

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 5-24-15 PM NOTES
"REPLACING FLESHLY LIVING"
GALATIANS 5:16-23
#3 in Series, "Dealing With Our Past"

Galatians 3:3 (NKJV) "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

Romans 7:25b (NKJV) "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

Romans 8:5-6 (ESV) ⁵For 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. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

Romans 13:14 (ESV) "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

Galatians 5:13 (NKJV) "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

2 Peter 2:10a (NKJV) "and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority."

I. Exposing the Flesh (v. 16)

John 17:2a (NKJV) "as You have given Him authority over all flesh..."

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Romans 6:6-7 (HCSB) ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, ⁷since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims."

Romans 6:11-13 (NKJV) ¹¹Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Our basic non-physical needs are for love, acceptance, significance, and security.

Galatians 3:3 (NKJV) "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

John 15:5b (NKJV) "...for without Me you can do nothing."

Walking after the flesh is a condition of yielding to the control of the power of sin which results in living out of our own resources according to our old programming.

II. Conquering the Flesh (vv. 17-18)

Galatians 5:17-18 (Wuest Translation) “For the flesh constantly has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit constantly has a strong desire to suppress the flesh. And these are entrenched in an attitude of mutual opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you desire to do.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

2 Peter 1:4b (NKJV) “...that...you may be partakers of the divine nature...”

John 17:23b (ESV) “...you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

Ephesians 2:4 (NKJV) “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.”

Jeremiah 31:3b (NKJV) “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love...”

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV) “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

Romans 5:8-9 (NKJV) “⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

Ephesians 1:5 (NKJV) “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Hebrews 13:5b (NKJV) “For He Himself has said, ‘*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*’”

Colossians 2:10a (NKJV) “and you are complete in Him...”

Philippians 4:19 (NKJV) “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

John 10:28 (NKJV) “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

III. The Alternative to the Flesh (vv. 16, 22-23)

Isaiah 11:2 (NKJV) “The Spirit of counsel and might...”

Romans 8:14 (NKJV) “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV) “²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Colossians 2:10a (NKJV) “and you are complete in Him...”

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#3 in Series, “Dealing with Our Past”

I suspect that my testimony as to spiritual growth is similar to many people. I came to Christ as a child, but growing up, my concept of the Christian life was that we are to try our best to follow the rules. Being truly born again, I had a deep longing in my heart to obey and please God, but I didn't really know how and I didn't have the power. I would try so hard, make promises to God about never breaking the rules again, and then I'd do it. I would finally become so guilt ridden that I would go forward in a service in my church and rededicate my life, which meant that I was once again promising God that I would try harder. That was the frustrating cycle I went through for the first 16 years of my Christian life. There was little if any joy! I understood that salvation was not of works and that it was by God's grace, but I thought living the Christian life was up to me. I really was identical to the Galatians. Paul said to them in **Galatians 3:3 (NKJV)** “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” In that verse, we see the obstacle to a life victory – it is the flesh. Our greatest battle is not with the world around us or the Devil who assails us, but it is the flesh within us.

There is no shortage of verses in the New Testament detailing the danger of the flesh. Here are a few. **Romans 7:25b (NKJV)** “So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” We see that the flesh is attached to this law of sin in our members. **Romans 8:5-6 (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.” **Romans 13:14 (ESV)** “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” The flesh is something that we can make provision for, but to do so is disobedience to God. **Galatians 5:13 (NKJV)** “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” This verse tells us that the flesh tends to abuse the liberty we have in Christ. **2 Peter 2:10a (NKJV)** “and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority.” Flesh involves walking in uncleanness. There are other verses, but that is enough (along with our text) to show us what a battle we have with our flesh. As we get into this message, we are going to see that so much of our struggle with the flesh in the present is tied to our past.

I. Exposing the Flesh (V16)

It takes a little digging in to Scripture to understand what is meant by the flesh as it is used in a negative sense as it is in Galatians 5:16. There are three ways that the word flesh is used in the New Testament. First, there are times when “flesh” simply refers to humanity in general. **John 17:2a (NKJV)** “as You [God, the father] have given Him [Jesus, God the Son] authority over all **flesh**...” Second, there are times when “flesh” refers to the human body. **Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)** “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the **flesh** [human body] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” I want to focus on a third meaning of the flesh. What is the flesh as it is used in Galatians 5:16, when it refers to something immaterial and something we battle against and must not give in to its strong desires (“lust”)? I warn you that this may seem complicated, but it is vitally important that you understand what the flesh (in this negative sense) is so that you can know how to deal with it. The Bible nowhere **defines** the flesh as it is used in our text; the Bible just **describes** it. From those descriptions, we will try to come up with a definition of the flesh and see how dealing with the flesh brings us victory over our past.

