

The Spiritual Conflict

by J.C. Philpot

The conflict between the flesh and the Spirit is a struggle between our earthly, sinful nature and our heavenly, holy nature, and it is only through yielding to the Spirit and allowing Him to work in our lives that we can overcome the flesh and live a victorious Christian life.

Scripture: Genesis 39:9, Jeremiah 2:13, John 3:6, Romans 8:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:17, Galatians 6:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:4

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Inner Conflict"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the internal conflict between the flesh and the spirit, highlighting the opposing desires and actions of these two principles within believers. He emphasizes the struggle of not being able to do spiritually what one desires due to the flesh's opposition, as well as the mercy of not being able to do naturally what one would, preventing complete vileness. Philpot delves into the detailed workings of the flesh and the spirit, illustrating the constant battle and collision between these two opposing forces in the believer's heart. He concludes by pointing to the grace of God for all that is spiritual and the self-condemnation for the sinfulness within, leading to humility, self-abhorrence, and a reliance on God's mercy and guidance.

Transcript

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"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would." Galatians 5:17

If I loved, or courted popularity, I might feel some pleasure in seeing so crowded an assembly this evening. But, on the contrary, it rather raises questions in my mind. The first question that arises is, "What can I say to profit or edify this body of people?" And the second, "Am I faithful? Do I speak to men's consciences? Do I rightly divide the word of truth? Do I draw a separating line of distinction between the living and the dead?" If so, would not my hearers be fewer?

On seeing so many assembled together, I feel that the Lord must give me strength in body, soul, and spirit for the work; that he must supply me with thoughts and words and set before me a door of utterance, that I may speak a word for his glory and for your profit. And I am sure, if the Lord be not in our midst, you will go

away disappointed, and I shall leave this pulpit pained and mortified.

When the Lord takes his people in hand, he gives them all to know and feel the evil of sin. He lays an effectual blow by his own unerring axe at the root of sin in us. But though this is the case, yet we generally find that when the Lord first begins his work on the heart, the fountains of the great deep are not at once broken up, the recesses of our hearts are not immediately laid bare, the awful secrets of the charnel-house we carry about with us are not opened up at first to our astonished view. When God is pleased first to indulge the soul with some manifestations of his mercy, gives to feel his presence, and draws up the heart into some communion with himself, sin receives a stunning blow, and lies for awhile dead and torpid in the carnal mind.

But oftentimes when the Lord withdraws his gracious presence, those hidden evils which lay at first concealed from view, which had been seemingly torpid and asleep, rise up once more with redoubled power, and make us painfully feel what enemies we carry in our bosom. Thus the people of God, instead of getting (as they are told by men ignorant of divine truth) gradually holier, purer, and better in themselves, by having their hearts more anatomized and dissected by the keen knife of the Spirit, sink more and more deeply into the conviction of their nature's vileness; and thus they learn to abhor themselves "in dust and ashes" before God, and to be clothed with that becoming robe of which the Apostle speaks, "Be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5)

An inward and experimental conflict now commences, which is known, in a greater or less degree, by all the people of God, and is in fact that of which the Apostle speaks in the text- "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would."

In speaking upon these words, it will be desirable, before we enter into their experimental meaning, to DEFINE, with some degree of accuracy, the terms of the sentence, and to explain, as clearly as the Lord may enable use, the words of the text before we proceed to the experience contained in it.

The first word, then, that meets our eye, is, "the flesh." What does the Holy Spirit intend by this expression? He means, I believe, that corrupt nature which we derive from Adam, the whole natural man, our mind with all its faculties, the whole of our intellect, passions, and propensities; in a word, everything that we are and have as fallen children of a fallen parent. Thus the Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6.)

The next thing that demands a little explanation, is, the word "spirit." What is to be understood by the expression? Are we to understand thereby God the Holy Spirit, who is one in essence, power, and glory with the Father and the Son? I believe not; but that by spirit in the text is meant that new nature which is breathed into the people of God when the Lord quickens their souls into spiritual life; according to the following passages of Scripture- "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.) "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit." (Rom. 8:16.) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." (Gal. 6:13.) "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Jesus Lord Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23.)

In all these passages, the word spirit signifies the "divine nature," the "new man," the "heart of flesh;" in a word, that "new creature," or "new creation," which is given to us when the soul is quickened by God the Spirit; according to those words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or "new creation"), old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17.)

