

The Spirit and the Flesh

Mark 14:26-42

6/27/04

Intro

As we near the end of Mark, we come to the last days of Christ on the earth. Having just finished the Passover Supper, he leaves with His disciples out to the Mount of Olives where they are staying.

Here Jesus warns them that they will all fall away. Here Peter stands out first and promises this will not happen, but every disciple will be tested. Peter will be sifted like wheat.

Then Jesus went out to pray and took with Him Peter, James, and John. And leaving to be alone in prayer he warned them, be alert and pray. Here too they failed.

Jesus then gave them insight into their failure. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

In these verses we gain insight into the struggle between the flesh and the spirit and the key to victory in Christ.

I. The Spirit is Willing

A. The spirit desires spiritual things

- We can all relate to this truth, that our spirit desires many spiritual things.
- The will is there to desire to read God's Word, to pray, to stand in victory over sin, etc.

Illus – When Peter promised He would not fall away and that he would even die with Jesus, *he meant it*. He meant it with all his heart.

But Jesus told him in advance that Satan desired to sift him like wheat.

Luke 22:31-32, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

B. The spirit and the flesh are in conflict

- There is a battle within all of us between the spirit and the flesh.

Galatians 5:17, "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."

- Notice something important in this verse; that he says that you may not do the things **that you please**.

- **Our identification is in the spirit. That is who we are now that we are in Christ.**

Illus – if you were to be completely honest while in sin, you would say that this is not what you really want to do.

II. The Flesh is Weak

A. The flesh has no self-control

- The flesh is a word which has several meanings in the Greek, but it commonly means the urges, the passions, and the desires of the body.
- Flesh is the earthly part of man.
- The flesh is not able to **subject itself** to God.

Romans 8:7-8, “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

- Self control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

B. The flesh has no maturity

- Babies operate solely by the drives of the body.
- Spiritual babes also operate the same.

1 Corinthians 3:1, 3, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ...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?”

C. The flesh’s weakness is a great trouble

- Lack of sleep and Peter, James and John could not pray.
- Fear and doubt cause Peter to deny the Lord three times – even with cussing.
- Lack of food and we become irritable...
- When things go wrong and we become easily frustrated and lose our patience.

Illus – I remember reading about a man traveling deep into the frozen north and was lead by a man of great patience. When the snowmobile broke down, he had to take it apart and repair it. When it wouldn’t work he had to do again – with perfect patience and peace.

Illus – testing will determine if our foundation is really made of rock or sand.

Matthew 7:24-27, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall.”

III. Walk According to the Spirit

A. Watch and pray

- That you may not fall into temptation Jesus said.
- Prayer, then, is a key to victory. But especially prayer that recognizes our weakness and trusts in God's strength.

Illus – the night before Martin Luther's famous trial, he spent the night confessing his weakness and asking God for strength. He cast himself before God.

The next day he stood with great strength and declared, "Unless someone can show me from the Holy Scriptures the error of my thinking, I will not and cannot recant. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me."

- But we must also be on guard – be alert.

1 Corinthians 16:13, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

1 Peter 5:8-9, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith."

B. The spirit must master the flesh

- This is the key to victory over the flesh.
- Since the flesh has no self-control, our spirit must be master over it as we are under the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:12, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything."

- Feelings have such importance today. We must be sure to validate our feelings, etc.
- **But what if our feelings are wrong?** What if our feelings are from the flesh?

Illus – we should test all things to see if they are from God.

Romans 14:23, "...whatever is not from faith is sin."

C. Rely on the Lord

- If we started in the Spirit will be perfected in the flesh?

Galatians 3:3, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

- **Though the body is dead, the spirit is alive in Christ Jesus.**
- **Let the joy of the Lord be your strength.**

Conclusion

The scripture is sure that we will reap from the spirit if we sow to the spirit; even life eternal.