

Begin by the Spirit, Finish by the Flesh?

Galatians 2:19-3:3

19 “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Three meanings of “flesh”:

- 1) The material of our literal physical body. By extension it is the frailty of human strength and life in contrast to God’s strength and life. Thus it can mean human effort in its inherent weakness.
- 2) Fallen mankind in rebellion and hostility to God, the sin nature
- 3) The realm of all that is fallen and hostile to God, the present evil age and all that it encompasses.

Galatians 3:3 - Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Galatians 4:23 - His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

Galatians 5:13 - You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Galatians 5:16-17 - So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21 - The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:24-26 - Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 6:7-8 – Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction;

Galatians 6:12-14 - Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.