The last term that demands a little explanation is the word, "lusts." We must not take this expression in the gross idea usually attached to it. The word means simply, to desire, to covet; in fact, we have the identical word in Romans 7:7, where we read, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, you shall not covet." The word translated "covet," is precisely the same expression as is rendered in our text, "lusts;" and it means simply an intense desire, an ardent thirsting or longing after the attainment of any wished-for object.

Having seen then the scriptural explanation, as I believe, and definition of these three words, we shall be the better prepared, if the Lord shall be pleased to lead us, to enter upon the experimental meaning of the text:

I. The first grand truth, then, which the Apostle lays down in it is, that "the flesh lusts against the SPIRIT." The whole bent of "the flesh" is earthward; the whole bias of "the spirit" is heavenward. The entire affection, the exclusive desire, and intense coveting of "the flesh" is after the things of time and sense; the whole bent, the ardent desire, and internal panting of "the spirit" is after the things of eternity. These two dispositions then being so opposite; the one tending earthward, the other heavenward; the one fixed on time, the other on eternity; the one on God, the other on self; the one formed for heaven, the other fitted for hell- the disposition of these two principles, being so directly contrary, an opposition necessarily takes place. "The flesh" within us does not lie torpid, neither does "the spirit" within us lie torpid- but both are active principles in a man's bosom; they have each their desires, and each thirsts with intensity after its peculiar objects. Being so diametrically opposed, they of course, contradict and fight against each other; and thus there is a perpetual and mutual clashing, collision, and conflict going on between them.

But, with God's blessing, we will go a little into particulars; for truth is apt to be lost in generalities. What God's people want is something that comes into their heart, and touches their conscience- something that points out the hidden workings of nature on the one hand, and the secret operations of grace on the other. It is not, therefore, sufficient to state in general terms, that "the flesh lusts against the spirit" unless we enter, more or less minutely, into the particulars of this opposition.

The whole bent of "the flesh," as I have before observed, is earthward; it never can rise beyond itself, however high it may mount; self being the only object of all its pursuit. "The spirit," on the other hand, being born of God, created by the hand of God in the soul, and being the very image of Christ in the heart, soars, as the Holy Spirit operates upon it, heavenwards- hence flows the opposition.

1. "The spirit," for instance, is prayerful, seeking from time to time, as the Holy Spirit works upon it, the Lord's face, and pouring itself out in secret into the bosom of a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. Being born from above, it covets the presence of God as its heaven, and the favor of God, as its true happiness, mounting up in pantings, longings, and aspirations towards the holy fountain whence it originally came. "The flesh," being earthly in all its lusts and covetings, hates and opposes this soaring and mounting upward of the spirit. When the spirit, for instance, would lead a man to seek the Lord in prayer, the flesh counteracts and works against it, suggests excuses, raises up carnal and sensual thoughts, and damps, as far as it can, the holy fire that is burning on the altar of a broken heart.

2. Again. "The spirit" is watchful. Its eyes are illuminated to observe sin in things considered by most people harmless and innocent. Like a watchful sentry, it observes, under God's teaching, the first approach of an enemy. It watches the secret movements of the heart, and observes the snares set for the feet. The spirit is alive to see and feel the secret workings of sin, in sleeping or waking, in eating or

drinking, in the daily business of life, or in the worship of God. "The flesh," on the other hand, being altogether earthly and sensual, lusts against this watchfulness. The flesh loves sin. Sin, in one shape or another, is its natural element, and it never can love any thing else. As the fish lives only in the water, so the flesh lives only in the element of sin; as the element of a bird is the air, so the flesh lives in an atmosphere of evil. And as we only live by drawing the air by which we are surrounded into our lungs, so the flesh only lives by drawing in to itself the air of sin.

As the spirit therefore loves watchfulness, the flesh on the other hand hates it- and in this, as in all other cases, whatever the spirit desires, that the flesh opposes. The flesh would walk not merely on the brink of temptation; but, if God did not hold us in with a powerful hand, it would plunge headlong into it; it would swim in sin, like an active swimmer amid the waves of the sea; yes it would dive down into iniquity, and wallow in all its filthy and vile abominations. All its tendencies, all its desires are towards sin; and what God loves, it hates with intense abhorrence.