Flesh, when used in this negative sense, is used of both Christians and non-Christians. Non-Christians are “in the flesh” while Christians still struggle with the flesh but are not in the flesh. For the non-Christian, flesh is a **position** where the person is a slave to the power of sin in them, controlled by their old programming from their past, and are operating in their own strength. For a Christian, flesh is a

condition we fall into where we choose to yield to the power of sin in us (though we don't have to), walk according to our old programming (though we have a new identity in Christ), and operate in our own power (even though we have the Spirit of Christ living in us). A non-Christian is "in the flesh"; they are enslaved to the power of sin, controlled by the programming of their Adamic nature, and to operate in their own strength. We are going to focus on Christians who operate according to the flesh even though their new position is in Christ. Let's focus in on three elements that the flesh involves.

First, a Christian who is walking "according to the flesh" (2 Peter 2:10) is yielded to the power of sin. When sin is used in the singular, it is often referring to a power that dwells in our body whereby Satan has inroad to tempt us and attempt to deceive us. The old us in Adam was powerless against this power called sin. At salvation, the old us in Adam was crucified with Christ and the one sin had authority and dominion over died. **Romans 6:6-7 (HCSB)** ⁶ "For we know that our old self [old man] was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, ⁷ since a person who has died [the old man crucified with Christ] is freed from sin's claims." Notice that sin didn't die – only the one sin controlled and enslaved died. That power called sin is still in believers and Satan will use it to tempt us until we leave these bodies of flesh and blood. As a new creation in Christ, we no longer have to yield to this power called sin. **Romans 6:11-13 (NKJV)** ¹¹ "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God." When a Christian yields to this power of sin instead of enforcing the victory won at the cross, they are walking like a lost person – they are walking according to the flesh.

Second, walking after the flesh means that a person is yielded to their old programming. This is where dealing with our past comes in. All of us have old programming from that old man in Adam. The goal of the adamic nature is to live independently of God (e.g. Adam and Eve in the garden). We were born with some basic needs designed to draw us to God, who is the only one with the supply for those needs. Our basic non-physical needs are for love, acceptance, significance, and security. From our childhood, we developed ways of trying to get our needs met apart from God. Different people with different personality types and different circumstances responded in different ways to get their needs met. For example, one child may seek acceptance from peers by a rebellious life. Another child seeks acceptance and love from their parents and other authorities by living a model life of working hard and following the rules in their own power. While we are not victims of our past, we need to recognize that our past does program our flesh. A Christian who is still seeking to get their needs for love, acceptance, significance, and security met from another source than God Himself and operating according to that old programming is walking after the flesh. The outworking of the flesh looks different in each of us because we have different personalities, different parents, and different painful life experiences. When we are controlled by our old programming and we are seeking to cope in our own strength, we are fulfilling the strong desire of the flesh and we are not walking in the Spirit. One of the most basic things that every Christian needs to ask the Lord to do is to reveal their own version of the flesh. You need to know what your lust of the flesh looks like. We'll focus more on that in the next message.

Third, a person who is walking after the flesh is operating in their own strength. The Galatians were having a problem in this area. **Galatians 3:3 (NKJV)** "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" Some people have very competent flesh (USDA Choice flesh). Some people have weak flesh in that they aren't very competent or talented. In one sense it's easier for the "weak flesh" people to walk in the Spirit's power than the USDA Choice flesh people. Here is the problem. It is impossible for flesh to please God (Romans 8:8). There are no eternal benefits of anything done in the power of the flesh. In John 15:5b Jesus said, "... for without Me you can do nothing."

Putting all of that together, here is a definition of a Christian who is walking after the flesh. **Walking after the flesh is a condition of yielding to the control of the power of sin which results in living out of our own resources according to our old programming.** The simplest definition of walking after the

flesh is walking with self in control of your life. That walking with self in control might be very righteous looking or it might be very revolting. It might involve addictions or it might involve a self-righteous, critical spirit toward those who are struggling with addictions. It might be manifested in someone who is “down and out” and looks a mess or it may be in someone who looks like they have it all together on the outside but in reality, they are “up and out”. It may be someone who is very skilled in getting their own needs met and is very disciplined and thus filled with pride, or it may be someone who is a failure at all they try and is extremely undisciplined. All of these are different versions of the flesh. For a Christian, walking after the flesh is never pleasing to God.

