

Adamic Man (The Man of Flesh)

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The Flesh Lusts Against the Spirit

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 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 ye would. 18 But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they that do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith 23 meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

That Which Is of the Flesh

First question to consider is how are we to understand the word "flesh"? Some modern English translations have chosen to give an interpretation of the Greek word *sarx*, rather than actually translate it. This is because it was thought that the word *sarx*, as used by Paul, gave too heavy an incrimination to man's physical existence. But, this is clearly what Paul intended to do. He set human flesh in juxtaposition to the human spirit. The flesh of man was the seat of his physical pleasures, his desires, and his sense of

personhood. John's reference to "lust of the flesh" in 1 John 2:16, was distinguished from lust of the eyes and pride of life; perhaps, to allow it to represent exclusively what gives pleasure or fulfillment to the flesh. Paul does not think that human flesh is evil, as did the Gnostics. In Eph 5:16, he says that a man should love his wife as he does his own body and then adds, "for no man ever hated his own flesh." It is a matter of emphasis to Paul. Adam of old lives on in man through the flesh of man. Only when man escapes his earthly existence does he totally put off his Adamic nature. But, it must be remembered that God created man's human body and called it "good." When it overtakes the whole of man's personality and rules over his spirit is when it becomes problematic.

Paul sees the human spirit as that which experiences renewal in conversion to Christ; his flesh, however, remains Adamic and its wants and desires are constantly set in tension with the attributes of the spirit, the "touchstone" of the image of God in man. Tracing the word "flesh" through the Scriptures (old and new) we see a diverse usage of everything from man's physical body to his relatives or kin, and also to his human appetite, from food to sexual desire. The ultimate problem of flesh is that it is the flesh that dies when the life force separates from the body.

The Hebrew word for flesh, "*basar*," is defined as, "the physical body of both humans and animals, of all living things, the human race, of one's kindred, the desires of one's body (hunger, thirst, pleasure, the seat of sexual desire), and the need for recognition of one's physical persona." In Gen 2:24 the sexual union of man and female is referred to as "become one flesh." The following collection of texts gives a good representation of the usage of this word in Scripture. The Hebrew term *basar* is consistently translated by the Greek *sarx* in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint/LXX). Its use in the OT to identify the human body, which consists of flesh.

In the Hebrew Scriptures

When God created man he did so by taking dust of the earth and turning it into human flesh, which is different from the way he

created animals. However, when he created woman he created her from the body of Adam. In Gen 2:21 we read, “And *Yahweh* God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs and closed up the **flesh**,” (Gen 2:21). When Adam saw the woman he said,

*This is now bone of my bones, and **flesh** of my **flesh**: she shall be called “woman,” because she was “taken out of man.”* ²⁴ *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and **they shall be one flesh*** (Gen 2:23-24).

Later, as the human race advanced and the sons of Adam populated the earth, God determined that he would remove the man of flesh from the earth,

*And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all **flesh** had corrupted it’s way upon the earth* ¹³ *and God said to Noah, The end of all **flesh** is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth* (Gen 6:12-13).

In Lev 17:14, while giving a prohibition to the people of Israel against eating blood which contains the breath of life (oxygen), we find a curious use of the term flesh, “Because the **the life of all flesh is its blood**; therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat **the blood of any manner of flesh**: for the life of all **flesh** is the blood: whosoever eats it shall be cut off (Lev 17:14; cf. Deut 12:23).

In Job’s response to Bildad, we see another usage of the term; Job says to him, “You have **eyes of flesh**? You see as a man sees? (Job 10:4). Here the term takes on the meaning we see in the NT, flesh is associated with desire, with a direct connection to the physical body; Job is speaking of seeing with a view to concerns of the flesh. Further in the text of Job we see a statement reflecting the creation imagery of Gen 2:7. Job says, “If it were his intention, and he withdrew his (God’s) spirit and his breath; **all flesh would perish** together, and man would return again to dust,” (Job 34:14-15). The text used by Peter as evidence of the resurrection of Jesus uses the term “flesh” to refer to the dead body of Jesus, which rested in hope (poetically speaking) of new life, “I have set *Yahweh* always before me;” says

David speaking for himself and his descendent the Messiah, “because he is at my right hand I will not be shaken; therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices, **my flesh also shall rest in hope,**” (Psalms 16:9).

Concerning Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones, the prophet, speaking for God, says to the bones: “And I will attach nerves/tendons to you, and **will bring flesh on you**, and cover you with skin, **and put breath (*ruach*) in you**, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am *Yahweh*,” (Ezek 37:6).

