

THIRD STAGE – CHRIST LIVING IN ME

DEALING WITH THE FLESH

Three Definitions of The Flesh

The first definition of the flesh in the Bible is **our corrupted body**. When God first created man, he had only the physical body, not the flesh... However, when Satan induced man to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then Satan and his sinful life, which was signified by the fruit, entered into the human body, causing the human body to be transmuted and corrupted and thus become the flesh. Therefore, today, the human flesh, which has sin, lust, and many other impure substances of Satan within it, is much more complicated than the original human body. The second definition of the flesh in the Bible is **our whole fallen being**. Romans 3:20 says, *"By the works of the law shall **no flesh** be justified in his sight."* Galatians 2:16 states, *"A **man** is not justified by the works of the law."* In these two passages we see that "flesh" and "man" are identical. In the Lord's eyes, man not only has the flesh, but is flesh as well. Usually when we mention the flesh, we think that the flesh is corrupt and wicked, just as mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. But the Bible shows us that the flesh has not only an evil aspect, but also **a good aspect**. The good flesh desires to do good and to worship and serve God. Paul in Philippians 3:3-6 indicated that there were some who worshipped God in the flesh and boasted in their flesh. The flesh there undoubtedly refers to flesh in its good aspect, for by it man worships God and through it man boasts.

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In dealing with the flesh we are dealing with these three aspects. First, we need to **deal with** passion, lust, pride, selfishness, dishonesty, covetousness, contentiousness, jealousy, and all other **corrupt elements** which are in the flesh. Secondly, we need to **deal with the fleshly man**. Our very being has fallen into the flesh and is bound and controlled by the flesh; hence, our whole being has become flesh. Therefore, our whole being must be thoroughly dealt with by the cross. Thirdly, we need to **deal with the good aspect of the flesh**. All our natural goodness, our strong points by virtue of our birth, man esteems to be good, but they are abominable to God; thus they also need to be dealt with. Therefore, whatever belongs to our being, because it is flesh, needs to be dealt with. But how do we deal with the flesh? We will discuss this in two aspects: the objective fact and the subjective experience.

The **objective fact** in dealing with the flesh is completely related to Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, *"I am crucified with Christ."* Again, Romans 6:6 says, *"Our old man has been crucified with him."* These two passages clearly show us that when Christ was nailed to the cross, we were crucified with Him. Our fleshly being has been dealt with on the cross of Christ. This is

a fact which has been accomplished long ago in the universe. The fact that we have been crucified with Christ is the basis of our dealing with the flesh. If we had never been crucified with Christ, none of us could deal with the flesh. Therefore, our dealing with the flesh is to bring forth in **experience the fact that we have died with Christ**.

The **subjective experience** in dealing with the flesh is completely related to the Holy Spirit. Being dead with Christ is merely a fact which Christ has accomplished for us before God; to us it is still objective. There is the need for the Holy Spirit to work in us and execute the fact which Christ has accomplished on the cross; then the dying with Christ will become our subjective experience. A very major and basic work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is to work into us the fact that Christ has crucified the flesh on the cross. In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit is to have the cross on Calvary wrought into us to become **the cross within us**. Therefore, the subjective experience in dealing with the flesh is being executed by the Holy Spirit in us.

THE PROCESS OF EXPERIENCING DEALING WITH THE FLESH

The procedure of our experience in dealing with the flesh begins with a deeper **longing** and **seeking** for spiritual things... But in practice, our desire often is frustrated and we fail. What we desire, we cannot do, but what we do not desire, we do. The result of **our repeated failures** is that we are brought to the place of total misery and despair. Although we often seek the Lord's deliverance, we cannot find the way of deliverance. At this time, the Holy Spirit gradually reveals that the reason for failure is that we live in the flesh...[T]he Holy Spirit shows us how filthy, corrupt, evil, and wicked our flesh is. Not to mention **the evil** aspect of our flesh, even what we ordinarily consider **as good** is also full of the element of man and the self. Our flesh, the good as well as the evil, is condemned by God and unacceptable to Him. When we have seen this, we will naturally, in the light of the Holy Spirit, hate our flesh. At this time the Holy Spirit will impress us with the fact of our being crucified with Christ. This impression, as vivid as picture taking, causes us to see that our flesh, our old I, or our old man, has already been **nullified on the cross** of our Lord Jesus. The entrance of this light immediately produces a killing effect which causes our old man or our old I to become gradually paralyzed and withered, eventually losing its position and power. Then all the fleshly elements in our practical living will automatically be exterminated. The more we allow the light of the Holy Spirit to shine within us, the more the old I or old man loses its position, and all the fleshly elements in our living gradually diminish and disappear. At this time we will have a little subjective experience in the matter of dealing with the flesh through the death of the cross.

