

PHILEMON

Lesson 20: In the Flesh and In the Spirit

13 May, 2016

After Onesimus was “**begotten**” (vs. 10), he became “**profitable**” (vs. 11), “**both in the flesh, and in the Lord**” (vs. 16).

IN THE FLESH: because we are all descendants of Adam (1 Cor 15:22, Rom 5:12). In Adam; in the flesh, we are drawn toward sin.

IN THE LORD: because we’ve been born again (John 3:6-7); we’ve had a second birth (1 Pet. 1:23). The new man in the believer cannot sin (1 Jn. 3:9).

We learn from this passage that the balanced believer will be profitable both in the flesh and in the Lord.

In the Lord:

- a. witnessing, studying the Bible, faithful church attendance and participation.
- b. Avoiding or neglecting all Christian activities.

In the flesh:

- a. Arrogant, rude, self-centered, lazy, unwise, etc.
- b. Humble, polite, esteeming others better than themselves, hard-working, wise, etc.

Every Christian has a dual personality. This is a very delicate balance. Strength in one area can result in a weakness in the other area. We’ve got to be careful to have a consistent attitude, both in the church among the brethren—and outside the church among our neighbors and co-workers. “**The life which I now live in the FLESH**” (Gal. 2:20) does not have to be a bad thing if Christ is ruling in your heart.

ROMANS 7:18-24 Paul illustrated how the new man, which wants to do right—is always at war with the old man, which tends toward sin. The higher your standards of righteousness, the more obvious this contrast will be and the more it will grieve you that this conflict exists.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-10 In the Lord, every Christian is risen with Christ, seeks those things above and not on the earth, reckons themselves to be dead and already living with Christ in glory.

In the flesh, every Christian still has the capacity to commit the same acts of sin that any unsaved person may commit. This is what bothered Paul in Romans 7. Hence the command: “**Mortify...your members**” (vs. 5). You don’t HAVE to do those things. You can choose to be profitable and beloved in the Lord AND (!) in the flesh (Philemon 1:16).

PHILIPPIANS 3:4 Though Paul had reason to have confidence in the flesh, he said his flesh was no good. His flesh was governed by the new man.

You can yield to the LORD and be profitable and beloved in the flesh and in the spirit.

Or— you can yield to the flesh and be unprofitable—both in the flesh and in the spirit.

It is possible to live a victorious Christian life. It will be a constant battle all the days of your life to maintain the right balance and to keep the flesh under control, but you'll be glad you did.