In the New Testament

These OT reference focus on flesh as the body of animals and human beings. As mentioned above, the Hebrew term for flesh (*basar*) is consistently translated by the Greek *sarx* in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and is also found throughout the Greek NT as relates to one’s physical existence or human life; however, it is used in the NT for the inclinations of the desires of man centered in human flesh. In this last sense Paul sets man’s flesh in juxtaposition (contrast and comparison) to the regenerated human spirit, creating a tension between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the spirit of man having experienced renewal. Following is a selection of such occurrences:

[From the words of John in the prologue of his Gospel] *And the Word (i.e., revelation of God personified) was made **flesh** [became a human being], and dwelled among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth, (John 1:14).*

[Jesus’ words spoken to Nicodemus] *What is **born of the flesh is flesh** [that which is born human]; and what is born of the spirit is spirit. 7 Don’t wonder that I said to you, You must be born again. 8 The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you can’t tell where it comes from and where it’s going: so is every one born of the spirit (John 3:6-8)*

[Jesus' words given in his sermon on the bread of life] *It is the spirit that makes alive; the **flesh** accomplishes nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).*

[Peter's application of the Joel 2:28 prophecy] *Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the **flesh**, he would raise up an anointed one to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his **flesh** did see corruption (Act 2:30).*

From here we move into the letters of Paul and his use of the term "flesh" (*sarx*) to refer to man's human nature intrinsic within the flesh of man. Paul sets the spirit having experienced new creation over against man's desires to gratify the physical wants of his body (flesh), consisting essentially of behaviors God has forbidden: behaviors of a sexual nature, the human appetite for aggrandizement or the excessive possession of desired things, man's tendency to participate in avarice, greed, and pride, or the inordinate desire for recognition, as well as the emotions driven by the desire or lust for fulfillment. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explicitly sets out this contrast:

*This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and you will not fulfil **the lust of the flesh**. 17 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 as you will; 18 but if you are led of the spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 **But the fruit of the Spirit is**: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 **And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts**. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16-25).*

Here in this text Paul gives the most extensive development of those behaviors that are condemned as sin that will end in the death of man without the hope of eternal life. Paul's warning concerning the power of the flesh, as used by satanic forces, is found throughout his letters. This concept of flesh can be seen in Romans 7:5, "For when we were **in the flesh the passions of sin**, through the law, were working in our members bearing the fruit of death." In 14:14, he admonishes his readers, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the **flesh**, to fulfil its lusts."

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul instructs the church concerning someone who had taken his father's wife (stepmother), "Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the **flesh**, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 5:5). He closes this first letter by reminding the believers at Corinth, "Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh** and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption," (1 Cor 15:50).

In the second letter to Corinth Paul, commenting on the resurrected state of Jesus, writes, "Henceforth we know no man after the **flesh**: yes, though we have known Christ after the **flesh**, now we know we him so no more," (2 Cor 5:16). In chapter 7, Paul's concerns with the corrupting nature of the flesh are clearly seen, "Having therefore these promises," he writes, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the **flesh** and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here Paul warns that the lusts of the flesh can take over the whole man if given enough time and freedom to do so; even defiling the spirit itself, (2 Cor 7:1).

In Galatians Paul reminds the Celts of Galatia, "he that sows to his **flesh** shall of the **flesh** reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," (Gal 6:8). In his letter to the believers in Ephesus Paul reasons,

And you he has made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now

works in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all conducted ourselves in times past; in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us; 5 even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive, together with Christ, (by grace you are saved), (Eph 2:1-5)

Although Paul gives this theme its most developed treatment, it is also present in other NT writers. The writers of the letter to the Hebrews, the letters of Peter, and the letters of John address the danger of the flesh and its ability to destroy the human spirit, which is struggling against the flesh in an attempt to live a life ruled by the newly created spirit in the quest of full restoration of the image of God. The writer of Hebrews says,

*Forasmuch then as **the children** [the sons of Adam] are partakers of **flesh and blood**, he also himself [as one who was a son of Adam], likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2:14).*

Peter, in his first circular letter, warns his readers, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts**, which war against the soul,” (1 Peter 2:11). In chapter 3, Peter says of the death and resurrection of Christ, “For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death **with** [reference to] **the flesh**, but made alive **with** [reference to] **the Spirit** (1 Peter 3:18). In verses 20-21, Peter tells the believers that their baptism was not a means of cleansing their flesh as a rite of purification; rather, it was a removing the sins staining their spirits [i.e. receiving the forgiveness of sins Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16], which was made possible by the resurrection of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:16-17). In 1 Peter 4:2, Peter tells his readers that they, “should no longer live the rest of their time in the **flesh** to the lusts of men, but to the will of God,” (1 Peter 4:2).” In his second letter Peter gives admonition to those who have chosen to walk after their own will and desires, which have led them into lusts of the flesh,

