

Overcoming the Flesh

(The Eternal Perspective)

By Jim Sayles

Definition: The “flesh” is our natural body and mind. But we are essentially **eternal** spirit beings temporarily living in a body of flesh, and our eternal future depends on whether or not we are covenanted to God, the Father in Christ. And if we are covenanted to God the Father in Christ, our eternal experience is related to the level of our response to His Holy Spirit in this lifetime.

Our response then, to the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, who is the voice of our Lord, determines the nature, assignments, and rewards of our eternal existence. i.e. We either barely escape the flames or we are rewarded with future assignments, not only during the 1000 years of the millennial kingdom, but throughout all eternity.

Thus, overcoming the flesh in this life has an eternal reward. And we have an enemy in this life who provokes the flesh, and hinders our understanding of the truth of God in scripture as is demonstrated through our current division into a multitude of differing opinions concerning the truth of God in scripture in order to either cause us to reject our faith, or to be compromised in our response to our Lord.

Opening proclamation: By the presence of your indwelling Spirit, Father, I am the righteousness of God **in Christ**, and through **Him** I can do all things.

2 Peter 1:3,4

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Q: What is the general promise?

A: (That we have been given everything we need for life and godliness. Have “been given” is past tense.)

Q: What is the specific promise?

A: (That we may **participate** in the divine nature in this present life.)

Q: What is the condition for receiving the specific promise?

A: (That we RECEIVE, BELIEVE, and OBEY the promises and commands of God by Faith.)

Q: What is the result of receiving this promise?

A: (We will escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.)

James 1:13-15

*When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil... (flesh or Satanically inspired)... **desire, he is dragged away...** (from the truth and will of God in Christ)... **and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death...** (God did not make you do it, And the Devil did not make you do it. You chose to do it.)*

Q: What typically happens when we sin and repent? Is that the end of the sin?

A: (We typically commit the sin again and again) So, what can we do about that?

Having RECEIVED and BELIEVED, through the operation of faith, that we are not in agreement with God's will, how are we, then, to obey?

RELIGIOUS RULES can bring about some external conformity to a standard of outward behavior, but it does **not** give us power over sin in our lives.

Examine the classical scripture concerning confession and restoration.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

This "purification," though, is temporary if we turn back to our sin as a dog returns to its own vomit.

1 John 1:9 Amplified

If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action].

IF we continually pursue His righteousness without turning back to the flesh.

Romans 8:12-14

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die;...(in the spiritual sense)... but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body,...(the natural man or "flesh")...you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

"Dying" in this instance is not a referral to death in the ultimate sense, but dying to the influence of our flesh man, the natural man apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit, so that we respond appropriately to the influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Colossians 3:4-13:

When Christ, who is your ...(spiritual)...life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ...(and we who have escaped His wrath through faith should not continue to bring shame upon His name.)

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with...(through our obedient faith responses to the indwelling presence of Christ, the Holy Spirit)..., that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin...(through our obedient faith responses to His voice spoken into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.)

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin...(through our obedient faith responses to His voice spoken into our hearts by the Holy Spirit)... but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.... (“Offering” is a matter of our own will.)

Romans 8:1-14:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law...(religious rules)...was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature...(the “flesh”)..., God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit...(through our obedient faith responses.)

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires...(what we think about, what we are emotively influenced to do apart from the influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit)...; *but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled ...*(overwhelmingly influenced)...*by the sinful nature...*(the flesh nature without surrender to the Holy Spirit who is the voice of our Lord)... ***cannot please God.***

You...(Christian believers)...***however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ***

from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. IF...(you are pursuing His truth, His covenant promises, and His commands with your whole heart, soul, and mind)...

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die...(to the Spirit i.e. be devoid of Holy Spirit truth, covenant promises, and commands)...; *but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body...*(the sinful nature of the flesh)...*you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God...*(And will be empowered to walk out the will of God in Christ, which glorifies Him and draws men to Him.)

Ephesians 2:1,2

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit...(Satan, whose sole intent is to oppose God through the provoking of our “flesh,” our natural instincts apart from disobedience.)... *who is now at work in those who are disobedient*

Nothing corrupt will enter heaven. The physical body is corrupt. The “flesh” or “sin nature” is corrupt. The works of the “flesh” or “sin nature” are corrupt. Works of the flesh die with the flesh.

Yet, they will be judged as we kneel before our Lord in heaven.

Do we want to hear, “**Well done My good and faithful servant?**”, or not, knowing that even if we escape hell, we have basically failed to walk out His specific anointing, gifts, and will for us in this life?

Many believers want their new life in Christ to EMPOWER their life in the “flesh” i.e. God as Santa Claus. “Help me accomplish the works of the flesh.”

Yet, those works have no positive rewards in our eternal life in Christ. And one of the truths that has come to me and empowers my response to His will is the fact that this present life is the “boot camp” for our eternity.

We will either “wash out,” be assigned a very low rank in the eternal scheme, or be blessed with rewards that include ongoing blessings and adventures in the eternal life, which we will not spend floating around on clouds listening to harp music.

We do not know specifically what eternity holds for us, but whatever it is it is eternal. We do know that we will experience another 1000 years

back here on earth, and our status and assignments during that very interesting time will be related to how well we responded to His truth, His covenant promises, and His commands in this present life.

And THAT depends on how well we overcame the flesh in our response to Him in this present life.

Does that give you an appropriate perspective?

Matthew 6:33:

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.