II. Conquering the Flesh (V17-18)

I like New Testament scholar Kenneth Wuest’s translation of these two verses: **Galatians 5:17-18 (Wuest Translation)** “For the flesh constantly has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit constantly has a strong desire to suppress the flesh. And these are entrenched in an attitude of mutual opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you desire to do.” Doesn’t that sound like a battle? It is a battle! The battle is constant and never lets up for a Christian until we leave the flesh behind and we are absent from the body and present with the Lord. If there is no battle in you, you need to carefully examine your life to see if you are in the faith. When the Lord saves a person, the old man (also called the sin nature, the adamic nature) is crucified with Christ. That is not symbolic language; it is real. The old man is dead and buried with Christ (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20). But there is still that power in us called sin. In addition, the Lord doesn’t wipe out the programming of that old man and his desires and tendencies. Here is what the Lord does: First, He gives us a new nature that desires to please God and loves the things of God. That is what **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)** is referring to when it says “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” **2 Peter 1:4b (NKJV)** “that ... you may be partakers of the divine nature...” Second, and most importantly, He gives us His Spirit – the Spirit of God to dwell in us to enable us to walk in victory over the flesh and the power or law of sin. Third, He unites us to Christ in such a way that the Bible describes us as being “in Christ”. In Christ, we have a new identity and all the resources of Christ Himself. Remember that we said that our old programming from our past was caused by how we sought to meet our needs our way instead of God’s way? When we came to Christ and were baptized into His body, look what He has done for us. We had a need for love, acceptance, significance, and security. In Christ we are loved with an amazing love. **John 17:23b (ESV)** “...you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” **Ephesians 2:4 (NKJV)** “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us”. Mankind is looking for love in all the wrong places. **Jeremiah 31:3b (NKJV)** God says, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love...” God has created us with a need for acceptance. We seek acceptance by the wrong people in all the wrong ways. **Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)** “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” We have a need for significance, a sense that our life counts and has value. We see our significance to God in the price He paid to reconcile us to Himself. **Romans 5:8-9 (NKJV)** “⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” He not only saved us; He adopted us into His eternal family. **Ephesians 1:5 (NKJV)** “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will”. We have a need for security. We try to find security in material things, in relationships, in our self sufficiency, but there is no security in anything or anyone except in God Himself. **Hebrews 13:5b (NKJV)** “For He Himself has said, *‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*”

In our past, we have all sought to meet our needs in our own way. To get our needs met many have compromised morals, sacrificed their health, and made themselves miserable. **Colossians 2:10a (NKJV)** “and you are complete in Him...” **Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)** “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” His love is the only love that meets our deepest needs. His acceptance is the only acceptance that lasts. His bringing us into His forever family meets our deepest need for significance. He who is all powerful is in reality the only source of security. **John 10:28 (NKJV)**

Jesus said, “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

III. The Alternative to the Flesh (V16, 22-23)

We do not overcome the flesh – especially that aspect of the flesh that is the old programming – by focusing on the flesh. We overcome the flesh by reckoning on the truth of our identity in Christ and by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us and to walk in dependence on the Holy Spirit. There are two “pulls” in every Christian. There is the pull of the flesh and the pull of the Holy Spirit. The pull of the flesh is the pull to yield to that power called sin that dwells in our members; it is that pull to do things in our own strength following the old patterns that have been programmed in us by the old man in Adam. The Holy Spirit is called in Isaiah 11:2 the “Spirit of counsel and might”. He is always guiding, drawing us to that which pleases God. **Romans 8:14 (NKJV)** “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” The pull that we choose to follow sets the direction of our life. The overcoming Christian life is to walk with the Holy Spirit and continually yield to Him, to look to Him for guidance and power and to listen to Him for direction. To walk in the Spirit is not a passive, “let go and let God”; we choose moment by moment to listen to Him and to trust Him for the power to do what we cannot do.

How do we know that we are walking in the Spirit? He tells us in **Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)** “²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

CONCLUSION

We will never overcome the past until we stop walking after the flesh which is our old programming, and reckon on who we are in union with Christ. In Christ, every need is met and we discover that Jesus is enough. **Colossians 2:10a (NKJV)** “and you are complete in Him...”