

## The Deeds of the Flesh

### Introduction:

Every individual who is “born again” will eventually discover the “flesh” is very much alive and the greatest adversary in their spiritual life. It is not the devil but, more times our flesh.

The Deeds of the Flesh is the product of a “Self-Serving” lifestyle!

The Bible teaches the Believer to “walk after the Spirit” as the only way to counter the flesh but more so as a pathway into the “abundant life.”

Walking after the Spirit is a lifestyle that supports the “service of others” above ourselves.

Old Testament	Occurrences	New Testament	Occurrences
• Law of Moses	72	• Gospels	22
• History	14	• Acts	4
• Psalms	16	• Paul’s Epistles	75
• Wisdom	40	• All other Epistles	21
• Prophets	50	• Revelation	3
Totals:	192		125

### Occurrences of the word FLESH in the Bible

Paul addresses the workings of the flesh more than any other writer in the Bible. This is likely due to his revelation and understanding of the “Mystery of the Indwelling Christ.”

#### **Colossians 1:26-27**

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: **which is Christ in you**, the hope of glory.

Galatians 5 deals with the subject of the conflicts we encounter with our spiritual life.

**Ga 5:13-26** 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.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

5 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 Now **the works of the flesh are evident**, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

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20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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.

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

### What is the flesh?

The word “flesh” is found, depending on the translation, between 52 and 377 times in the Bible. The New Living Translation (NLT) has the lowest instance, and the American Standard Version (ASV) is the highest because it is the more literal translation.

### Definition:

- The Old Testament Hebrew word is **bâsâr** (בָּשָׂר), meaning “body, person, or nakedness.”
- The New Testament Greek word is **sarx** (σάρξ), meaning literally “meat.” By extension, “external human nature apart from a spiritual nature.” In general, both words translate to mean a “literal physical human body of either mankind or animals.
- Both words also can convey the characteristic of “weakness or frailty” due to its propensity towards corruption and to err against God. The term “without strength” is a description of a “weak, frail human” who is without spiritual strength.

### Other distinctions:

- Not all flesh is sin but all sin has its roots in the lust of the flesh
- The apostle Paul uses the word "flesh" to mean: "something that is totally human, with no special grace attached." It is the “non-spiritual” part of man that is influenced by lust (longings)
- FLESH in Galatians and other scriptures means: "limited to exclusively to the natural realm of man, (i.e., a physical body and the physical strength it contains)." does not simply mean: "possessed of a physical body"; rather,
- FLESH is what we do in our own determinations, in our own power, in our own strength, in an attempt to bring forth spiritual results in lives such as fruit and the will of God for us.
- What we can do in our strength and our own will is associated with legalism. Legalism is “anything that I think I can do to make myself more righteous before God.”

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- The strength of our flesh is human achievement apart from the power and anointing of God. It is a form of self-righteousness.

### The difference between the “deeds of the Flesh” and the “Fruit of the Spirit”

Paul provides the most practical understanding of “flesh and Spirit” than any other writer in the Bible. He approaches his insight from the position of identifying the “source.” Paul shows that the flesh and the Spirit are diabolically opposed because of their sources. Therefore they are mutually exclusive to each other.

In practice, it means that a born-again person has to “choose to walk after the flesh or to follow after the Spirit.” In doing so, the deeds of the flesh are destroyed when a person pursues the Holy Spirit; the “anointing within.” The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the evidence.

