

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

By
Dr. E. Harold Henderson

Dr. E. Harold Henderson was for 25 years, from 1972-1997, the principal English language speaker on Life Word Broadcast, an international radio outreach of the Baptist Missionary Association of America. Dr. Henderson was the Writer of the Adult Sunday School Quarterly (Baptist Publishing House, Little Rock, AR) for 39 & ½ years. He authored four books and numerous religious periodicals.

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Prisoners Bible Crusade
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Lucedale, MS 39452

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THE FLESH OF VERSUS THE SPIRIT

Do you feel as if a war is raging within you? Has the conflict between the higher and lower inclinations of your nature brought you to the place of frustration or even hopelessness? If so, the Bible brings you this good news, “There is deliverance.” Other believers, even the most spiritual, have the same battle you experience. God knows your conflict—the war within you— and provides victory for you through the Lord Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATION

The combatants in that war within you are identified in Galatians 5:16-26 as “the flesh” and “the spirit.” “Flesh” is sometimes used in the Scripture to refer to man’s physical body: “**Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,**” I Cor. 15:5. It is used in this context to

mean the sinful element in our nature. "Flesh" speaks of human depravity, the seat of sin in man. As such, in the flesh dwells no good thing (Rom. 8:8). The flesh (depraved) nature is with us as a result of the Fall of the human race.

Over against the flesh stands the Holy Spirit. The believer is born of the Spirit (John 3:5), indwelt by the Spirit (John 14: 16-23), sealed by the Spirit (Eph. 1:12-14), taught by the Spirit (John 16: 12-15), led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14), lives by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and walks by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). The Holy Spirit is in the believer to contest the flesh and keep check on us.

Each action and all motives are prompted by the flesh or the spirit. Yet, the aims and purposes of these two are diametrically opposed. When the flesh prompts to sin, the Spirit says "No." When the Spirit prompts to righteousness, the flesh says "No." The result is that a battle rages. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to one to the other..." Gal. 5:17. Your own will determines which you will follow.

The severity of the battle between flesh and Spirit is indicated by the term "lust" repeatedly found in Galatians 5: 13-26. It speaks of mutual opposition plus a strong desire of each to overcome the other. God set the conflict thus so you could never live at peace while living in sin.

To live in the flesh means to live your own life; to live in the Spirit is to live the Christ life. You are in the flesh as a member of God's family, In the flesh, you are related to Adam: in the Spirit, you are related to God. The flesh operates under the influence of human corruption; the Spirit operates under the influence of divine regeneration. The flesh promotes pride; the Spirit promotes humility. The flesh hates; the Spirit loves. The flesh is marked by selfishness; the Spirit is manifest in selflessness. No wonder there is a warfare between them. By an act your will, you determine which of the two controls your life.

EXAMINATION

The works on the flesh are catalogued in Galatians 5: 19-21. They are offensively obvious. So obvious, in fact, that anyone can see them and they are unmistakably identified as coming from the lower nature. They are of such a nature that it is almost embarrassing to read them in a mixed assembly. And yet, they are manifest in the lives of countless numbers of people each day. The works of the flesh fall into four categories.

1. The flesh produces sins against chastity. They arise from the obvious depravity and misuse of the sexual passion, Gal. 5:19. These sins are adultery (unfaithfulness to the marriage bond), fornication (immoral sexual behavior by married or unmarried), uncleanness (impurity of any sort including all types of sexual perversion), and lasciviousness (indecent in every form whether by action, attitude, or conversation). When you see a person behave himself by such a pattern, you can be sure he is not walking under the dominion of the Holy Spirit. Apply this principle to programs you watch on television, books you read, articles in magazines, which come to your home, and to conduct of your relatives, friends, and associates. How many are marked by the control of the flesh? You cannot be a spiritual Christian if you continually saturate your mind with such influences. Flesh is always unchaste.
2. The flesh produces sins against religion. This indicates a depraved spiritual nature, Gal. 5:20a. "Idolatry and witchcraft" are two of the many forms depraved religion takes. "Idolatry" is that attitude which places something or someone before God. It is giving greater allegiance to any other than you give to Him. In Bible times, it was a sin deserving death. "Witchcraft" or "sorcery" as is otherwise called, includes all

involvement in the occult. Today, it would include people's fascination with fortune telling, astrology, necromancy, magic, Satan worship, and kindred matters. Remember: all these are the sign of depraved religious conscience, which result from a domination of the unregenerate flesh nature. One who knows Jesus does not need these.

3. The flesh produces sins against charity. This is a violation of love, Gal. 5:20b. So widespread is this error that no less than nine words are used to describe it. Hatred (a spirit of enmity), variance _strife and wrangling), emulations (jealousy and envy), wrath (fits of rage), strife (selfish ambition), sedition (dissension and division), heresies (doctrinal errors), envying (jealous rage), and murders (desire to destroy). Each of these violates the law to love God above all and to love one's neighbor as one's self. Do not be surprised. The flesh nature is concerned only about is self. Only the Sprit of God makes a person unselfish, free hearted and loving.
4. The flesh produces sins against temperance. This includes all the excesses of drunkenness, carousing, and the like, Gal. 5:21b. Use this as a guide to examine your own experience. Are you living under the dominion of the flesh or of the Spirit?

DEFERENTIATION

In contrast to the works of the flesh, there are the fruit of the Spirit. Observer that "works" are plural while "fruit" is singular. The flesh is divisive in itself. There is no unity nor agreement in it. It is marked by many kinds of "works" which are each opposed to the other. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is marked by harmony and unity. Its fruit hangs as a cluster of graces.

"Fruit" indicates life. The fruit of the Spirit is produced in your life because the Holy Spirit is living in you. When you have no known sin unconfessed nor unforgiven, you receive wisdom, strength, and righteousness from Him.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit blesses all of life's relationships. The inner man of the human heart is blessed by "**love, joy, and peace.**" The social relationships are marked by "**longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness.**" The religious life manifests "**faith, meekness, and temperance.**" The presence of the Holy Spirit, when He is permitted to exercise control over the life, makes a man live at