

Lesson 10 — The Battle Between Flesh and Spirit

The Wheel of Faith

Big Idea

The ongoing struggle between flesh and Spirit is not a sign that faith has failed or that justification has been lost. It is the normal experience of a believer living in union with Christ. Victory in this battle comes not through self-effort or passivity, but through remaining in Christ.

Why This Study Matters

Many believers become discouraged when they discover that conflict does not disappear after conversion. Some assume sanctification should remove struggle entirely. Others interpret failure as proof that God has withdrawn His grace. Scripture teaches something different. The presence of struggle does not mean sanctification has failed. It means sanctification has begun. This lesson helps us understand the battle between flesh and Spirit as part of the Christian life—and shows us how to remain anchored in Christ when the struggle is real.

1. Why the Battle Exists

Read: Galatians 5:17

The Bible teaches that after regeneration, two opposing realities are present:

- the fallen nature (the flesh)
- the indwelling Spirit of Christ

These two are contrary to one another.

Group Questions:

- What are the two opposing sides present in every believer?
- How does knowing this protect us from discouragement?

Theological guardrail: conflict is a *feature* of sanctification, yet we must reject fatalism (“so sin is inevitable”). The point is: the battle exists, and victory is found in Christ.

2. Conflict Does Not Mean Lost Justification

Read: Romans 7:23; Matthew 26:41

The presence of struggle does not mean God has rejected us. Jesus Himself acknowledged that even willing hearts remain connected to weak flesh.

Group Questions:

- Why do we often interpret struggle as spiritual failure?
- How do Jesus' words help us view weakness differently?

Theological guardrail: Romans 7:23 shows the reality of war “in my members.” Matthew 26:41 keeps the tone compassionate: willing spirit + weak flesh.

3. What the Flesh Really Is

Read: Romans 8:5

When Scripture speaks of the “flesh,” it is not referring only to the body. It describes the fallen patterns of self-reliance that remain even after conversion.

Group Questions:

- In what ways does self-effort replace dependence on Christ?
 - Why is self-reliance especially dangerous in spiritual growth?
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4. Grace Is for Sanctification Too

Read: John 15:4; Galatians 2:20

Group Questions:

- How do we sometimes try to live the Christian life apart from Christ?
- What does it practically mean to “abide” in Him?

Theological guardrail: Grace is not only for forgiveness—it is for daily life. Sanctification is sustained the same way salvation began: by faith in Christ.

5. The Real Battle — Staying in Union

Read: Colossians 3:1–3; Galatians 5:17

Group Questions:

- Why does Scripture focus on where the mind is set?
- How does focusing on Christ affect temptation?

Theological guardrail: The greatest struggle in the Christian life is not managing individual sins, but remaining connected to Christ. Sin gains power in distance; it weakens in communion.

6. The Role of the Will — Consent, Not Force

Read: Romans 8:5

Companion Reading: Steps to Christ, p. 47

Group Questions:

- How is consent different from trying harder?
- Why is freedom essential to genuine obedience?

Theological guardrail: God does not override the will. Sanctification happens as we consent to remain in Christ. Obedience flows from trust, not pressure. Consent = yielding the will to remain and follow. It is not “white-knuckling.” It is simply: agree with God, yield, turn to Christ, stay in the light.

7. The Death-Like Nature of the Struggle

Read: Colossians 3:1-5

Group Questions:

- What does this text mean by putting to death your members?
- How does setting your mind on things above facilitate the death of your members?

Theological guardrail: Scripture describes sanctification as a kind of dying. This is never comfortable. Resistance is expected—but victory is found in Christ’s strength, not our own.

8. What Happens When a Believer Falls

Read: 1 John 1:7; Proverbs 24:16

Group Questions:

- Why do we often pull away from Christ after failure?
- How does returning to justification {conviction, repentance, forgiveness, restoration} restore peace and growth?

Theological guardrail: Sanctification does not mean believers never fall. When failure occurs, Scripture does not send us away from Christ—it sends us back to Him.

9. Christ's Ongoing Intercession

Read: Hebrews 7:25

Group Questions:

- How does knowing Christ intercedes change how we face weakness?
- How can this idea also be abused to our destruction?

