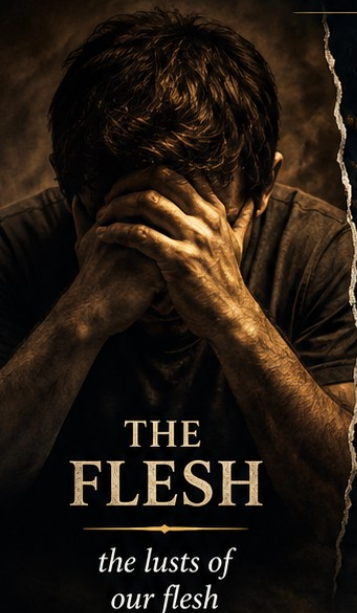


IS IT THE FLESH, THE WORLD, OR THE DEVIL?

LEARNING WHAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY FIGHTING



THE FLESH

*the lusts of
our flesh*



THE WORLD

*the course of
this world*



THE DEVIL

*the prince of
the power of
the air*



*"Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

JAMES 4:7 KJV



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NEW JERSEY UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

— ONE LORD. ONE FAITH. ONE BAPTISM. —

IS IT THE FLESH, THE WORLD, OR THE DEVIL?

Learning What You're Actually Fighting

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7 KJV

Not every spiritual battle has the same source.

Sometimes we are fighting temptation arising from our own flesh.

Sometimes we are being influenced by the values, pressures, and attractions of the world around us.

And sometimes there is genuine spiritual opposition from the devil.

If we do not understand the difference, we can easily fight the wrong battle in the wrong way.

We may try to cast out something that needs to be crucified.

We may rebuke the devil for something we simply need to stop doing.

Or we may dismiss genuine spiritual warfare as nothing more than human weakness.

The Bible teaches us to recognize all three.

The flesh.

The world.

The devil.

Ephesians 2:2–3 KJV

*“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of **this world** (the world), according to **the***

prince of the power of the air(*the devil*), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in **the lusts of our flesh**(*the flesh*), fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind...”

The flesh — “the lusts of our flesh”

The world — “the course of this world”

The devil — “the prince of the power of the air”

They often work together, but they are not the same thing.

And Scripture does not tell us to respond to each of them in exactly the same way.

1. THE FLESH — THE ENEMY WITHIN

When the Bible speaks about “the flesh” in this sense, it is not merely talking about the physical human body.

It describes the sinful desires and inclinations of our fallen human nature.

Paul wrote:

Galatians 5:16–17 KJV

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other...”

There is a battle that takes place within us.

And sometimes the enemy we are fighting is simply **us**.

James explained:

James 1:14–15 KJV

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin...”

Notice what James did not say.

He did not say every man is tempted because a demon entered him.

He said a person can be drawn away by **“his own lust.”**

Human beings are perfectly capable of sinful desires without demonic possession.

2. YOU CANNOT CAST OUT THE FLESH

This distinction is extremely important.

The Bible never tells us to cast out our flesh.

It tells us to **crucify it**.

Galatians 5:24 KJV

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Jesus said:

Luke 9:23 KJV

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

That requires a decision.

God does not remove our responsibility to choose obedience.

You cannot cast selfishness out of someone who has decided to remain selfish.

You cannot cast rebellion out of someone who refuses to submit.

You cannot cast bitterness out of someone who insists upon holding a grudge.

You cannot cast lust out of someone who continually chooses to feed it.

There may certainly be spiritual temptation involved, but eventually the individual must make a choice.

The flesh must be denied.

The flesh must be disciplined.

The flesh must be crucified.

3. THE WORLD — THE PRESSURE AROUND US

Scripture also warns us about “the world.”

This does not mean the planet or the people living upon it.

It refers to the ungodly system of values, desires, priorities, and influences surrounding us.

John wrote:

1 John 2:15–16 KJV

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,

and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

The world constantly presents things for the flesh to desire.

The world says:

Do what feels good.

Put yourself first.

Follow every desire.

