

Christian Life on the Inside - Sermon 1 of 5

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession explores the internal conflict between flesh and spirit in the Christian life, emphasizing the need for spiritual growth and transformation through the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 48:26

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses three ways in which we can act: out of the natural, out of the flesh, or out of the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes that there is nothing wrong with acting out of the natural, as it allows us to enjoy things that are right and fitting to our taste. However, he warns against allowing the flesh to dominate and control our natural desires, leading to self-centered actions. Instead, he encourages allowing the Holy Spirit to capture and use our souls as a vehicle to express Christ. The speaker also mentions the importance of discerning between soulish and spiritual actions, and emphasizes the need to understand the true nature of the Christian life on the inside.

Transcript

And these can be almost more deadly, because they spoil and ruin sweet relationships, one with another, and cause divisions. And Paul says they make you nothing more than babes. You're studded in growth.

And I cannot speak unto you as spiritual, but unto babes, I've got to give you forever the simple elementary things. It isn't you haven't got enough up here. It isn't you haven't studied your Bible.

You're carnal. And I don't care who that man is, how experienced, if he's acting carnally, if he's taking up arms against another, if he isn't loving his brother, but resenting him, that man is a babe in Christ. And I don't care what he may appear to receive in his mind.

I speak about myself. When I'm in this condition, I'm a babe. I can still understand spiritual things, but not really.

The only thing applicable to me, then, are the simple things of milk. All right, then. Here is this element that has come into our lives, into our natures, at the fall.

And as I've indicated, it still remains in the believer. He's not a natural man. The spirit within has been quickened.

Christ has begun to take it up, residents there, but there's this other. And so you have all the way through Paul, flesh and spirit, flesh and spirit. And perhaps the most famous passage is the passage you've got open there in Galatians 5. And this is an important one.

Here I come to something important, but Galatians 5, 17. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, one to another, so that you cannot do the things that you would.

Or alternatively, it could have been so that you may not do the things that you would. Both, I suppose, are true. The spirit lusts against the flesh, so you can't go completely the way of the flesh.

Though some of us seem to manage to go a good way. And the flesh lusts against the spirit, so you'll find yourself unable to go wholly the way of the spirit. And what a battle there is to be willing to take that gracious attitude toward another who's so wrong.

How difficult it is to make that gift to another. It almost pulls the inside out of you, making a gift to another. Another face says, no, keep it for yourself.

Oh yes, and this is the great battle that goes on within us. Now listen. What is the purpose of this conflict between flesh and spirit? What are they fighting over? Who is going to possess the soul? Who's going to capture and dominate and control that natural part, that amoral part, which isn't necessarily right or wrong in itself? Is it the flesh going to capture it and make it act self-centredly, so that all those beautiful gifts are prostituted for our own wretched ends, and anger flashes out of our minds, and hardness is in our hearts, and lust in our desires? Is it going to be the flesh going to capture the soul? Or is it going to be the dear Holy Spirit, the other self of Jesus, as someone has called him, going to capture that beautiful thing, the soul, and use it as his vehicle to express Christ? This is the great conflict.

When the flesh captures the soul, we have what is called the old man, which is the man of which self is the centre. But when the spirit captures the soul, you have what Paul calls the new man, the centre of which is Christ. I don't think, myself, I'm not dogmatic, that it's right to regard the references to the old man as a picture of the sin nature.

No, I believe it's right to regard it as the natural captured by the flesh. There's the old man. The old man is simply the man of old.

That's how you always live. And we'll turn away and put that man off. But when the spirit is permitted, as a result of deep surrenders and repentances, some of them quite painful, to capture the soul again, Christ is the centre, and there is the new man.

That's just perhaps a help to understand the allusions. And now, in the last minutes, I want to suggest that there are three ways in which we can act. First, we can act out of the natural, and there's nothing wrong in so doing.

You can just be your natural self, enjoying those things that are right and proper and fitting to your particular tastes. It can be beautifully ingenuous. There's so much which is natural, and in a way we ought to be willing to let the natural have its place.

