

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.
Vol. 3 September 26, 2021 No. 39*

Are We Walking After The Flesh Or Spirit?

By Ken Green

“... that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

Here is the purpose to which the sending of God's own Son was directed. That righteousness which was demanded by the law, and possible only by perfect obedience to the law, is now available to us who have transgressed law. “And the commandment which was to bring life, I found to bring death” (7:10). The reason it brought death is because it was “weak through the flesh” (8:3). “And so the thing that the law required, but could not accomplish, is fulfilled in those who obey the gospel” (R. L. Whiteside).

The condition of walking “according to the Spirit” and not “according to the flesh” is now given. The figure of “walking” in the Scriptures speaks of the course or tenor of one's life. It is the direction in which one is progressing. If one walks according to the flesh, that then is the controlling influence in his life. Such is to live after or primarily in the pursuit and employment of that which gratifies the desires of the flesh.

William Barclay observes that “flesh” is used in three primary ways in Romans: (1) literally, as in Romans 2:28; (2) in reference to the human point of view, as in Romans 1:3; 9:3; and (3) in reference to living on the animal level and allowing the passions to reign supreme in one life, as in Romans 7:5; 8:4,5,8,12.

Now, what is meant by “walking according to the Spirit?” The translators have capitalized the word indicating that they consider Deity, the Holy Spirit, to be in view. Yet the contrast seems to be drawn between the human flesh and the human spirit. This has led some to conclude that to walk according to the “spirit” means to promote the interest of the inner man rather than the flesh.

There is good supporting evidence for this view. In verse 6 Paul speaks of being “spiritually minded.” But verses 9, 11, and 14 (“The Spirit of God dwells in you...as many as are led by the Spirit of God”) appear to favor the position that the Holy Spirit is under consideration.

The answer, I believe, is that “walking according to the Spirit” involves both of these elements. One who so walks must surely put his spirit above his flesh and be spiritually minded; but he must also submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Where this harmony between man's spirit and the Holy Spirit exists, one is walking according to the Spirit. Where either element is missing, one is not walking according to the Spirit. The two are brought together in verse 16: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

“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, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8: 5).

The Greek preposition rendered “after” in the KJV, or “according to” in the NKJV, conveys the idea: “as measured by.” There are only two rules of measurement: either the flesh or the Spirit. To set one's mind on the things of the flesh is to concentrate on worldly and fleshly things to the exclusion of deeper and higher thoughts and goals. If one lives according to the Spirit, he concentrates on spiritual things and the revelation of God's Spirit. He sets his affections on things above (Col. 3:2), and seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

The illustration has oft been given of sailboats upon the lake that move in different directions under the very same winds. It is the set of the sail that determines the direction. And so with our lives:

we all suffer the winds of temptation, tragedies, anxieties, and difficulties. The direction we move under such adversities is determined by the set of our sails. Are we walking after the flesh or the Spirit?

God's Grace

By Dick Ward

Did you know we are saved by the GRACE of GOD? Most folks who profess to believe the Bible are quick to say they understand man is saved by God's grace. Ephesians 2:8 clearly states we are saved by grace, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

It has amazed me to read creeds written by men which contend we are saved by grace ALONE! For example, the Baptists view contends for such: "We believe the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God..." (Hiscox's Baptist Manual, p. 61). The word "wholly" means "entirely, completely, solely, exclusively." Does the Bible teach that lost people are saved exclusively by grace and nothing else is involved?

Does Grace Exclude Faith?

If a person or group of people say salvation is "wholly" by grace, and understand what they are saying, they exclude everything else. Would not such a view eliminate "faith" on the part of an individual seeking salvation? The Word of God plainly teaches us that man is "...justified by faith..." (Romans 5:1). I take it -- faith and grace save because God's Book says BOTH are involved. If faith has a part in one's salvation, such proves a lost soul is not saved solely by grace!

Does Grace Exclude Obedience?

God's part (Grace) does not exclude man's part (obedience to God's commands). In the case of Noah finding "grace" in the eyes of God (Genesis 6:8), such did not exclude the obedient act of building the ark according to God's pattern. Noah could not have been saved from the flood-waters separate and apart from God's saving grace, but neither could he have been saved without strict obedience to God's instructions concerning the construction of the ark of gopher wood. God's grace in no way rules out man's working faith! Galatians. 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

God's Grace is Inclusive

God's grace provided the means of salvation, but all men are not saved. The plan of salvation given through God's grace has to be believed and obeyed before man can be saved. Let us notice some statements of Jesus:

"If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13: 3). "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Let us never misrepresent God's grace, but rather let us appreciate it and take full advantage of it by doing our part.