3. "The spirit" is meek and lowly; it has "the mind of Christ," the image and likeness of Christ. And having the mind, image, and likeness of Christ, it is in its measure, meek, lowly, and gentle as Christ was. Pride, on the other hand, is the very being of the flesh; it lives in pride, for to exalt itself is all that the flesh loves and lives for. As the spirit then breathes forth, and suggests humility, the flesh rises up in pride against everything that tends to humble it. Does the spirit seek to be humbled down at God's footstool? The flesh, with daring rebellion, spurns at all self-abasement, and will approve of nothing but what gratifies that pride which is its very being.

4. "The spirit" bears injuries, submits to ill-treatment, puts its mouth in the dust, "endures all things for the elect's sake." But the flesh cannot bear that a straw should lie in its path- it cannot endure a look, or the least thing which mortifies it; and rises up full of wrath against every person or thing that vexes it, thwarts its inclination, or hinders its desires.

5. "The spirit" seeks the glory of God as its grand object. It desires to live to God's glory, and to walk in the light of his countenance. "That God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus," is its desire and aim, under the influences of the Holy Spirit. But the flesh, in all things, seeks its own exaltation and glory. Instead of aiming at God's glory, it would rather pull him down from his throne, if it could stand an inch higher thereby; and would be willing that God should be nothing, if it could be everything. The flesh, in its awful presumption and horrible arrogance, would rise up against Jehovah, and sit on his seat enthroned as God. This was the original temptation, when the devil said to Eve, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" and this imaginary godship has ever been in the heart of man since the fatal day when that poisonous speech was drunk in by Eve's ear, and brought into the world sin and death.

6. "The spirit" is for crucifixion and mortification, and for being conformed to the image of a suffering Jesus. The flesh is ever for the gratification of self- in some persons, for the gratification of the basest lusts; in others, of intellect; in others, of covetousness; in others, of worldly respectability; but, whatever form it takes, it is that self may be gratified in some shape or another. As to being conformed to the image of the meek and lowly Jesus, to "know him and the power of his resurrection," to walk in his footsteps- the flesh spurns at the idea, and will have nothing but the gratification and indulgence of self.

7. "The spirit," as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to work upon it, seeks communion with God, to delight in his smiles, and to enjoy the manifestations of his presence and love. The flesh has no conception of, and no relish for heavenly visitations, divine comforts, or spiritual manifestations. It loves only an outside,

formal, hypocritical, and pharisaical religion, and is abundantly content with "a name to live." It can never rise beyond the mere form; this is amply sufficient to gratify its pride, and feed its self-righteousness.

8. "The spirit" is sincere, honest and upright before God and man. It knows it has to deal with a God who cannot be mocked; it is deeply impressed with the conviction, that "the eyes of God are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." The flesh loves hypocrisy; it is a part of its "deceitfulness above all things." It will therefore assume any shape, wear any mask, or put on any disguise, so long as it can play the hypocrite.

Now, in all these instances, (and if time would suffice, I might mention others,) "the flesh lusts against the spirit." It does not lie broken and shattered in our hearts as a conquered enemy, but it fights and struggles for victory. And when it cannot obtain what it thirsts for with intense longings, it is filled with rebellion at the disappointment.

II. But the Apostle has also said (and it is our mercy that he has said it), "the spirit lusts against the FLESH."

The word lust, as I have before hinted, must not be taken in any gross sense of the word; for who would dare to impute anything impure to the Holy Spirit of God? But it means, as I have already explained, to covet or intensely desire. Now, as the spirit covets, or desires against the flesh, it thwarts, mortifies, and works against it, in all its secret and subtle actings.

1. Does "the flesh" then lay some subtle scheme to glorify, honor, or exalt itself? "The spirit" breathes out its solemn protest against such God-dishonoring conduct. As a secret monitor, whose voice though gentle will be heard, it whispers its condemnation against every step the flesh takes to gratify itself. It is no silent spectator of the awful enormities going on within; it is no blind, deaf, or dumb judge, who has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no tongue to speak against the criminal. It cannot be bribed or muzzled- it is God's viceregent; and, therefore, it stands up for the honor of God, and testifies for him in a tone of authority that must be heard. Bunyan sweetly sets this forth in his "Holy War," where he says, "that when the judge spoke, he made the whole city tremble." And I believe, when "the spirit" speaks, as the Holy Spirit dictates, he makes the soul bow down beneath it, for he speaks with a voice clothed with authority and power.

