

## Overcoming The Flesh

Matthew 26:36-41

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.”<sup>37</sup> And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.<sup>38</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”<sup>39</sup> He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”<sup>40</sup> Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?<sup>41</sup> Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

**You may have seen the children’s cartoon about the cat that resolves that he will overcome his urge to grab and eat a little bird. He tries so hard to be friendly. He even puts tape over his face to make sure he won’t mess up. But in the end, after he can’t stand it any longer, he gives in to his appetites and desires, and he stuffs the bird in his mouth. Of course, the owner is not far behind with a broom to make him spit it out.**

**As human, we understand that story very well because we our inner man (spirit man) has been saved and left to live in a body (flesh) that is not saved. And therein lies the dilemma. Paul puts it this way in Romans 7:15-20,** “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 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. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do

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

**God understands our dilemma and has made provisions.** Jesus gave us this promise in John 16:13-15, “Nevertheless, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” **Have you ever noticed that sometimes you are aware of certain things before you even know what the Bible says about it?** That is because the Holy Spirit is in you teaching you the truth. As we become more aware of the Spirit of God in our everyday affairs, we will be quicker to hear and obey these teachings and leadings. **This is God's desire for the Body of Christ.** The Holy Spirit is revealing the will of God to us in our spirits.

**Listen, God will not chase you down and demand our attention.** The Bible tells us to "seek" the Lord and we will find Him. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." **God sent Jesus to the cross.** Therefore, fellowship between God and man has been restored. **The price has been paid. He has sent the Holy Spirit.** It is up to us to take what God has done for us and in us and draw near to Him. **We must seek Him!**

**But there is a problem!** And the problem is that the flesh is weak.

**All through the Scriptures we see that spiritual failure is due to the weakness of the flesh.** Romans 8:3 tells us that the law was weak through the flesh. Therefore, because they followed after the desires of their flesh, Israel failed God. Peter failed because of the weakness of his flesh.

Matthew 26:40-41 tells us that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus told His disciples, "What, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that you do not enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." I was taught that Jesus was saying, "Pray that you do not enter into temptation." However, a deeper study of this passage of Scripture reveals that Jesus was telling them that if they would pray, when temptation came, they would not enter into it. Luke 22:46 makes this truth a little more clear, "Why are you asleep? rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Temptation will come but God has made provision for our victory, which is our deliverance through our union with Jesus Christ. Therefore, if we will get our spirit in authority over our flesh and mind, we will not give in to it. We need to spend time communicating with God to keep our priorities right. This is the key to overcoming the weakness of the flesh.

Only hours after that incident in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter was tempted. He denied the Lord. Had he prayed, he probably would not have done it. Peter's heart wanted to follow the Lord. When Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him, Peter said, "Oh, I would never deny You. I would die for You. I would go to prison for You." That was his heart speaking. Jesus said, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Peter's heart was right. The weakness of his flesh was his downfall. His flesh gave in to the temptation.

I really believe that most Christians really want to please God. We want to serve Him with our whole heart. But we have to overcome the weakness of the flesh.

We are very peculiar creatures because when we enter into the salvation of God, we become "new creations in Christ Jesus." We become spiritual beings in natural bodies. Therefore, we must learn through the revelation of God by His Spirit how to function the way He intended. The Holy Spirit will teach us how to walk in the Spirit even while we live in a natural body.

**God wants to use us to manifest His life and minister the Gospel to the world.** As long as we are in this flesh, we have the ability to minister to others who live in the flesh. Otherwise, we could just go home to be with the Lord! The Bible teaches us that "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" and that would be far better!

**We have allowed our flesh to dominate us through a lack of knowledge and; a lack of fellowship with God.** The Lord is calling us to "walk in the Spirit" and to allow God to manifest Himself by His Spirit to this world. We are to be continually and habitually conducting ourselves in the realm of the Spirit.

**Unfortunately, the Body of Christ as a whole has never done that.** We have had the potential since the day of Pentecost. Some have come closer than others, but the church has never walked as we are going to walk in our day in the Spirit.

**To do this we are going to have to put into practice what the Holy Spirit is teaching us.** The more the Holy Spirit reveals the *spiritual realm to us*, the more we will conduct ourselves in it. Galatians 5:25 says this, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the spirit."

**The flesh will do whatever it is trained to do.** If you give your attention to the sin in this world, your flesh will desire to practice sin and to follow after the spirit of the world. If you expose your flesh to the things of God, it will learn to behave and walk after the Spirit of God.

**Have you ever wondered why it is so hard to go against the world?** It is simply because the whole world around us is pushing sin. The devil pulls at your flesh to get you to go the world's way. But you do not have to conform to the world!

In Hebrews 2:16-18 we are told how God has made a way for us to live the Christian life, "For verily he (Jesus) took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it, behooved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to help them that are tempted." And then in Hebrews 4:15 we are told, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." **Jesus overcame sin in the flesh.** He dominated His body through His spirit. He communicated with God. **Jesus began His ministry on a forty day fast.** He took authority over the flesh from the very beginning. Jesus lived in submission to God by knowing God's Word and following God's will!

Now, listen closely to Romans 8:26, "Likewise, the Spirit also helps our weakness: for we don't really know what we should pray for: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be spoken."

**Child of God, if you are ever going to "walk in the Spirit" and not "fulfill the desires of the flesh," it will be because you have such a desire to be what God has called you to be that you cannot even verbalize the desire of your heart!** It is then that God the Holy Spirit comes to your aide!

Therefore, as you allow the **Spirit** of God to teach you the **Word** of God, He will bear you up under the weakness of the flesh, to stand on your own two feet for the glory of God!

If you are not saved today, then why not come right now?

**Everyone please stand for prayer.**

Father,

I praise You that You are truly sovereign over all things. Give grace to Your children who, even today, are being tempted and afflicted by the enemy. Help me to realize that I am more than a conqueror through Christ who loves me. In Jesus' name. Amen.