—v. 18a.

II. For the sake of His economy, God in His wisdom and sovereignty uses our sinful, ugly flesh to force us to turn to our spirit that we may live by the law of the Spirit of life and gain more of the Spirit—8:2:

- A. We are either in the spirit or in the flesh; there is no third place for us to be—vv. 4-13.
- B. Judicially speaking, both Satan and our flesh were condemned once for all on the cross (8:3; John 3:14; Heb. 2:14; 2 Cor. 5:21), but God allowed the flesh

to remain with us to help us and force us to turn to Christ in our spirit and to have no more confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).

1. Without the help rendered by the sinful, ugly flesh, we would not be as desperate to gain the Lord or to have Him wrought into us.
2. Our goal may be holiness, or spirituality, or victory, but God's goal is to work Himself into us; often, when we are in a difficult situation, we are more open to the Lord, more willing to turn to Him, and more willing to allow Him to work Himself into us—Rom. 8:28-29.
3. Our hardships, defeats, failures, and disappointments force us to realize that there is no hope in the flesh; the flesh is good only to force us to turn to Christ in our spirit, to make us desperate to get into the spirit, and to keep us watchful to stay in the spirit—Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:17-18.
4. The Lord does not care for whether or not we have a victory; the Lord cares for only one thing—that we gain Christ as the Spirit—Phil. 3:8; 2 Cor. 3:18.

III. Today we need to take care of one thing—walking according to the spirit—Rom. 8:4:

- A. Our flesh is a compound, compounded with sin, death, and Satan; our spirit is also a compound, compounded with Christ, the Spirit, and grace—2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 6:18.
- B. God wants us to walk according to this wonderful compound spirit (have our being and our living with all that we say and do according to the spirit)—Rom. 8:4; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 6:17; cf. Exo. 30:23-25.
- C. Only the persons who walk according to the spirit can be the proper members for the building up of a local church; if we do not have such a walk, sooner or later we will be a trouble to our local church—Gal. 5:16-26.
- D. God has reserved the human spirit for His purpose—Zech. 12:1; Gen. 2:7; Prov. 20:27:
 1. Our spirit today is the real Bethel, the house of God, and also the gate of heaven; when we turn to our spirit, we are in the third heaven—Eph. 2:22; Gen. 28:12, 17, 19.
 2. When we are in our spirit, we are in the Holy of Holies touching the throne of grace and being sustained by Christ to live a heavenly life on earth—Heb. 10:22a; 4:16.
 3. In our spirit we can overcome the world, and the evil one cannot touch us; the only way to overcome Satan is to stay in the high tower of our regenerated spirit—1 John 5:4, 18; John 3:6; 14:30.
 4. Our spirit is the secret place of the Most High, the place where we enjoy Christ as our life to grow in life and experience the reality of the Body—Psa. 91:1; Matt. 6:6.
 5. Because Christ as the life-giving Spirit has dispensed Himself as life into our spirit, our spirit is life (Gk. *zoe*)—Rom. 8:10.
 6. Our spirit is the place of oneness; we can be one only if we worship God in our spirit, which is today's Jerusalem—John 4:23-24; Psa. 133.
 7. Christ, the heavenly and spiritual food, is in our spirit, and we need to eat Him to grow up into Him for the building up of His Body—John 6:57, 63.