2. Does "the flesh" make excuses, and carnalize, so to speak, the whole man? When we would seek the Lord's face, does the flesh make a thousand pretexts why it should not be done there and then? "The spirit," wrought upon from above, desires communion with God, and to seek his presence; and as these desires work, from time to time, against the flesh, it will often sweetly overcome the opposition. And thus the Lord's face is sought after, whatever excuses the flesh may make.

3. Again. Does the flesh say, "Away with all watchfulness and carefulness! If you are a child of God, you cannot perish; if you are of the election of grace, you cannot be lost. What harm is there in this thing or that? It is not a great sin; and, if God has pardoned your sins, he has pardoned this among the rest." When the flesh comes with these hellish suggestions, the spirit will bear a secret testimony against such vile reasoning, as it did in the case of Joseph, when he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) You will say, when these thoughts arise, "Shall I take occasion from pardoning love to sin against it? Shall I be so base as to trample the blood of the Redeemer under foot, and crucify to myself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame? Far, far be it from me!"

4. Again. Does "the flesh" lust after sin? Does it wallow in imagination in the vilest iniquities? Does it lay plots and plans how its desires may be gratified? Does it, in its filthy cravings, bury itself in those sinks and mud-holes where it loves to grovel? "The spirit" speaks for the honor of God; "the spirit," armed with authority from God himself, pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy, bears a secret testimony against all the plots and plans the flesh may lay down to indulge itself; it accuses the traitor, arrests him in the very council-chamber, and denounces his meditated crimes.

5. Does the flesh want to resent injuries; to draw the sword that hangs at its side, and smite down the first that insults it? Does it say, even when a Christian brother is the offender, "I will never forgive this injury; I will never overlook that offence; I will die rather than not satisfy my revenge for that wrong?" There is a gentle monitor within, speaking not in accents of anger, but in soft and mild tones, yet with a voice that makes itself heard amid the thunders of the flesh, "Is this as a Christian should act? Is this as the Lord would have his people walk? Has he not forgiven you your sins, and will not you forgive your brother his?" The spirit speaks in these soft and gentle remonstrances, and thus overcomes all the fiercest workings of the flesh, when it would madly rend asunder the dearest and nearest ties rather than be reconciled. It calmly takes the sword out of the hands of the flesh, and brings us once more to peace and union with those to whom a moment before perhaps we were resolved never to speak again.

6. Does "the flesh" seek to lift itself up against the authority of God? Does it, like Antichrist, "oppose and exalt itself against all that is called God, or that is worshiped?" (2 Thess. 2:4.) The spirit, "clothed with humility," bears a secret witness against this self-exaltation and arrogance of the flesh, and points the eye of the soul to a suffering Christ.

Thus these two principles are in continual collision; and scarcely a day passes without the quickened family of God knowing and feeling the conflict of these two distinct principles within them.

My friends, what does true religion consist in? Is it in coming to chapel, reading the Bible, having family prayer, and kneeling down night and morning with due regularity? Is it in being called a Calvinist, a Baptist, or an Independent? This is but the shell; and he who has nothing but the shell is destitute of vital godliness. True religion consists in the blessed teachings of God's Spirit in the conscience, in the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in the soul. If, then, you have a religion worth a straw, if yours is a religion that will stand by and save you when you need it most; when you are stretched upon a dying bed, and are passing into an opening eternity; if you have such an internal, experimental religion, as God has described in his word; you know something of the conflict I have been attempting to describe, "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" and you feel what it is, by personal and painful experience, to have in you the "company of two armies."

III. But the Apostle has added, "So that you cannot do the things that you would;" and a blessed addition it is. Now, as "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," we must apply this last clause of the text to both sides of the question. To make my meaning clear, you have two opposing principles, and therefore two distinct wills in your bosom- the will of the flesh and the will of the spirit. Because then "the flesh lusts against the spirit," you cannot do the things that you would spiritually; and because "the spirit lusts against the flesh," you cannot do the things that you would naturally.

