

Andrew Murray:

Walk by the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh, with the passions and lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.'--Gal.5:16, 24, 25,

'IF we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us walk.' These words suggest to us very clearly the -difference, between the sickly and the healthy Christian life. In the former the Christian is content to 'live by the Spirit;' he is satisfied with knowing that he has the new life; but he does not 'walk by the Spirit.' The true believer, on the contrary, is not content without having his whole walk and conversation in the power of the Spirit. He walks by the Spirit, and so does not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

As the Christian strives thus to walk worthy of God and well-pleasing to Him in all things, he is often sorely troubled at the power of sin, and asks what the cause may be that he so often fails in conquering it. The answer to this question he ordinarily finds in his want of faith or faithfulness, in his natural feebleness or the mighty power of Satan. Alas! if he rests content with this solution. It is well for him if he press on to find the deeper reason why all these things, from which Christ secured deliverance for him, still can overcome. One of the deepest secrets of the Christian life is the knowledge that the one great power that keeps the Spirit of God from ruling, that the last enemy that must yield to Him, is the flesh. He that knows what the flesh is, how it works and how it must be dealt with, will be conqueror.

We know how it was on account of their ignorance of this that the Galatians so sadly failed. It was this led them to attempt to perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit (3: 3). It was this made them a prey to those who desired 'to make a fair show in the flesh' that they might 'glory in the flesh' (6:12, 13). They knew not how incorrigibly corrupt the flesh was. They knew not that, as sinful as our nature is when fulfilling its own lusts, as sinful is it when making 'a fair show in the flesh;' it apparently yields itself to the service of God, and undertakes to perfect what the Spirit had begun. Because they knew not this, they were unable to check the flesh in its passions and lusts; these obtained the victory over them, so that they did what they did not wish. They knew not that, as long as the flesh, self-effort, and selfwill had any influence in serving God, it would remain strong to serve sin, and that the only way to render it impotent to do evil was to render it impotent in its attempts to do good.

It is to discover the truth of God concerning the flesh, both in its service of God and of sin, that this Epistle was written. Paul wants to teach then how the Spirit,--and the Spirit alone, is the power of the Christian life, and how this cannot be except as the flesh, with all that it means, is utterly and entirely set aside. And in answer to the question how this can be, he gives the wonderful answer which is one of the central thoughts of God's revelation. The crucifixion and death of Christ is the revelation not only of an atonement for sin, but of a power which frees from the actual dominion of sin, as it is rooted in the flesh. When Paul in the midst of his teaching about the walk in the Spirit (16-26) tells us, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts,' he tells us what the only way is in which deliverance from the flesh is to be found. To understand this word, 'crucified. the flesh,' and abide in it, is the secret of walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Let each one who longs to walk by the Spirit try to enter into its meaning.

' The flesh'--in Scripture this expression means the whole of our human nature in its present condition under the power of sin. It includes our whole being, spirit, soul, and body. After the fall, God said, 'man is flesh' (Gen.6:3). All his powers, intellect, emotions, will,--all are under the power of the flesh. Scripture speaks of the will of the flesh of the mind of the flesh (fleshly mind), of the passions and lusts of the flesh. It tells us that in our flesh dwelleth no good: the mind of the flesh is at enmity against God. On this ground it teaches that nothing that is of the flesh, that the fleshly mind or will thinks or does, however fair the show it makes, and however much men may glory in it, can have any value in the sight of God. It warns us that our greatest danger in religion, the cause of our feebleness and failure, is our having confidence in the flesh, its wisdom and its work. It tells us that, to be pleasing to God, this flesh, with its self-will and self-effort, must entirely be dispossessed, to make way for the willing and the working of Another, even the Spirit of God. And that the only way to be made free from the power of the flesh, and have it put out of -the way, is to have it crucified and given over to the death.

'They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.' Men often speak of crucifying the flesh as a thing that has to be done. Scripture always speaks of it as a thing that has been done, an accomplished fact. 'Knowing, this, that our old man was crucified with Him.' 'I have been crucified with Christ.' ' They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.' ' The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' What Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, did on the cross, He did not as an individual,

but in the name of that human nature which, as its Head, He had taken upon Himself. Every one who accepts of Christ receives Him as the Crucified One, receives not only the merit, but the power of His crucifixion, is united and identified with Him, and is called on intelligently and voluntarily to realize and maintain that identification. 'They that are of Christ Jesus' have, in virtue of their accepting the crucified Christ as their life, given up their flesh to that cross which is of the very essence of the person and character of Christ as He now lives in heaven; they 'have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.'

