

# “the flesh”

- **(Galatians 5:24 ESV) And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

## UNDERSTANDING “HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH” ...

Understanding the phrase “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” is crucial to our ability to live in the abundance of life that Jesus Christ has provided. We have to move past vague, religious concepts (read guesses) to the reality of this truth in our everyday lives.

We need to understand what the term “the flesh” actually means, but we also must understand the huge significance of the phrase “with its passions and desires.”

human goodness in our world.

But we must not mistake this goodness for goodness that would make us acceptable to God because Scripture is clear that by that measurement no one is good.

- (Romans 3:10–12 ESV) As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; **no one does good, not even one.**”
- We are sometimes confused and conflicted because goodness according to human standards is very evident in our world. In other words, sometimes people are very, very good and kind and generous, etc. So what gives?

This leads to our Big Question: Since human goodness is so evident and observable, then why do we need to crucify the flesh?

Because ... There is a life that we humans live in the flesh that is not really a bad life. In fact, this life can be a very good life, even an exemplary life in the eyes of our fellow humans. The problem is not necessarily the goodness of this life (i.e. goodness according to human measurements) at this moment in time but the direction of this

[illegible]

This is where the phrase “with its passions and desires” comes into play. In our humanity we embrace a way that seems right but does not take into account eternity.

- (Proverbs 14:12 ESV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

The way that seems right really does seem right ... for a time at least.

But the person on the “seems right” way only has himself and the world around him as a reference point. This is the “natural person” that Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 2:14.

- (1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV) **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him,** and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

- God is not in the picture on the “seems right” way of the flesh—the way of humans who live on earth who do not receive information from God about life. And when God is not in the picture, then only human standards of measurement are used. Because of this humans without God’s information are blind to their ultimate end.

Our problem: The flesh has plans of its own; plans apart from God. The flesh has plans—read passions and desires—that are in conflict with the plans of God. So even though much of the common, ordinary, day-to-day goodness we do as humans apart from God is very good, the big fly in the ointment is that our true plans for

life—our passions and desires—are opposed to the desires of the Spirit.

- (Galatians 5:17 ESV)  
For the desires of the  
flesh are against the

**Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh**, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

God didn't call us to freedom—set us free from our sins—to provide us with an opportunity to fulfill our desires.

- (Galatians 5:13 ESV) For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh**, but through love serve one another.

We all walk in the flesh, but we must crucify the flesh—keep it in its place—so we do not walk according to the flesh. Walking “in the flesh” is being human. Walking “according to the flesh” is being hostile to God.

- (Romans 8:5–8 ESV) For **those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh**, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 **For to set the mind on the flesh is death**, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The flesh—our sinful, finite, frail, fallen humanity—is like the monster in the horror movie that never dies. We must deliver the death blow. Our old self must be put to death or the devil will continue to exploit this weakness and rob us of the abundance of God.

- (John 6:63 ESV) **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.** The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.
- (Romans 7:5–6 ESV) For **while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.** 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.
- (Romans 8:3–4 ESV) For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be **fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**
- (Romans 13:14 ESV) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**
- (2 Corinthians 1:17 ESV) Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? **Do I make my plans according to the flesh**, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time?
- (Galatians 2:20 ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- (Galatians 3:2–3 ESV) Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 **Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**
- (Galatians 5:19–21

ESV) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- (Galatians 6:8 ESV) **For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**
- (Philippians 3:3–4 ESV) For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and **put no confidence in the flesh**— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.
- (Colossians 2:20–23 ESV) If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed **an appearance of wisdom** in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, **but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.**
- (1 Timothy 3:16 ESV) Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He [Christ] was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.
- (1 Peter 2:11 ESV) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to **abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.**
- (1 Peter 3:18 ESV) For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.
- (1 Peter 4:1–2 ESV) Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 **so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.**
- (2 Peter 2:18–19 ESV) For, speaking loud boasts of folly, **they entice by sensual passions of the flesh** those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. 19 **They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption.** For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.
- (1 John 2:16–17 ESV) **For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.** 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
- (Jude 22–23 ESV) And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; **to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.**