A child naturally wants to express itself. It's not wrong for it to want attention. That's natural.

You're wrong. I'm wrong not to give it. We grown-ups talk, talk, talk, and we forget the children.

There's a natural want to have a little attention. That's why they create a fuss. And sometimes we have wronged our children by not giving them attention.

We can act out of the natural. But don't let us kid ourselves. It's spiritual.

It's natural. And once again, don't have any inhibitions about the natural. I used to feel, when I was first blessed and got into deep fellowship with some of my brothers, that they were rather quiet types, you know.

Reserved, your typical Englishman, Chuck would call them. And I thought, well, that's consistent with brokenness. But I wasn't.

I was ebullient. I said, well, of course, I've got to change and be very quiet and so on. That wasn't so.

God set me free. And none were more pleased when I was set free to be myself than these very brothers. They didn't want me imitating them.

That was how they were. No, no. That's the natural.

So I don't want you to get into bondage. You are free in God's sight to be yourself and to express things in a way which is natural to you. And all that can be without sin and will vary from person to person.

The trouble is, of course, when our service is done merely in that power. And it can be. We can use means and measures.

I mean singing. If the spirit uses it, wonderful. But it can work on its own.

And for a time, it sounds the same thing. But it isn't the same thing. It's just singing.

And it may have some sort of influence. But if your spirit says something like, this is soulish. You can come into a meeting, you know, this is soulish.

There's something here getting us all stirred up. This is just the soul. I find it difficult to give a clear title to the theme of our Bible readings this morning and throughout the week.

I suppose I can only, and you need to know what we're doing and where we're going. I can only say that the theme is really going to be what the Christian life really is on the inside. What this life is that you've embarked upon on the inside.

Because that's where you really live yourself. And we don't always know where we are, what we've embarked on. And of course, our end is to know what that victorious life is to be on the inside.

Because what's inside will inevitably come outside. Now this morning, I want you to turn for our first passage in these few mornings, to the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. And we shall be very largely confining ourselves to the writings of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

It's lovely to see the different personalities and outlooks coming through Scripture, even when it comes to divine, eternal, unchanging truth. John has his particular outlook and vision of that Lord Jesus. His own particular way of putting things.

Peter has his, different from John. And Paul is different from either. And inasmuch as there are far more epistles by Paul than Peter or John, you need to understand your Paul, if you're going to understand your New Testament at all.

Now the passage we're going to read is 1 Corinthians chapter 2, or part of it, a little bit of 3. And I'm going to use throughout the authorized version, or as they say in America, the King James version. In spite of its Elizabethan language, and in spite of certain obscurities, it has a precision and an accuracy which no other version has. Certainly it has a precision and an accuracy that the revised standard version hasn't had, that doesn't have.

Of course it hasn't got the felicity of expression. It doesn't relate quite so easily to the modern man as the revised standard version does. But if you want accuracy, you need to go to your authorized version, or better still possibly, to the revised version.

Because when they made that revision in 1881, they were told to change the authorized as little as they could, only those things that really needed to be changed and made a little more accurate. The revised standard version has gone further and hasn't been bound by the great demands of accuracy. It may surprise you to know that there is no translation which is more word for word with the Greek than the authorized.

That's possibly why it isn't always easy English. But if it's accuracy you want, maybe you don't always want dead accuracy, but if you're preaching the word and studying it in order to expound it, you must really know it's accuracy. Now I've been a bit shocked to discover that in the themes I shall take, we simply must use the authorized version.

There are terms which we've used for years as Christians, which I shall use continually, which come from the authorized version, which don't even appear in your revised standard version. Now I read my revised standard version. I always read the two.

And I don't want to denigrate the revised standard version. It's brought great advantages. Carry on.

But I'm telling you, that's how we're going to be. And if you happen to have brought both your revised standard version and your authorized, you might be quite well served to bring your authorized as well as your revised. All I would say to you, dear Christian, never jettison your authorized version.