Measure yourself by possessions, appearance, popularity, power, and pleasure.

Do not let anyone—including God—tell you how to live.

The world supplies countless opportunities for temptation.

But the world cannot force us to yield.

4. THE WORLD AND THE FLESH OFTEN WORK TOGETHER

This is why distinguishing them can sometimes be difficult.

The world may present the temptation, but the flesh responds to it.

For example, the world may glorify materialism.

But greed arises within the human heart.

The world may normalize sexual immorality.

But lust can arise from within.

The world may celebrate pride and self-promotion.

But pride is also a condition of the human heart.
The external influence and the internal desire can
work together.

That is why Paul wrote:

Romans 12:2 KJV

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

We cannot remove ourselves completely from the
world.

But we do not have to allow the world to shape us.

**5. THE DEVIL — A REAL SPIRITUAL AD-
VERSARY**

The Bible also makes it unmistakably clear that
Satan is real.

Peter warned:

1 Peter 5:8–9 KJV

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith...”

The devil deceives.

The devil tempts.

The devil accuses.

The devil opposes the work of God.

And Scripture also records genuine cases of people
being afflicted or possessed by evil spirits.

Jesus did not treat these situations merely as psy-

chological problems, bad habits, or failures of self-discipline.

He commanded evil spirits to leave.

6. DEMONS ARE CAST OUT

Jesus said:

Mark 16:17 KJV

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils...”

We see this demonstrated in the ministry of the apostles.

Acts 16:18 KJV

“But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”

Paul did not counsel the spirit.

He did not negotiate with it.

He did not teach it self-control.

He commanded it to leave **in the name of Jesus Christ.**

That is completely different from dealing with the flesh.

A devil is cast out.

The flesh is crucified.

7. THE NAME OF JESUS IS NOT A MAGIC FORMULA

There is another important lesson in Scripture. Simply saying the words “Jesus” or “in Jesus’ name” does not turn them into a magical formula. Acts 19 tells us about the seven sons of Sceva. They attempted to command an evil spirit by saying:

Acts 19:13 KJV

“We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.”

The evil spirit answered:

Acts 19:15 KJV

“Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?”

The encounter ended disastrously for them.

They knew the terminology but did not possess the spiritual relationship and authority they were attempting to imitate.

There is a tremendous difference between **using the name of Jesus as a formula** and **living in submission to Jesus Christ and exercising His authority.**

Notice the order of James 4:7:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Submission comes before resistance.

8. CAN A DEVIL BE COMMANDED WHILE THE FLESH REFUSES TO OBEY?

This brings us to an important distinction.

Evil spirits recognize the authority of Jesus Christ.

The Gospels repeatedly demonstrate Christ's authority over them.

But human beings possess a will.

Jesus calls people to follow Him, but people can refuse.

Jesus said:

John 5:40 KJV

“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”

That was not inability.

It was unwillingness.

This helps explain why we cannot treat human rebellion as though it were simply a demon that can be commanded away.

A minister can command an evil spirit in the authority of Jesus Christ.

But a minister cannot command another person's will into submission to God.

Every person must choose repentance.

Every person must choose obedience.

Every person must choose surrender.

9. NOT EVERYTHING IS A DEMON

This is where Christians need biblical discernment.

It can be tempting to attach a spirit to every sinful behavior:

A spirit of anger.

A spirit of jealousy.

A spirit of lust.

A spirit of drunkenness.

A spirit of bitterness.

A spirit of rebellion.

But Scripture specifically identifies many such behaviors as **works of the flesh**.

Paul wrote:

Galatians 5:19–21 KJV

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...”

Notice that Paul includes **hatred, wrath, strife, envy, drunkenness, and sexual immorality** among the works of the flesh.

That does not mean Satan can never tempt someone in these areas.

It means we should not automatically diagnose a demon simply because sinful behavior exists.

Sometimes a person doesn't need an exorcism.

They need repentance.

10. BLAMING THE DEVIL CAN REMOVE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

There is a danger in attributing everything to demonic activity.

