

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

Thrive with us by following on Instagram and YouTube
@FlagNazChurch, @FlagNazYouth and FlagNaz.org



Conspirators

What are the current objects of battle between flesh and Spirit in your inner life?

What is the Truth that underlies your feelings toward one of those objects—the Good that feeling aims for that the flesh misunderstands?

What is something you can watch for in the life of a loved one so you can be the Good that properly fulfills desire and deny Satan any weakness?

Galatians 5:16-18 – ¹⁶Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

1 Corinthians 7:5 – Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

I) Inner Turmoil...

We are perplexed by the difficulty in living consistently. The world around us often seems opposed to our intentions. That's not strange. If our chosen way of life conforms to the ways of the world, we are in constant competition and struggle for scarcity. If we choose Christ, our values directly conflict with the world. Either way there is resistance. What's strange is the inner resistance to our own choice. Uncontrolled, our feelings cause us to say, think, and do things contrary to our values. While we drift unconsciously through life, we can justify these reactions. It is harder to reconcile them with the person we choose to be when we reflect on them. God explains this inner turmoil to us and gives us hope for victory.

◆ **Truth vs. deceit:** The cosmic battle confronting us is that of Truth against deceit. God created us to represent His heart and mind within creation and in so doing to glorify Him. Expressing Him means

February 18th, 2024

knowing Him, and the better we know Him the more perfectly we express Him. Walking with Him, He grants us intimate knowledge. Satan thwarted our ability to walk with God, tempting us with deceit that provoked impulsive desire to reject Truth. That act and others like it have wounded us, disabling our capacity to know the True cause of our emotions and thus control our reactions to them. When we commit to follow Jesus, He fills us with His Spirit, restoring our ability to know God. Yet our flesh, the body with its emotions and impulses, remains disabled. God's Word commands us to "Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16)." Hope begins with trusting Truth whenever it is at odds with our feelings.

◆**Disabled:** The disability caused by sin is the loss of spiritual awareness. The flesh believes all reality, all goodness, is perceived through the five senses. The Creator cannot be perceived this way. The flesh worships creation, desiring all that is pleasurable and despising all discomfort. It leads us into selfish, hurtful behaviors to gain pleasure and avoid pain. The Spirit imparts Truth that God is the Creator of all and has promised to provide every good thing that is the source of life and wellbeing. His desire is that we express His justice, love, and mercy grounded by the pure faith that He will meet our every need. Our inner turmoil is explained by "what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh (v17)." Hope grows with understanding.

II) The Battle Rages...

Our decision to live by the Spirit does not end the matter. We live our mortal lives with the scars from the wounds of sin. Satan has not conceded defeat. He continues to believe a revolt by all creation can overthrow God. Whether we observe this in a grand cosmic sense or not, we experience this reality in our inner life. The turmoil interferes with our ability to live well as Satan continues to tempt our flesh.

◆**Tug of war:** At the onset of our renewed walk with God, the Spirit actively opposes our flesh for our good. Jesus has purchased us from slavery to sin, but the flesh remains dominant within us. We sense this opposition as conviction. At first it may be the sense of genuine sorrow after disobedience. It grows into preventative warnings that start to redirect our behavior. Eventually, the Spirit completely aligns the will of our heart with that of the Father. Still our flesh is disabled. Satan continues to attack our weakness. We experience confusing turmoil "for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what

you want (v17)." At first the Spirit stops us from ongoing destruction, then the flesh keeps us from complete glorification.

◆**Freedom in battle:** This contentious state is better than we deserve. Prior to the generosity of Jesus, we only had the Law. We knew a shadow of God's mind, enough to prove our incapability to express even that much of Him on our own. The disabling wound of the flesh is real. If we choose Truth and do everything to win the struggle, "you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law (v18)." We are granted the full knowledge of God and how He would have us present His image. We are free despite being at war.

III) Conspirators For Victory...

We know the general description of life in God's image is a life loving Him and our neighbors. Not vacillating emotional love—resolve to bring out another's best whatever the cost to us. This does not principally manifest in teaching and admonishment. It principally manifests in sharing the burden to deny the illusions of the flesh by properly directing the emotions to their True response.

◆**Be the good:** The Bible gives a specific example that demonstrates the good use of our feelings, their potential corruption, and the loving way we can defend one another. God instructs us to remain sexually active in marriage. We understand the goodness of procreation that results, but this text says nothing of childbearing. Our bodies were made in a way that brings about joy, intimacy, vulnerability, trust, and healthy self-esteem. We are not to deny the emotional desire for these, instead being told "Do not deprive one another (1 Corinthians 7:5)." We are the fulfillment of the other's desire for His goodness. While this may also benefit us, that is not the motive. Nor are we to judge, admonish, or deny the legitimacy of the feelings.

◆**Fight for each other:** We are to be sensitive to each other's feelings and satisfy the Truth that underlies them, not the flesh's misunderstanding. We conspire together to properly channel each other's feelings "so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (v5)." Satan uses our feelings to tempt us to disobey God and satisfy material craving. The inner battle, never fully won, leaves us vulnerable to the flesh despite our growth in the Spirit. If left unaided, we will weary and fail. Standing firm in our identity as an heir to the kingdom of heaven is not a solo act. First, we rely on the Spirit of God to walk with us. Second, we depend upon those who, like us, also walk with the Spirit. And we do likewise for them. Love God, love each other.