

## Articles and Sermons :: Holy Spirit - Part 5 - Flesh

**Holy Spirit - Part 5 - Flesh - posted by vivmeeraj (), on: 2012/6/18 3:55**

Flesh (Self will, carnal nature)

Further to the discussions on self will in the introduction, let us look deeper.

1 Pet 4:2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Self willed persons despise the authority of Holy Spirit God). They are self willed so never want to change or sacrifice anything. Spiritual life is a life of transformation of the carnal man to a holy man. Religious ones think they are spiritual but actually seek God for a fear of missing heaven (and) or in many cases, losing their wealth due to God's wrath.

2 Pet 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in {its} corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,

Holy Spirit has used the term flesh so many times so as to reveal the real meaning – Self Will. Nevertheless believers commonly understand flesh in connection with lust and at the most include worldliness. Lusts and worldliness are all just constituents of self will. Lack of understanding of God's will, makes believers self justifiers. They feel they are doing well in comparison to others. The standard one has to compare oneself with is the word of God and not others. We cannot lower the standard of the word of God even when we are unable to reach it.

Admit our shortcomings and dare to call them 'sin'

God would be pleased in a man who admits I am not able to reach there, rather than in one who misinterprets and lowers the standard to make self look acceptable. Look at the many preachers who sound as if they have never sinned after coming to faith life.

You may disagree saying John has written

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

So let me also remind you saying the same John has opened this letter saying

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Are these contradictory? No, the meaning is that no one who is born of God will continue in sin. The moment one falls even in a small sin, the spirit would convict and there will be immediate repentance.

What is sin?

The spiritual growth stages

• Old man and self will

• Initial realization of self, sin and God through the Holy Spirit

• Repentance of sin, submitting to God

• Higher level of awareness of righteousness (of God) and His will

• Continuous submission for Godliness.

• Self will overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit (mostly in a step by step manner)

• Living within God's will by everyday walking with Jesus.

There is an impact of sin which is by birth. Our God is a righteous God who offered Himself as a sacrifice and redeemed us from our sins. So when one comes to faith, accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior, the sins by birth are gone and we are cleansed.

Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Rom 5:18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Rom 5:19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Regarding the sins we commit ourselves, the same sacrifice on the cross cleanses us but we need to repent and reconcile. Our God again showers us with His grace and His Spirit so that we are able to deny our will (flesh, sin) and choose His will (holiness, righteousness and justice).

What one considers sin is another area that demands light from above. Jesus has always looked into the spirit behind the external situation. So let us also do that.

Ex. There are people who wouldn't watch television or movies, or listen to songs other than spiritual. How does God rate them if they do not have the love which He has poured through the Holy Spirit? I am not saying yes or no to entertainment of any type. Let the Holy Spirit alone convince one in such matters. What I believe is that people are of different circumstances, cultures and lifestyles. Our God almighty is not a silly God who doesn't understand the differences. He would look deeper than lifestyles and see our inner life. He would judge us by them rather than lifestyles. But it is important for us to have a clean testimony in public life as well as private life. The spirit would guide us in everything material. So let us choose diligently.

Spirit and flesh — the constant war

Rom 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Can a spiritual man ever be fleshly in nature? The above verse reminds us and in fact warns us that a carnal man is not spiritual and does not belong to God. A person is spiritually identified by the Spirit which leads him and not by the faith statements, practices or rituals or. If it is the Holy Spirit leading one, he is spiritual. On the other hand if it is the worldly or selfish spirit, one is worldly and carnal. Whatever be the position they hold. The word of God says they do not belong to God.

John 3:6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Self will (carnal spirit) is the default nature of human beings. We inherit it from our parents. We can notice this spirit even in small children. No one has to teach them selfishness, anger etc. This selfish, self centered and sinful nature grows with age to make him a completely fleshly person (that which is born of the flesh is flesh).