Theological guardrail: Jesus continues to intercede for believers in the midst of struggle. Our assurance rests in His faithfulness—Our job is to keep coming to Christ, yet because we have this assurance we must never become complacent or presumptuous!

Closing Emphasis

The battle between flesh and Spirit is not evidence that God has withdrawn. It is evidence that Christ is present. Sanctification does not remove struggle—it teaches us where to remain while the struggle continues. When believers learn to return again and again to justification, the battle becomes a place of growth rather than despair.

Experiential Reality — The Battle Between Flesh and Spirit

A 7-Day Journey of Remaining in Christ During the Conflict

The conflict between flesh and Spirit is not resolved by eliminating struggle, but by **learning where to remain while the struggle is present**. Scripture never promises the absence of battle; it promises the presence of Christ.

This seven-day journey is designed to help believers experience victory **not by suppressing the flesh through effort**, nor by abandoning the will through passivity, but by **staying in living union with Christ while the conflict is real**.

Day 1 — Recognize the Conflict Without Condemnation

Scripture: Galatians 5:17

“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”

Practice:

Acknowledge today that the conflict itself is not failure. Do not interpret struggle as loss of faith.

Prayer time: spend some time in prayer today acknowledge before God your awareness of this battle, and allow the spirit to show you where your battle is.

Day 2 — Admit the Weakness of the Flesh

Scripture: Matthew 26:41

“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Practice:

reflect on current temptations today, or challenges in your spiritual journey with yourself or others, and then recognize the weakness of your flesh.

Prayer time:

Spend some time in prayer today with God confessing the weakness of your flesh that has been controlling your life, and or the weakness of your flesh to live the godly life you want to live.

Day 3 — Refuse to Fight in Your Own Power

Scripture: Romans 7:23

“I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.”

Practice: Notice when you have defaulted to self-effort—arguing with sin, promising yourself change, or trying harder. Contemplate Where are you still trying to defeat the flesh without Christ?

Prayer Time: Today, go to God in prayer and seek the strength of God in the previously contemplated struggles you are having. Confess to God your helplessness to do anything about it, and ask God today to give you victory.

Day 4 — Choose to Remain in Union

Scripture: John 15:4

“Abide in Me, and I in you.”

Practice: Make one conscious choice today to turn your attention back to Christ—through Scripture, prayer, or quiet remembrance of His presence.

Prayer Time: Whatever your thoughts or meditations were from the above practice use them as a prayer format for the day. In other words, whatever God revealed to you from that practice bring it back to him in prayer, and see how the conversation with God evolves, and what has he revealed to you through it.

Day 5 — Set the Mind on the Spirit

Scripture: Romans 8:5

“They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit.”

Practice: Today, stop at a particular time, and deliberately set your mind on things above. Record your thoughts, journal them, reflect on them, if only for 15 minutes, and then seek to make this a daily habit

Prayer time:

from the above practice take your reflections to God, and ask him to deepening your understanding on the topic matter.

Day 6 — Accept the Death-Like Nature of the Struggle

Scripture: Colossians 3:5

“Mortify therefore your members...”

Practice: recognize where the death like struggle is happening between your flesh and spirit. Define some areas in your life where you know you are willingly resisting God in something he wants you to give up, or a commitment to God that you have yet to make. Where is your battle today? Identify it and name it out loud, and even better write it down and look at it.

Prayer time: Take this battle to the Lord. Tell God today specifically, and honestly what it is that you do not want to do. For example: “Lord I know that I should do what your word is asking me to do, or that I know I should stop this sin that I have been convicted of, but my flesh does not want to” Now in prayer ask God to give you victory over the desire of your flesh.

Day 7 — Rest in Christ's Strength

Scripture: Colossians 3:3

“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Practice: End the week by resting—not in your victories, nor overburdened with your failures, but spend some time quietly contemplating each one of the seven daily exercises in review, and mark what has been your best experience this week, and then share that with someone.

Prayer Time: Just spend some time in thanksgiving for what God has done in your life this week, especially that one big take away.

Experiential Summary Statement

The battle between flesh and Spirit is not won by overpowering the flesh, nor by escaping the struggle. It is won by **remaining in Christ while the struggle continues**. As we stay connected to Him, the Spirit supplies what the flesh lacks, and victory becomes the fruit of union rather than the product of effort.