If I say,

“The devil made me angry.”

“The devil made me look at pornography.”

“The devil made me lie.”

“The devil made me commit adultery.”

“The devil made me lose my temper.”

I can begin transferring responsibility for my choices to someone else.

But Scripture does not allow us to do that.

The devil may tempt.

The world may entice.

The flesh may desire.

But we are still responsible for our response.

Paul wrote:

Romans 6:12 KJV

*“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,
that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”*

Notice the language:

“Let not.”

There is a choice involved.

11. BUT DON'T MAKE THE OPPOSITE MISTAKE

We should not blame everything on demons.

But neither should we pretend demons do not ex-

ist.

Jesus cast out devils.

The apostles cast out devils.

The early church clearly understood spiritual warfare to be real.

Paul wrote:

Ephesians 6:12 KJV

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Biblical Christianity recognizes genuine spiritual opposition.

Discernment means avoiding both extremes.

Not everything is a demon.

But neither is everything merely psychological, emotional, or behavioral.

12. HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I AM FIGHTING?

There is no single mechanical test that answers every situation.

We need prayer, Scripture, spiritual discernment, wisdom, and sometimes patience.

But there are questions we can ask.

IS THIS SOMETHING SCRIPTURE IDENTIFIES AS A WORK OF THE FLESH?

If so, begin by dealing with it as Scripture in-

structs.

Repent.

Deny yourself.

Crucify the flesh.

Walk in the Spirit.

AM I CONTINUALLY FEEDING THIS DESIRE?

We cannot continually feed the flesh and then blame the devil when the flesh becomes stronger.

Paul wrote:

Romans 13:14 KJV

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

Sometimes the answer is simply:

Stop making provision for it.

AM I BEING SHAPED BY THE WORLD?

What am I watching?

What am I listening to?

Who is influencing me?

What values am I allowing to shape my thinking?

IS THERE EVIDENCE OF GENUINE SPIRITUAL OPPOSITION?

Scripture shows that genuine demonic activity exists.

When it does, believers should not fear it.

Jesus Christ has authority over every evil spirit.

13. THE THREE CAN WORK TOGETHER

These categories should not be treated as though they always operate independently.

Consider temptation.

Satan may present or intensify a temptation.

The world may normalize and advertise it.

The flesh may desire it.

All three can point in the same direction.

That is why spiritual victory involves more than simply rebuking the devil.

We must:

Resist the devil.

Refuse conformity to the world.

Crucify the flesh.

14. JESUS GIVES US VICTORY OVER ALL THREE

The answer is not to become obsessed with identifying demons.

The answer is to become completely surrendered to Jesus Christ.

Through Christ we can resist the devil.

Through Christ we can overcome the world.

Through the power of the Holy Ghost we can walk in the Spirit rather than fulfilling the lusts of the

flesh.

John wrote:

1 John 4:4 KJV

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

And Paul wrote:

Galatians 5:16 KJV

“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

The Christian life is not lived in fear of the devil.

It is lived in submission to Jesus Christ.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When you are trying to understand what you are fighting, remember:

You cannot cast out the flesh.....The flesh must be crucified.

You cannot cast the world out of some-one.....The world must be resisted and refused.

You do not crucify a demon.....A demon must submit to the authority of Jesus Christ.

And none of these removes human responsibility.

The devil can tempt you.

The world can entice you.

Your flesh can desire something.

But you still have a choice.

That is why Scripture says:

James 4:7 KJV

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

The safest place in spiritual warfare is not an obsession with demons.

It is a life completely submitted to Jesus Christ.

A SIMPLE WAY TO REMEMBER

THE FLESH — Crucify it.

THE WORLD — Don't conform to it.

THE DEVIL — Resist him.

DEMONIC SPIRITS — Cast them out in Jesus' name.

And above all:

SUBMIT TO GOD.

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Wednesday Bible Study

8:00 PM

Servicio en ESPAÑOL

Viernes 8:00 PM

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