1 Pet 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

Being born again

Rom 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Born again experience means the death of this old man (spiritual death of old man), being buried with Jesus and rising again with a new Spirit, the Spirit of God. This is something Christendom generally does not focus and teach as, many of the people accepting water baptism do that only for the sake of ensuring a place in heaven and not to be united with Jesus. So the fundamental purpose is lost.

This is precisely the reason why we see carnal nature in self proclaimed believers, their leaders etc. They are of the flesh and they seek things of the flesh. I am not judging others here. I know this too well as I was also not completely dead when I took the baptism. I don't know if that is the case of everyone but I will tell you one thing. I have got victory ONLY in areas where I surrendered completely. This happened over the years in many areas. I am only happy it is happening even now. Every day I find some area where I have to die so that I can walk in the newness of life in that area. It is such a refreshing and reassuring experience.

1 Pet 3:21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God

for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The death of self in a particular area and a new life of purity in the Holy Spirit happen ONLY when one submits completely. Many are yet to have a born again experience. It is a higher spiritual level of a person who is saved. Ensure you are born again by the Holy Spirit and fire.

I have seen really born again believers. I have also seen many saved but not really born again. Can we judge, No, can we discern, yes, by the above verse. It is difficult to accept, but this verse means that when we are worldly, even if it is only in certain areas, we have not died (crucified with Christ) in that area. Unless we die, we cannot rise and live with Him.

This applies to our personal, family, official, public lives and more so in our ministry. When we are in Christ, our desires go down on the priority list and God's will come up to the top. If this doesn't happen, even our spiritual work would be an utter failure. The following verse makes it clear.

The spiritual struggles for a born again person

Rom 7:14 -25 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. But if I do the very thing I do not want {to do,} I agree with the Law, {confessing} that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

For example, if I am spiritual in 6 areas out of 10, that means, I am yet struggling in 4 areas. It is not a weakness of the Holy Spirit that you are still struggling in those areas. It is only for the reason that the Spirit doesn't want you to wait till you die in every area to give Himself to you! The spirit is given in varying measures, through whom higher level of understanding and desire comes. This desire leads to denying or at least praying for victory in unachieved areas. This desire along with prayers in total submission leads to victory.

Can a person who thus fails in a few areas but is victorious in certain other areas be called 'spiritual'? Yes, if the person is guided by the Spirit and if he listens to the Spirit. A student of class 1 and of post graduate degree course, are both called students. Similarly, a person who has just started listening to the Spirit might have a lot of shortcomings in him. But as he has allowed the Holy Spirit to lead him, he is spiritual. But life would be manifested by the measure of Holy Spirit filling in one. This is why we need to be filled over and over for a higher life.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. Rom 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God {did:} sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and {as an offering} for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, Rom 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Spiritual life means a life lead by the Holy Spirit. A life lead by Holy Spirit is Godly. Godliness means living according to God's will in His ways. So spirituality means nothing but doing God's will. This is something we all need to understand clearly. People try to do so many things, some even look like spiritual work, charity etc but if it is not within God's will, it is a DEAD WORK. Let us seek the will of God.

Let us not judge others for their shortcomings but look at the spirit and acknowledge if they are spiritually oriented. If they are not, let us just pray for them and if God guides you, speak the truth in love. Perfection is a long way to go and is completed in Him and by Him.

More struggles in flesh—repent & get cleansed

1 Cor 3:3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Look at the connection of fleshly with human nature of jealousy and strife. Flesh in a spiritual sense means human nature including desires, convictions, behavior, thoughts, attitude etc, in short, our WILL. It is the will that the spirit wants to defeat so that we would shed our human nature and become spiritual (Godly).

Some 'believers' have all that human nature at the same levels or sometimes even at higher levels than other men. Many of them claim to be filled by the Holy Spirit just for the reason they pray loudly and in tongues. Do you still think that is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit if there is no godliness in them? The word of God clearly says no. Let Satan not deceive us. Let us receive the true spirit and fulfill God's purpose which is for us to win over the flesh, world and Satan and live a spiritual life.