**Gal 5:20-21** –the distinction being made between flesh and spirit

**“...idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy,...”**

- **Idolatry:** to hold a view of an image in one’s self that is not God. It can be self which manifests itself in stubbornness, un-yielding (Love yields), and iniquity (wrong-doing and possibly sin)
- **Sorcery:** medication ("pharmacy"), i.e. (by extension) magic (literally or figuratively):--sorcery, witchcraft.
- **Hatred:** hostility to include an attitude of hostility; by implication, a reason for opposition:--enmity, hatred.
- **Contentions:** a quarrel, i.e. (by implication) wrangling:--contention, debate, strife, always having a variance.
- **Jealousies:** heat, i.e. (figuratively) "zeal" (in a favorable sense, ardor; in an unfavorable one, jealousy, as of a husband (figuratively, of God), or an enemy, malice):--emulation, envy(-ing), fervent mind, indignation, jealousy, zeal.
- **Outbursts of wrath:** passion (as if breathing hard):--fierceness, indignation, wrath. Aggressive passion for the hurt of someone else
- **Selfish ambitions:** intrigue, i.e. (by implication) faction:--contention(-ious), strife.
- **Dissensions:** disunion, i.e. (figuratively) dissension:--division, sedition.
- **Heresies** a choice, i.e. (especially) a party or (abstractly) disunion:--heresy (which is the Greek word itself), sect.
- **Envy:** ill-will (as detraction), i.e., jealousy (spite):--envy.

**1Sa 15:23** For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. {witchcraft: Heb. divination}

**“Not all flesh is sin..... BUT all sin has its roots in the lust of the flesh!”**

To continue to sin is to entreat the fleshly or carnal side of our being. It produces death and is counter to the life and peace of Christ in us.

**Romans 8:6** “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

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- You can't be tempted in areas where you have not first thought
- Temptation is not sin! Sin occurs when evil thoughts are continually entertained.

**James 1:13-15** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires (lusts) and enticed.

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

**Lust:** desire, yearning, longing for, hunger for, envy, covetousness

**Romans 7** – “the things I want to do, I do...the things I don't want to do” [paraphrase]

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### There is a Godly desire that replaces lust as we seek after the Lord (Holy Spirit)

**Ps 37:4** “**Delight yourself** also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

**Delight:** to be soft or pliable, i.e. --delicate(-ness), (have) delight (self), take pleasure in, appreciate, gratify yourself, find your happiness in

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**Carnal – sarkitos (grk)** as” pertaining to the fleshly or natural man”

**Flesh –sarx:** literally “meat” (as opposed to “spirit”)

1. The flesh is stripped of the skin, i.e. (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food)
2. The body as opposed to the soul (or spirit)
3. The symbol of what is external
4. The means of kindred (i.e., “all flesh” being related)
5. By implication, human nature (with its frailties (physical or moral) and passions); “the NATURAL man”
6. Human being:--carnal(-ly, + -ly minded), flesh(-ly).

### References to carnal (carnality):

- Every person is at different levels of spiritual commitment and understanding, therefore, spiritual maturity varies in each individual.

**Read Ephesians 4 for greater insights into maturity in the spirit.**

**Ro 8:7** Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

**1Co 3:1** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

**1Co 3:3** for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

**1Co 3:4** For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

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**2Co 10:4** For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

**What does it mean to "Walk in the flesh and to walk in the Spirit."**

**How do we walk in the flesh?**

To walk after the flesh is to seek life in terms of what man can accomplish of himself.

- You can do all kinds of religious things in the flesh.
- The flesh can preach a sermon.
- The flesh can sing on the praise team.
- The flesh can pray. ["hypocrites love to pray" –Matt 6:5]
- The flesh can lead people to Christ.
- The flesh can heal people

**Mt 7:20** "Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Godly motives produce good fruit)

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

- The flesh has the capability of being very zealous in its sharing of the Gospel but they can also deny the power.

**2Ti 3:1-6** But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,

**All Flesh is self-centered and not God-centered**

1. The flesh can mimic the Spirit, making it a religious activity.
2. There is nothing wrong with what is being done, but what is wrong is the power being relied upon to do it.
3. The motivation of the flesh is "self-desire" over "spirit-desire." Choosing the flesh in a secular or religious context still leads to legalism and death.

**How do we walk by the Spirit?**

- We choose to walk by faith and not by sight  
[not using our natural five senses for spiritual insights, understanding & direction]  
-2 Corinthians 5:7
- The Word of God has to have value and preeminence in our lives  
-2 Timothy 3:16-17

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- We have to understand what the will of God is for us by seeking Him in every area of our heart.  
-**Ephesians 5:17**
- Experiment in hearing Him enabling us to learn that still, small voice on the inside of us, which is Christ.  
-**Hebrews 5:14**
- Learn to trust Him in conflict and in rest.  
-**Proverbs 3:5**
- Make a conscious decision to continually and consistently focus our hearts and minds as dependent on Him. In this, we learn to trust Him and thereby walk after the Spirit.  
(**Romans 12:1-3**)

### Walking after the Spirit maintains continuous fellowship with God

- To walk by the Spirit implies that we maintain ongoing communion with God. We are exercising those spiritual disciplines that keep our hearts focused upon the Lord, who turns our feet away from sin towards the love for Christ.

