

## The War Within Demands Change

*Galatians 5:16-17 - But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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.*

Walk by the Spirit. The idea here is that believers are to subject their wills to the Holy Spirit. They are to live in accord with righteousness. Keeping a clear conscience. Doing what they are doing for the purpose of pleasing God.

What are the desires of the flesh? 1 John 2:15-17 puts them in three categories: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life. They are the selfish drives. They can become desires which are godly when submitted to God (hunger for a proper amount of food to honor God by being healthy; physical relations in marriage; earning money to supply family needs), but by nature the desires of the flesh are evil, distorted by motives of selfish pleasure (food eaten excessively; sex outside marriage; working long hours for money to spend on pleasures). We are all tempted by the desires of the flesh at one level or another.

It's a war! The flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other. They are enemies. They set their desires against each other. They are attorneys in court. They are football players in overtime of a playoff game. They are opposing soldiers with weapons in hand in the middle of a field in the 1700s. But this war is fought on a different battlefield; this one is won or lost in the hearts and mind.

Have you seen the war in human lives? Have you seen it in the mirror? I have. I do. I have not run out of sin to put off and righteousness to put in its place. The wars of today require God's help to walk by the Spirit. What past wars have ended in victory, by God's grace, there has been great joy. Always those moments are filled with thanks, worship, and the sense that this has been the work of the Lord. That is the case in my life and in the lives of those I serve in ministry in whom I have seen change.

Here is the essence of Godward change: "Will you choose today to obey the Spirit?" Many Christians in our midst have big problems in their lives because their answer to this question is "no". When asked good questions about motives, priorities and goals one can find out that these believers have made habits out of carrying out the desires of the flesh and doing the things they please. The good news is that believers can win the war against the flesh. They may need the help of the Word, a faithful brother or sister to come alongside and the power of the Spirit within, but God has supplied each Christian with all the tools necessary to obey Him.

"You may not do the things that you please." That's the conclusion of it all. The war inside demands change. It is hard change; it goes against the grain of who we are as people. But this change is the hallmark of the lives of Christians. You can walk by the Spirit. Do you view yourself and others as Galatians 5:16-17 teaches? Do you teach these truths from Scripture? If so, excellent work, my friend.