

Do you ever feel like there is a tug of war going on inside of you? You know what God is calling you to do and you know what His will is for your life but there is something inside of you that keeps you from doing the right thing.

You cannot possibly follow Christ for long if you have a divided heart. Eventually you have to make a decision. In fact, it is impossible for a person to stay there without choosing between God's way or the world's way.

There are a lot of people that try really hard to live with a divided heart. Yet there is nothing in the New Testament that suggests we should settle or live this way.

In Romans 8, we read these words,

*So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, **the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.** ³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have.*

And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit." Romans 8:1-4 NLT

So what Paul is suggesting is that we can be freed by the power of the Spirit from the power of sin. To glorify or surrender to the notion that sin has the dominion over the ability of God to deliver us is completely contrary to the power of God.

There are two ways people will attempt to please God. First they will try to please Him out of their own resources or they will allow God's Spirit to indwell their lives and they will live out of the resources of the Spirit.

To follow our own resources is to live and fail daily to please God but to surrender our lives completely to the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit is the often ignored answer to the lukewarm existence of way too many Christians.

What I do believe with all my heart is that there is no way to maintain our faith without making the choice to follow God's way.

Paul says very clearly that there is an unmistakable contrast between "living in the Spirit" and "living in the flesh."

Living in the flesh leads to death: *"¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die"*
Rom. 8:13

In fact it is in verse six that Paul bluntly declares: *So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death.* In some translations it is even stronger. "To set your mind on the flesh is death" Why is this? Because life is only to be found in God; it is not within us. The bottom line is that if

you attempt to live on your own power and wisdom you will not only fail but you will perish. It can't be done. The question is do you accept this biblical principle?

Living in the flesh is hostility toward God: *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.* Romans 8:7 NIV

No one can live in neutral when it comes to God's will. You either accept it or you will reject it. Apart from living in God's will you are living in hostility to God. Oh it may not surface and be seen by those looking on but we have an amazing capacity to compartmentalize our lives. We have a God compartment and we seem to have a rest of our life compartment. You do understand that this is not reality, right?

Paul is saying clearly that there is no compatibility with life in the flesh and life in the Spirit.

Living in the flesh is displeasing to God: ⁸ *Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.* Romans 8:8 NIV

What does this mean? It simply means that if and I let our human desires dominate our lives there will be an inevitable rising up of hostility toward God. We feel the guilt of living outside His will. What do we do with that? There are a couple of options.

If you find yourself outside of God's will you can either repent or rebel. All of us face this in our lives at one time or the other.

John Morley said, "No man can climb beyond the limitations of his own character."

Living in the flesh is to live in bondage: *"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children."* Romans 8:15 NIV

Living in the flesh is to live in sin outside of God's Will. I don't care what your theology is if you try to live that way and find acceptance with God you will be sadly disappointed. To live in sin is to live as a slave to a habit, the power of lust or existing in the realm of double mindedness. Regardless of what it is you or I may be struggling with there will be no peace until we surrender it to God. We cannot free ourselves. It will take the supernatural power of a Holy God who calls us to be holy as He is Holy.

There is hopelessness to all of this unless you search for the path that God laid out for us to follow.

Let's go back to Romans 8 for a few moments. . .

4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. 6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. 7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10 And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life^[d] because you have been made right with God. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters,^[e] you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. 13 For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature,^[f] you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children^[g] of God.

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers^[h] in harmony with God's own will.

On the flip side Paul also gives another view. He clearly demonstrates that “living in the Spirit” will be a completely different life. Sin does not have to dominate us.

In verse four we read that people just like us can actually please God with our lives.

In verse six we are told that living this way gives us life and peace.

We are led by the Spirit

We can walk in the Spirit.

We walk without fear because God gives us a witness that we are His children.

We also learn in verse 26 that when we walk in the Spirit the Holy Spirit will help us pray and will intercede for us.

The bottom line is this: If we are to stand before God our hearts must be cleansed of this double-mindedness. God must make us holy so that we will be wholly His.

What's the big deal? Does God really care about this?

The answer is yes! Living in the flesh is never profitable for anything eternal. Authentic Christfollowers will always live with eternity in view. It is critical that we care about this

because God really cares what you and I do with our lives, our loves, our relationships, habits and are loyalties. It matters and it's as plain as simple as that.

Napoleon said that in every battle there [is] a period of ten or fifteen minutes which decides the issue of the conflict. Certainly in the battle of life there are moments and hours which, so far as we can tell, determine our history: hours when the spirit in which we lived, the step we took, the word we uttered, or what at that moment we thought, resolved, accepted, rejected, did, or did not, gave a complexion to our whole being here, and it may be, hereafter. These are tenth hours when a whole life seems packed into a single hour of revelation and destiny.

What's the big dilemma? The Carnal Mind vrs. The Mind of Christ

Paul says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds (phroneo) on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5) This Greek word for mind speaks of a person's entire perspective on life – what one thinks, feels and aspires to do. Paul is saying that a carnally minded person is driven by physical desires. The appetites rule. Such a person seeks whatever brings pleasure, whatever "feels good."

In contrast to that is the person who thinks with the mind of Christ. This person has the perspective of Christ's own Spirit. This person seeks whatever pleases the Spirit of the Lord. This person longs to know where Christ's Spirit is at work, and join in that work. The person who sets his mind on the Spirit of Christ sees the world through Christ's eyes and seeks to be a part of what he is doing in the world.

What's the desired outcome?

You probably know Ted Giannoulas even if you've never heard his name. He has been the San Diego Chicken for 30 years. He originated the character as a college student, but Ted is getting older. At age 50, being the Chicken has been his life and his whole identity. His face is never photographed unless he is in costume. No one knows the real Ted. He has no family. At first, he loved his alter ego. "I discovered an untapped personality in that suit," he said. "It was like, now I have freedom. Now I'm no longer Ted." But there is a price to pay. Dave Raymond, who for years wore the costume of the Philly Phanatic, said, "[Giannoulas] was the first and the funniest, and I have nothing but respect for him. But if you're not careful, you can lose yourself in that suit." Ted himself says, "I have plenty of Chicken stories. I'm afraid I don't have any Ted stories."

Many people live life being someone God didn't create them to be. They lose themselves in other things instead of finding their identity in Christ.

Listen, It's never too late to start doing right.

Be honest about who you are living for.

Be willing to do the hard work of surrender.

Be in it for life and for eternity.