**Ro 1:20-23** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,  
21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.  
22 Professing to be wise, they became fools.  
23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

**1Th 5:18** in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

### How do we recognize the flesh and the spirit?

- Whether a person is born-again or not, there is “consistent internal conflict between the flesh and the spirit”  
**Ga 5:17 (NASB)** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.  
**Ga 5:17 (NKJV)** For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.  
**Ga 5:17 (AMP)** For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the (Holy) Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (Godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other — continually withstanding and in conflict with each other — so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.
- No one escapes the conflict.
- No one can avoid the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit.
- No one gets a Christian life free from outward pressure and inward turmoil.

### Peter had an “internal conflict”

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**Mr 8:32-38** He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospels will save it.

36 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

37 "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

**Savor (KJV) "mindful of the things of God"** *phroneo* - to exercise the mind, i.e., entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by implication, to be mentally disposed of (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); intensively, to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience):--set the affection on, (be) care(-ful), (be) like-, + be of one, + be of the same, + let this) mind(-ed), regard, savor, think.

### Paul describes this struggle in our flesh

**Ro 7:8-25** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

- To live by the flesh is to depend upon the self-strength and self-motivation, the resources, abilities, and understanding of the natural man and not the "born-again man".
- Living by the Spirit means that we depend upon all the Holy Spirit's attributes, resources, and abilities. It is to depend on God and the grace that operates through faith and confidence in Him.
  - In both cases, the fundamental issue is "**depending.**" The critical difference is the **source of our dependence.**
  - Learn to hear and trust what the Holy Spirit is "quickening" to you on the inside...

**Walking in the Spirit will cause us not to fulfill the lust of the flesh. They are mutually exclusive!**

**Ga 5:16** I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

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### How to identify what you are following

**Gal 5:19-21** (NKJV) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Ga 5:19 -21** (BBE) Now the works of the flesh are clear, which are these: evil desire, unclean things, wrong use of the senses,

20 Worship of images, use of strange powers, hates, fighting, desire for what another has, angry feelings, attempts to get the better of others, divisions, false teachings,

21 Envy, uncontrolled drinking and feasting, and such things: of which I give you word clearly, even as I did in the past, that they who do such things will have no part in the kingdom of God.

*Paul says, "Now **the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are,**" and then he lists them. We can know EXACTLY what they are!*

The Flesh can be explained as our humanity or our life, the power of the Holy Spirit in control or the "lead position." "Self" is in control and makes the determinations and decisions.

Galatians seem to categorize fleshly leanings that oppose the control of the Holy Spirit in our lives. These are

- Sins against ourselves –sins against our body because we are now joined to the Lord (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness)
- Sensual -operating from input from our five senses (natural or carnal mind)
- Sins against God - Idolatry (self on the throne) & sorcery (witchcraft or a spirit of control)
- Sins against people -hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries

### Conclusion:

The presence of strife or double-mindedness is an indication that we are battling our flesh. The key is to seek and understand the mind of the Holy Spirit. This causes us to "renew our mind." It causes us to conform to the "mind of Christ," which is present in every Believer.

#### **Romans 12:1**

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Renew your mind by developing the following disciplines:

- Meditate in scripture 1 Timothy 3:16
- Seek God with your heart and not with your understanding. Seek the person of Christ. Deut. 4:29; 1Chr. 22:9; 1Chr. 28:9; 2Chr.15:12; Ecc. 1::13; Ecc.11:9
- Pray in tongues and pray with the understanding



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- Delight yourself in the Lord. Psalm 37:4

**Eph 5:18** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

**Col 1:9** For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