But what does this mean: 'They have crucified the flesh'? Some are content with the general truth: the cross takes away the curse which there was on the flesh. Others think of causing the flesh pain and suffering, of the duty of denying and mortifying it. Others, again, of the moral influence the thought of the cross will exercise. In each of these views there is an element of truth. But if they are to be realized in power, we must go to the root thought: to crucify the flesh is, to give it over to the curse. The Cross and the Curse are inseparable (Deut.21: 2 3 ; Gal.3:13). To say, 'Our old man has been crucified with Him,' 'I have been crucified with Christ,' means something very solemn and awful. It means this: I have seen that my old nature, myself, deserves the curse; that there is no way of getting rid of it but by death: I voluntarily give it to the death. I have accepted as my life the Christ who came to give Himself, His flesh, to the cursed death of the cross; who received His new life alone owing to that death and in virtue of it: I give my old man, my flesh, self, with its will and work, as a sinful, accursed thing, to the cross. It is nailed there: in Christ I am dead to it, and free from it. It is not yet dead ; but day by day in union with Christ will I keep it there, making dead, as they still seek to rise up, every one of its members and deeds in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The power of this truth depends upon its being known, accepted, and acted on. If I only know the cross in its Substitution, but not, as Paul gloried in it, in its Fellowship (Gal. 6:14), never can experience its power to sanctify. As the blessed truth of its Fellowship dawns upon me, I see how by faith I enter into and live in spiritual communion with that Jesus who, as my Head and Leader, made and proved the cross the only ladder to the Throne. This spiritual union, maintained by faith, becomes a moral one. I have the same mind or disposition that was in Christ Jesus. I regard the flesh as sinful, and only fit for the curse. I accept the cross, with its death to what is flesh, secured to me in Jesus, as the only way to become free from the power of self, and to walk in the new life by the Spirit of Christ.

The way in which this faith in the power of the cross acts, as at once the revelation and the removal of the curse and the power of the flesh, is very simple, and yet very solemn. I begin to understand that my one danger in living by the Spirit is yielding to the flesh or self in its attempt to serve God. I see that it renders the cross of Christ of none effect. (1 Cor.1:17 ; Gal.3:3, 5:12, 13 ; Phil. 3: 3, 4 ; Col.2:18-23.) I see how all that was of man and nature, of law and human effort, was for ever judged of God on Calvary. There flesh proved that, with all its wisdom and all its religion, it hated and rejected the Son of God. There God proved how the only way to deliver from the flesh was to give it to death as an accursed thing. I begin to understand that the one thing I need is: to look upon the flesh as God does; to accept of the death warrant the cross brings to everything in me that is of the flesh; to look upon it, and all that comes from it, as an accursed thing. As this habit of soul grows on me, I learn to fear nothing so much as myself. I tremble at the thought of allowing the flesh, my natural mind and will, to usurp the place of the Holy Spirit. My whole posture towards Christ is that of lowly fear, in the consciousness of having within me that accursed thing that is ever ready, as an angel of light, to intrude itself in the Holiest of all, and lead me astray to serve God, not in the Spirit of Christ, but in the power that is of nature. It is in,, such a lowly fear that the believer is taught to believe fully the need, but also the provision, of the Holy Spirit to take entirely the place which the flesh once had, and day by day to glory in the cross, of which he can say, 'By it I have been crucified to the world.'

We often seek for the cause of failure in the Christian life. We often think that because we are sound on what the Galatians did not understand,-justification by faith alone,their danger was not ours. Oh that we knew to what an extent we have allowed the flesh to work in our religion! Let us pray God for grace to know it as our bitterest enemy, and the enemy of Christ. Free grace does not only mean the pardon of sin ; it means the power of the New Life through the Holy Spirit. Let us consent to what God says of the flesh, and all that comes of it: that it is sinful, condemned, accursed. Let us fear nothing so much as the secret workings of our flesh. Let us accept the teaching of God's word: 'In my flesh dwelleth no good thing;' 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' Let us ask God to show us how entirely the Spirit must possess us, if we are to be pleasing to Him in all things. Let us believe that as we daily glory in the cross, and, in prayer and obedience, yield the flesh to the death on the cross, Christ will accept our surrender, and will, by His Divine Power, maintain mightily in us the Life of the Spirit. And we shall learn not only to live by the Spirit, but, as those who are made free from the power of the flesh, by its crucifixion, maintained by faith, in very deed to walk by the Spirit.

Blessed God! I beseech Thee to reveal to me the full meaning of what Thy word has been teaching me, that it is

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as one who has crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts, that I can walk by the Spirit.

O my Father ! teach me to see that all that is of nature and of self is of the flesh ; that the flesh has been tested by Thee, and found wanting, worthy of nothing but the curse and death. Teach me that my Lord Jesus led the way, and acknowledged the justice of Thy curse, that I too might be willing and have the power to give it up to the cross as an accursed thing. Oh, give me grace day by day greatly to fear before Thee, lest I allow the flesh to intrude into the work of the Spirit, and to grieve Him. And teach me that the Holy Spirit has indeed been given to be the life of my life, and to fill my whole being with the power of the death and the life of my blessed Lord living in me.

Blessed Lord Jesus! who didst send Thy Holy Spirit, to secure the uninterrupted enjoyment of Thy Presence and Thy Saving Power within us, I yield myself to be entirely Thine, to live wholly and only under His leading. I do with my whole heart desire to regard the flesh as crucified and accursed. I solemnly consent to live as a crucified one. Saviour! Thou dost accept my surrender; I trust in Thee to keep me this day walking through the Spirit. Amen.