

WAR WITH THE FLESH

Have you already forgotten about your new year resolutions? Some 80% of such good intentions fail by February. Bad habits prevail. That's why we focus on intentional healthy Christian growth. Three enemies wage war against your soul - the world, the flesh, and the devil. Of these, "the flesh" poses the most immediate constant threat. It's always with you, as the number one enemy of your soul.

1- A NEW PERCEPTION OF THE REAL YOU. Many people think of themselves as a body with a soul. But you are actually a soul with a body. Your soul lives on after the death of your body. And if you are a believer in Christ, having received Him as Savior and Lord, then your true identity is "in Christ."

Theologians say "union with Christ" is the big idea of the New Testament. Some 160 times it refers to believers as "in Christ" and "Christ in you." It's a theme of the book of Colossians. Believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them. They have received Christ, and have been raised up with Him, and like Him are alive to God and dead to sin. Colossians 3:1 sums it up: "*If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*"

It's the astounding truth of new creations in Christ, by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Your real life IS Christ. Not conceptually but really. Galatians 2:20 says "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives within me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.*" This perspective helps you perceive the real new spiritual you - living in your old body of flesh.

And that's what seems like the quandary of the Christian life. You live in a fleshly body in the world on the earth, and yet you have a new spirit and new spiritual life in Christ. That's the great truth behind your real identity, who you really are. Your spirit, created in the image of God, is the eternal part. Your flesh is all that's earthly and temporal. Not just flesh, blood and bones, but a human vessel for propensities of sin.

The flesh is what's passed on to every human being by our ancestor Adam. Romans 5:12 says, "*sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*" Romans 7:5 explains, "*our sinful passions are at work in our flesh to bear the fruit of death, the wages of sin.*" But being in Christ changes all that. As Romans 8:9 says, speaking of believers, "*you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.*" That is, the real you is now spiritually alive, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, living in your old body of flesh - which no longer defines you but merely contains you.

2- A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON YOUR DAILY LIFE. This new perception of the real you "in union with Christ" changes how you live your daily life. It's your key to overcoming sin. The real you is no longer enslaved to sin, but is set free to new life. Romans 6:6 says, "*our old self was crucified with Christ, in order that the body of sin would no longer be enslaved to sin.*" This is echoed in Colossians 1:22, "*Christ has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless before Him.*" This connects to Colossians 2:11 "*putting off the body of the flesh*" and "*raised with Him through faith*" and echoed in Colossians 3 above. If you are in Christ, the real you is alive with resurrection life.

These Scriptures also make it clear why Christ came in a human body. Gnostic heretics say the flesh is evil. But the Bible says Christ came in the flesh in order to redeem you in the flesh. To restore you to the spiritual life lost by Adam's sin. The washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit reconciles sinful people in the flesh, renewing and restoring you to God in Christ, by grace through faith. One day you will inherit a resurrected glorified body - the flesh made new and perfect with a sanctified spirit to live with Him in the new heavens and new earth forever. And in union with Christ, that future is guaranteed.

And your real life, now, is raised up with Christ. The Bible puts life in practical terms - put off the old man and put on the new, by the Holy Spirit. *We'll look at this powerful truth in more depth next time.*