However, our dealing with the flesh must not stop here. In our fellowship with the Lord and through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us and causes us to partake of the death of the Lord, we must apply the putting to death of our flesh and its expressions time after time and step after step. This is our application of the death of the cross through the Holy Spirit. This is also what **Galatians 5:24-25** speaks about: the subjective experience of crucifying the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof through the Holy Spirit. Because we give Him the opportunity, the ground, and our cooperation, the Holy Spirit within us will enable us to put our flesh to death so that we may live the life God wants us to live and do what God wants us to do. At this time, not only will we live by the Spirit, but also walk by the Spirit; then we will no longer be fleshly, but spiritual.

Not only should we deal with the 'doing' of the flesh, but also with the 'not doing' of the flesh. Some brothers and sisters have some knowledge concerning the flesh, and the Holy Spirit shows them how much of their service, such as visiting and sharing, is done according to their own natural self, not through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they decide that from now on they will never serve, visit or share. But if this inactivity is not derived from fellowship with the Holy Spirit, but rather from their own decision, **it is a worse kind of flesh**. Some brothers and sisters have been enlightened to see that their former prayers were of the flesh; therefore, they do not pray any more. Yet they do not know that their not praying expresses the flesh even more. Therefore, our 'not doing' is never a way of release from the flesh! On the contrary, many who have been released from the flesh are those who are most capable in doing. The Bible reveals that God is a working God, a God who has been continually working until now. For several thousand years He has been speaking and working and has never ceased His work among humanity. Likewise, all those who live in the Holy Spirit can never stop working, for the Holy Spirit is their motivating power, causing them to work even more. Therefore, we should not think for a moment that inactivity is not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. **All those who are inactive are even more of the flesh**. The flesh is nothing more than making your own decision and having your own opinion; it is simply being what you are and doing what you want. Therefore, dealing with the flesh means that I recognize I have been crucified on the cross; today it is not I who decide whether I should minister or pray, but the Lord who decides for me. What He does, I do; what He does not do, neither do I. When we have really dealt with the flesh, we will not decide anything according to ourselves, either to do or not to do. We should always live in fellowship and abide in the Lord; always have a heart that puts no trust in ourselves, but ever have a spirit which relies upon the Holy Spirit. A relying spirit and a trusting attitude are marks of our flesh being dealt with.

The life of the Lord on this earth shows that He is One who put His trust entirely in God. Our Lord has no sin nor fault, yet He said, *"I can of myself do nothing"* (John 5:30). When He was on this earth, He neither acted nor spoke from Himself. He was in the Father, and the Father in Him. He did all things and spoke all things through fellowship with the Father. This is the example for our dealing with the flesh. We must abide in the Lord and act as the Lord works within us; we must also speak as the Lord speaks within us. It is only in this way that we will not be in the flesh.

Romans 8 speaks of dealing with the flesh as well as walking according to the Spirit or minding the Spirit. These two always go together. Whenever we do not walk according to the Spirit and mind the Spirit nor live in the Spirit, we are in the flesh. When we deal with the flesh, we do not stress dealing with jealousy, selfishness, or pride of the flesh, but with our works and activities, behavior and manner of living that are outside of the Holy Spirit. Inasmuch as what we do is outside of the Holy Spirit and has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, whatever **we do** is the flesh, and whatever we do **not do** is also the flesh. Therefore, there is no other way, no other method, of release from the flesh but the Holy Spirit. It is only by walking after the Spirit, minding the Spirit, and living in the Spirit, that we are released from the flesh. Therefore, the outcome of our dealing with the flesh is that we live in the law of the Spirit of life, depending on the Holy Spirit in all matters, never upon ourselves. It is not until this point is reached that we experience dealing with the flesh in its fullest measure. May the Lord be gracious to us.