A. We cannot do the things that we would SPIRITUALLY.

1. We would, for instance, spiritually believe on the Lord of life and glory, and feel, from time to time, the actings of faith upon his blood and righteousness. That is a branch of our spiritual will; but "we cannot do

the thing that we would." Why not? Because "the flesh lusts against the spirit." Lusting against the spirit, it lusts to unbelief, unbelief being the very element in which it lives. We cannot therefore believe, and by believing do the thing that we would, because "the flesh lusts against the spirit," and works unbelief against it.

2. Again. Spiritually we would love the Lord. We would have our whole affections fixed on him; we would have our hearts so given to him, and so entirely his, that there should be no room for a rival. But "the flesh lusts against the spirit;" the flesh can only love itself; it cannot love God, nor the things of God. All it can do is to go after idols; to "hew out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water," (Jer. 2:13); to seek its own gratification. When, therefore, we would, according to our spiritual will, love God, we find a rival come forward; the flesh claims its share of our hearts; the wife, the husband, the children, the world, the things of time and sense around us, all creep in, and steal away our affections from God.

3. Again. We would, according to our spiritual will, be heavenly-minded; we would have our thoughts fixed on eternal things; we would sweetly meditate, comfortably read, powerfully and unctuously pray; we would have our hearts where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, and feel the world under our feet- but we cannot do the things that we would. The world within us will intrude, which is ten thousand times worse than the world without. We may shut and bar our doors, and exclude the world without, but the world within cannot be so shut out. No, we might go and bury ourselves in a hermit's cave, and never see the face of man again; but even there we would be as carnal and worldly as if we lived in Vanity Fair. We cannot shut out the world; it will come in at every chink and crevice. When, therefore, we would be heavenly-minded, think only on God, and enjoy some spiritual meditation, this wretched world will intrude itself into every thought and every imagination, so that spiritually we cannot do the things that we would.

4. We would, according to our spiritual will, walk as becomes the gospel. We would "make a covenant with our eyes" that we would not lust after forbidden things; we would walk before God as conscious of his presence; we would never wish to do a single thing that has not the approbation of God; and we would have the testimony of God in our conscience that our hearts are right before him. But we cannot spiritually do the things which we would. We cannot walk through the street, but Satan tempts; we cannot look or speak, but sin intrudes; no, let us shut our eyes, and close our lips, evil will still come in. I don't know how it may be with you, but I have no more power to keep out the workings of sin in my heart, than I have power by holding up my hand to stop the rain from coming down to the earth; sin will come in at every crack and crevice, and manifest itself in the wretched workings of an evil heart.

B. But, in the second place, we must not forget to look at the blessed converse. If we cannot do the things that we would spiritually, we cannot do the things that we would NATURALLY. To have this, as well as the other side of the question, is our great mercy.

1. What would we, then, do naturally? We would cast aside all true religion; at least we would have nothing to do with experimental and vital religion. The flesh hates what is vital and spiritual; it may and does love the form; but the power and reality of vital godliness the flesh hates. Thus, if we could have had our natural will, we would long ago have cast away our profession. Have you not been often tempted to do this? Have you not sometimes felt the way so rough, and found so many contradictions and obstacles, that you have said, "I cannot go on any longer in it;" and have felt sorry you ever made a profession at all? And would you not at times gladly throw it all aside if you could? You have, perhaps, made the attempt to do so; and have said, "I can go to Chapel no more." But when the Lord's day came, you have found a secret cord within you that drew you there. You might have secretly said, "I will read the word of God no more; I

will never pray again; I will not speak with the people of God." But there has been a secret compulsion in your heart that has made you do the very things which you wished to abandon. Thus naturally we cannot do the things that we would; and it is our mercy that we cannot.

2. Again. Could you do the things that you would naturally, you would wallow in sin; not merely take a drop or sip of sin; but, were your hearts unrestrained by God's grace and your carnal mind left to do what it would, you would lie down and roll in it! But it is our mercy that we cannot "do the things that we would;" for, thanks be to God, there are spiritual checks in the conscience; there is the fear of God springing up in the soul, as a "fountain of life to depart from the way of death;" and these inward flashes of the Spirit, producing convictions of the dreadful evil of sin, keep a man from doing those horrible things which he would do, if God did not thus powerfully restrain him.

