



Spirit or self?

Christ has set us free from our sins. If we do not use our freedom as an opportunity to through love serve one another, we will use this God-given opportunity to serve ourselves—aka our flesh, our sinful nature. No exceptions.

Through love serving one another is walking by the Spirit, and not through love serving one another is choosing a life direction that we determine. So this really comes down to a choice between following the Spirit of God or following our own direction. Spirit of God or sinful nature. We choose the path.

Many do not seem to understand the basic nature of this decision between Spirit and self. These folk cannot seem to grasp (because they are ignorant or rebellious or both) **that a person only pleases God when we are led by the Spirit and that even our very best version of ourselves when not following the Spirit falls prey to our sinful nature.**

No wiggle room for our sinful nature.

We are to make no provision for the flesh—our sinful nature. No allowance at all because the Spirit is against the flesh and the flesh is against the Spirit. **A person can never reconcile himself to the Spirit while walking in a direction that he chooses apart from the Spirit.**

We have an expression: “Well, I’m only human.” True somewhat but a shameful and harmful attempt to excuse our disobedience to God. This person in fact impairs his ability to hear necessary spiritual truth in the word of God because living as an infant in Christ (merely human) means that the person is following the path of his sinful nature.

- (1 Corinthians 3:1–4 ESV) But I, brothers, could **not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh**, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still **of the flesh**. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not **of the flesh** and behaving only in a human way? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being **merely human**?

So what do we do?

1. NO OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FLESH.

First, we do not use our freedom for an opportunity for the flesh. Our biblical, given direction is to through love serve one another. When we disobey this biblical instruction, then we have taken the first step toward a self-directed lifestyle that falsely promises freedom when it in fact delivers you to defeat and enslavement under the law.

2. NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH.

Second, we walk properly and make no provision at all for the flesh—no “we’re only human” excuses

- (Romans 13:13–14 ESV) Let us **walk properly** as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
- (1 Peter 2:1 ESV) So put away **all** malice and **all** deceit and hypocrisy and envy and **all** slander.

3. NO EXCUSES FOR THE FLESH.

Third, we ask God to help us evaluate our lives—a spiritual audit so to speak. Since we are to one day give an account before God, why not give an account now.

- (Matthew 12:36 ESV) I tell you, on the day of judgment people **will give account** for every careless word they speak.
- (Romans 14:12 ESV) So then each of us **will give an account** of himself to God.
- (Hebrews 4:13 ESV) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom **we must give account.**

Do a spiritual audit. Now!

How do we do this audit? Examine our lives by asking ourselves questions in the presence of God depending upon him for truthfulness.

What are some indicators that you may be following your sinful nature and not walking by the Spirit?

Are you a jealous person? Do you cause strife through your selfish acts? Jealousy and strife indicate that you are living by merely human standards. (See above 1 Corinthians 3:4.)

Are any of the following evident in your life? Quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

- (2 Corinthians 12:19–20 ESV) Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. 20 For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

Is there any bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander or malice evident in your life? **Do you have a friend you trust enough to ask their help in identifying these things in your life?**

- (Ephesians 4:30–31 ESV) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Are you kind, tenderhearted and forgiving as God instructs, or do you make excuses as to why you do not forgive as God calls you to forgive? Can you recognize the “merely human” influence when you revise God’s teaching on forgiveness?

- (Ephesians 4:32 ESV) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Would an outside observer see your actions as motivated by selfish ambition or conceit? Would that person see godly humility in your life? In your actions do you take into account the significance of others and look out for their interests also?

- (Philippians 2:3–4 ESV) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Do you ever grumble? Do you grumble and justify your grumbling and not confess it as sin?

- (Philippians 2:14–15 ESV) Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Do you sin in your anger by slandering people or gossiping about them? Do you ever **cloak your bitter feelings**—malice—with spiritual tones of fake concern for the person you are biting and devouring?

- (Colossians 3:5–8 ESV) Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual

immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Do you understand that biblically when you serve yourself you submit yourself to living under the law? And that living under the law produces foolish controversies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, that are unprofitable and worthless.

- (Titus 3:9–11 ESV) But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Do you realize that when you succumb to serving yourself that bitter jealousy and selfish ambition will invade your heart and you will be operating under wisdom that the Bible describes as earthly, unspiritual, even demonic?

- (James 3:14–16 ESV) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Do you realize when you choose to serve yourself that you impair your ability to agree with sound words of doctrine? And that serving yourself will produce spiritual ignorance as a result of your pride and deceit? This will in turn evidence itself in an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words? And that craving will produce envy, dissension, slander and evil suspicions? Did you know that the constant friction in your life that is now your new normal is the same friction that is seen among people who the Bible describes as depraved in mind and deprived of the truth?

- (1 Timothy 6:2b–5 ESV) Teach and urge these things. 3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.