Gal 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Unless one starts with a true repentance, and a desire to pay the price for higher life, one would by-pass true Holy Spirit in self. Spiritual life starts with an anointing of the Holy Spirit. We would then be trained to listen, give more and more control to the Spirit and do His will by denying ours. Have we reached there? If not, do we desire that?

Spiritual life is triggered by an earnest desire from repentance. Repentance – Desire – Prayers – anointing- victory – thanksgiving. The cycle goes on in each area, till we reach eternity. If we stop somewhere with a few victories, there is a high risk of pride and resulting fall. Unless we desire a higher life, we will not move on to the next stage.

A compromised 'spiritual' life

Many of such men just pretend (copy) certain manifestations of the Spirit. This is a totally fruitless exercise. Many fall for this as their soul (emotions, thoughts etc) controls them. The uncontrollable soulish emotions are often interpreted as a mighty movement or filling of the Holy Spirit. Let us meditate the word, pray more and seek Him in truth.

Gal 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Self will crucified in order to live with Him. How many of us have done this? How many believers would agree to this? How many would desire such a higher life? I do not claim attaining that but that is my desire and goal. I would strive till the last day of my life.

Gal 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

This is not just about so called acts of flesh. Even ministry, spiritual work, charity, good deeds etc, if they originate from flesh, are dead works and the results will be only worldly. Don't we see this happening in many churches even when they claim to have 'successful' ministries due to their numbers? Do we see the spirit of Jesus manifesting there or do we see another spirit?

We see that around us so often. Self appointed ministers with their own agenda, claiming a lot, happy with the physical growth of congregation and not worried about true spirituality. It is just the case of blind leading blind. Beware of deception at every stage of your life.

The dependency of the born again

Phil 3:3 for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

A spiritual man would NEVER depend on personal skills, talent, knowledge or charisma, but God. Their ministry might not be all that colorful and easy going. But that would transform people and help them to relate with God. They will NEVER keep people under their spell or control but show them how to give control to the Holy Spirit. I would encourage you to check this quality in leaders before you accept their authority.

Deeds of flesh

We need to look into the deeds of flesh so as to be careful ourselves when we go through the word. Note that the last verse says and things like these. So this is only an indicative list and anything similar are to be considered part of it.

Gal 5:19 – 21 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are:

1. (to 3) immorality, impurity, sensuality

Not only in a physical sense but also in thought life, in desires etc. The grace of God alone can give victory in this. How much do you hate sin? Forget victory, unless we hate sin. Do not be discouraged if you are under some sin but cry out to the Lord and say 'help me'. If you believe, you will see the glory of God. I have seen it many a time!

Matt 5:27-28 'You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

It is possible to fail over and over even after coming to faith, even after years of sincere struggles and attempts in this area. But in a moment one can get victory by admitting that failure and asking for His grace. He grants it as it is His will for us to lead a holy life.

4. idolatry,

Col 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

A believer might think he doesn't worship idols and hence out of this. Look deeper. A greed for material things is idolatry in the sight of God.

5. sorcery,

1 Pet 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

Sorcery and a believer? Haven't you heard of believers praying against others who trouble them? The word says, we ought to pray for those who persecute you. If we do not believe in this, we do not believe in the sovereignty of God. He knows how to handle that. We ought to leave it to Him and pray with a loving heart. We can bind the powers of darkness and Satan by such a honest Godly prayer. It is tough but the reward is great, eternal peace.

6,7 enmities, strife,

1 Cor 3:3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

2 Cor 12:20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps {there will be} strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

Unfortunately these are very common among people claiming to be believers. We all probably have them in varying degrees. We need to really set our spiritual goals high. Our God can deliver us if we admit our shortcomings and seek victory.

8. jealousy,

James 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Jealousy is such an effective tool of Satan that even Christian speakers become jealous of others who get applauded or become more popular. We can see traits of jealousies in self when someone compares us with another, when a peer gets a promotion, when another family gets a material reward etc. We cannot please God unless we love others. If we love someone truly, there is no way we can feel jealous about him. The success of one's children is a clear example. When a child grows up and becomes more successful than the parent, there is only happiness and no jealousy. So jealousy is the result of lack of love.