*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: 10 But chiefly **them that walk after the flesh** in the lust of uncleanness, and despise lordship. They are bold, selfwilled, and have no fear of the beings of glory 11 namely angels, which are greater in power and might . . . (2 Peter 2:9-11a).*

Further, in verses 14-15, Peter gives more detail concerning the kind of behaviors that develop from living after the flesh:

Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: a heart that trained in covetous practices; cursed children: 15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray (2 Peter 2: 14-15)

John is as concerned as the other writers of the NT that the believer should realize the negative influence of the desires of the flesh in turning a person from spiritual concerns to the desires of the flesh. In 1 John 2:15, he writes,

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh**, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but the one doing the will of God remains forever (1 John 2: 15).*

Restoration of the Adamic Body

This topic will be developed more fully in lesson 15: “And We Will All Be Changed,” to avoid leaving the impression that the human body will simply cease to be following human death, we will give a brief introduction to the restoration of the body in the general resurrection. Although Paul portrays human nature, and specifically the desires of the human body, in a very negative light; he does see the human body as a creation of God with the hope of recreation following death. The new creation of which Paul speaks in 2 Cor 5:17,

occurs only to the human spirit in that it is that part of man that bears the stamp of God. Man was created from the clay of the earth and was given life, not as an animal but life given directly by the very breath of God breathed into his face. The physical nature of man does have similarities with the non-human animal. The scriptures only speak of animals as having “life,” or the breath of life, but not the spirit (*ruach* or *pneuma*), which is unique to man. It by means of his spirit that man reflects greater intellectual and psychological attributes, and his emotional sophistication; but this is not the greatest of his attributes. He is the only being on earth with a god-consciousness and a sense of moral oughtness; especially, as relates to his moral responsibility to his fellowman.

The higher nature of man is not brought to full maturation in all men; in fact, from what we know from the history of man, we could say that most do not reach this stage of moral development. Said to say, more would rather be a god unto themselves and center their beliefs in themselves and make man, especially themselves, the object of their devotion than yield their will to the God who created them. In these beings the flesh rules and the number of those who have made this choice is staggering. However, those who conquer the desires associated with the flesh can do so only by means of the human spirit. In the teaching of Paul, it is the human spirit that is renewed now and the conquest of the spirit over the flesh will prove redemptive for the flesh. This is Paul argument in 1 Cor 15.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruit of them that slept. 21For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruit; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (1 Cor 15:20-23).

Paul's development of the 1 Cor 15 text will be addressed in detail in a later lesson; here we are only introducing the hope of the redemption of the body and spirit of man. Further on in this 1 Cor 15, Paul addresses the resurrection of those who experience new creation in Christ, using the imagery of the first Adam set in

juxtaposition to the second Adam (Christ):

But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" 36 Foolish one! What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39 All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another (1 Cor 15:35-39 author's translation).

The issue here concerns the nature of the resurrected body. In some sects of Judaism there was a belief that the human body would be resuscitated to be as it was before death. However, within the apocalyptic movement (as reflected in much of the Intertestamental Literature), there was a belief that those resurrected would be of a different nature. This was drawn from Dan 12:2-3,

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who impart wisdom will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever (Dan 12:2-3).

Paul appears to be of the same mind. In the Daniel vision, those raised will be "like the brightness of the heavens" and "like the stars for ever and ever." Paul explains to the church in Corinth that the body that is raised will be a different body than that which is sown. He goes on to develop this further,

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, 44 it is sown a natural body (soma psuchikon), it is raised a spiritual body (soma pneumatikon). If there is a natural body there is also a spiritual one (1 Cor 15:40-44 author's translation).

A change will occur concerning the nature of the human body; it will be changed from a perishable (*phthartos* - subject to decay) to an imperishable (*aphthartos* - not subject to decay) body. As the human body is now subject to decay, the resurrected body will not be; and the mortal (*thetos* - subject to death) nature of the body will be changed to an immortal (*athetos* - not subject to death) body. In the epistle of James we are told that death for the body is for the body to be separated from the spirit (James 2:26). In the resurrection the spirit will be returned to the body; as Paul says in the verses above (1 Cor 15:45), "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit (*pneuma zoopoioun* - a spirit that imparts life)."

For since by man came death (i.e. Adam) by man (Jesus of Nazareth) came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (zoopoiethsontai). 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruit; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (1 Cor 15:20-23).

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