3. Again. Could you "do the things that you would naturally," you would be the most accomplished hypocrite that ever entered the doors of either Church or Chapel! If you could be just what your flesh would wish to be, you would have all the form of godliness, but not a grain of its power; and thus would be the most varnished hypocrite that ever stood up to disgrace a profession. But you cannot do or be what you would. A spiritual sincerity and godly simplicity is wrought in your soul, so that you cannot put into action that which your hypocritical flesh would live in; the workings of sincerity in your heart oppose it. It is in the thorough hypocrite only that the flesh can have its full swing.

4. But again. Could you "do the things that you would" naturally, there would not be a more proud, presumptuous, arrogant, self-exalting, and self-conceited wretch than you would be!

Now, my friends, if I have painted you in very black colors, remember that I have dipped the brush in my own heart. I have not gone from Zoar pulpit into the sinful haunts of London to find out and describe the flesh. I feel all the workings that I have been describing. Do not think that I stand up in the pulpit as some holy being, who knows nothing of the workings of sin; that I have been imagining what evil might be in others, and then painting it out in the blackest colors I could devise. Be assured that every line in the picture I have been tracing of human wickedness is taken from myself. Not that God permits me, thanks to his blessed name, to do those evils that I know and feel by painful experience daily working in my heart. The seeds of every crime are in our nature; and therefore, could your flesh have its full swing, there would not be a viler wretch in London than you, or one that puts into practice more evil than you imagine. But God's blessed Spirit works in your heart to counteract these evils, so that you cannot be what you would, nor do the things that you would.

Let us look, then, at both sides of the question. You "cannot do the things that you would" spiritually, and that is your misery; and you "cannot do the things that you would" naturally, and that is your mercy. If you cannot be altogether holy, you cannot be altogether vile. If you cannot be wholly swallowed up in the love of God, you cannot be wholly swallowed up in the love of the world. If you cannot be entirely spiritual, you cannot be entirely carnal. If you cannot be daily and hourly prayerful, heavenly-minded, meditative, and have your affections fixed on God, you cannot go on day after day in carnality, without a single lash of conscience, or without the secret remonstrance of the Spirit bearing its witness in your spirit.

Let us take the question, then, in all its bearings. If we cannot do the things that we would spiritually, neither can we do the things that we would naturally; so that we are preserved, as the Lord manages it, by the action and reaction of these two principles. For, as in nature so in grace, action and reaction are mutual. By action and reaction, the world and all things in it stand in their place- and so spiritually, by

action and reaction, contradiction and opposition, working and counter-working, we are kept in an even path. God has so wisely ordered things, and so tempered matters, that we are preserved in that place which is most for our good and his glory.

Thus, we learn two important LESSONS. First to ascribe to the grace of God and to his unmerited mercy everything in us that is spiritual; hence springs matter of thankfulness and praise. And, we learn on the other hand, to ascribe to our wretched selves all the sinfulness, vileness, and evil that is working in our bosom; and hence spring humility, self-abhorrence, and godly sorrow. Thus, by watching the movements of "the flesh," we learn to hate ourselves; and by watching the movements of "the spirit," we learn whence come our help, hope, and strength. So that, while on the one hand, we have sufficient to thank, praise, and bless God for; on the other, we have sufficient to condemn and loathe ourselves for. And on the one side, if we cannot do spiritually the things that we would, through the opposition of our flesh, we are kept on the other walking humbly before God, and avoid those shoals on which many gallant barks have made shipwreck.

There are two sandbanks on one or other of which all but God's people run- licentiousness, and pharisaism. We are kept instrumentally from pharisaism by having our vile and wicked hearts laid bare by the Spirit, and thus painfully learning the opposition of the flesh. And we are preserved from licentiousness by the work of the Spirit leading the soul up to Jesus' blood and righteousness, and thus opposing the flesh. And thus, in a strange, mysterious, and often to us inexplicable way, we are preserved in a right path, and are kept from error on the right hand and on the left. O may we be enabled ever to trust in God's mercy, and hope in his grace, that he will guide us every step of our life, until ultimately he shall bring us to the eternal enjoyment of himself, in that blessed kingdom where tears shall be wiped away from all faces, and the only employment known, shall be to ascribe eternal honor, power, salvation, and glory unto God and the Lamb!

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