9. outbursts of anger,

Eph 4:26 BE ANGRY, AND {yet} DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

Means one has to reconcile immediately if fallen in anger. Do not evaluate whose mistake it was or whether it was justifiable by any standards, just apologize and get reconciled. We cannot achieve anything spiritually with our anger. If spirituality is our main goal, we need to fall in line.

Outburst of anger is in fact a lower level, uncontrollable anger and reactions. We need to really consider that as a grave sin and not just as a human weakness. Repent and God will shower His grace.

James 1:20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

James 1:19 {This} you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger;

Even among the true leaders with integrity, very often one can find an angry man. I have always been looking at spiritual leaders with great admiration who are calm and humble. It is one of the highest levels in spirituality to get victory in anger and judging others. Let us desire that now on and get press on for higher life.

It is sincerely my desire to be spiritually mature and grow in maturity as I go. For me, Jesus is the only role model though there are many saints who would challenge with their exemplary lives. But Jesus was perfect with His everlasting love. His love was manifested not only at the cross but also in every moment of His life. Jesus interacting with sinners and tax collectors, washing disciple's feet, keeping calm when the soldiers spat on Him etc are just a few examples. We often react like carnal men while claiming the presence of Holy Spirit. I am one struggling with anger and its outbursts. I do not want to pretend any holiness which I do not have. I just pray with all my heart to make me at least resemble the nature of Jesus in my life—in public and in private.

10, 11 disputes, dissensions

1 Tim 6:4 he is conceited {and} understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,

Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

We often find as many interpretations of a teaching as the number of men there. The reason is simple, one who doesn't want to accept a teaching even if it is true and in tune with the New Covenant teaching, will find some reason to debate. The word says, stay away from such arguments as the spirit is wrong. It will yield no spiritual results. There can be a different opinion expressed in a godly manner and even if it leads to disputes the agenda of all will be to find the truth and hence the spirit is right. So the best policy is to speak the truth in love and leave all the arguments to the people who want to argue.

12. factions,

1 Cor 1:10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Cor 11:18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.

Very often the factions and denominations and even groups within the same congregation fail to see the common factor which is our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We cannot have divisions and still conduct a church, the body of Christ..

Jude 1:19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

The word of God says the reason for such divisions is the worldly mind (carnal, self-willed) of people who do not give heed to the Holy Spirit. If there is a genuine spiritual reason, we can have differences in our opinions, we may not be able to mix with the ungodly and worldly churches or individuals. We may have to take it up as God guides us in the matter. W

Whatever be the case, we need to love everyone with all our heart and with a real concern and also cooperate with them to the best extent possible. Do not take sides

13. envying,

The state where another person's success (material, spiritual) cause discomfort or doesn't bring happiness is because of envy. It is an outcome of self centeredness, meaning lack of love and concern for others. We do not feel envious about the success of our children or dear ones. Let us repent if we have this work of flesh in us. God alone can remove this sticky human nature.

Titus 3:3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

1 Pet 2:1-3 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

If we have really tasted the kindness of the Lord, we need to really long for the cleansing by the pure word and grow in salvation. Milk or hard food, it is meant for growth. So pure word of God will help us to grow in Christ.

14, 15. drunkenness, carousing

1 Pet 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient {for} {you} to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

A spiritual man should not seek such pleasures or entertainment in the first place. Undoubtedly, it is a challenge to live victoriously in areas of sensualities, temptations etc even when we are in full senses. How can we make ourselves vulnerable to the attack of Satan by getting drunk? A sincere believer would abstain from worldly parties and gatherings unless he goes there to testify Jesus.

and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The list doesn't end there, it applies to any ungodly act similar or amounting to the above. I hope this trip through the deeds of flesh has revealed certain fleshly traits in us too. If it has, repent, seek Him more and more and cry out.