And I think you will see why I say this as we proceed with our study. I don't know how to express what we're going to express except in the words of the authorized version. And the revised standard version, in these particular passages, just doesn't give it.

So it really means that, but once again, I don't want to confuse you or disappoint you that you brought your revised standard version. It's a beautiful version. To my mind, far preferable to the new English Bible.

And it's come to stay. It's getting more and more widely used. And we who love our authorized version have nonetheless got to use the revised standard version often.

But I find myself going back to the expression used in the authorized version. Now the passage then, we're going to read. We have to break into Paul's argument.

You'll never get the beginning of Paul's argument unless you go to the beginning of a thistle. It all runs into one another. That's his way.

Doesn't always bother too much about full stops. It's all long sentences. Beautiful.

But you've got to, as I say, you've got to know your Paul and know how to read him and to pick up the threads. But we're going to break in at verse 12 of chapter 2. Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely or gratuitously given us of God, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches. I do like the word Holy Spirit more than the Holy Ghost.

I must confess the man of the prize with that old English phrase. So, by all means, always say Holy Spirit more than Holy Ghost. And yet, somehow, we oldies, there are associations with that old phrase that we still love.

Never mind. Words which, not which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches. And here we have to go to another translation.

Interpreting spiritual things to spiritual men. But the natural man, for the natural man, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they're spiritually discerned.

But he that is spiritual judgeth or discerneth all things, yet he himself is judged or discerned of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

I have fed you with milk and not with meat. For hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet, for ye are still carnal.

For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife and division, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Now the Christian is a strange mixture. He finds all sorts of conflicting forces within him, and the Christian has many a big battle going on in his heart. The man of the world, of course, is a strange mixture, and his makeup has to this day still defied the psychiatrist.

My own son is a psychiatrist, and as I allow myself to discuss things with him, I'm amazed how almost every psychiatrist has his own theory, very largely, on which he's working. Yes, man is a strange mixture, but the Christian, the believer of the Lord Jesus, is an even stranger mixture than the man of the world. He has all the makeup, the complicated makeup that the man of the world has, but another element has come into his life, and although this other element has produced his highest blessedness, it has nonetheless caused him problems which he never had before.

And this passage we have before us is going to help us to understand not only what man is, but what this stranger creature, the child of God, is. Now, Paul begins in this passage by classifying the human race into two. Now, we are quite used to regarding the human race as being classified into two great groups, the lost and the saved, and those are still to this day the great division, and the two classifications.

A man is either lost or he is saved. Clear cut, nothing in between. And Paul classifies the human race into two, but he does it in a different way and expresses it differently.

He doesn't talk here about the lost and the saved, but he talks about the natural man and the spiritual man. What is, then, the natural man? Well, the Greek word, and I get this second-hand from Derold Young's Analytical Concordance, is *psukikos*, from which we get psychology, and it really means the soul, the soulish part. And the natural man, if you want it literally, is the soulish man.

Now, the scriptural division of man's makeup is given in 1 Thessalonians 5.23. And if you want to have a little biblical psychology, you cannot do better than start with this verse, which gives us our makeup as God-seers. 1 Thessalonians 5.23, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many people have got it a bit loose, and they talk about the body, and the mind, and the soul.

Well, that's not biblical at all. The biblical division of our makeup is spirit, soul, and body. Well, now we don't need to talk too much about what the body is.

We have it ever with us, and we can see one another's bodies, and we're only too conscious of our own in its aches and pains sometimes. But, according to scripture, what is the soul? The soul is the psychological part of you, the *psychikos* part. It's your mind.

It's your emotions. It's your temperament. It's your real essential ego, with its own character and way.

You don't have a soul. You are a soul, according to scripture. And this soul, this natural part of us, is what we may call amoral.

It isn't in itself cynical. Your personality, excitable or quiet, ebullient or retiring, there's no right or wrong about it. Your emotions aren't necessarily wrong in themselves.

Your appreciation of this or that, nothing wrong. Your taste in music, there's nothing either right or wrong, and we've got to tell ourselves that sometimes. We sometimes think some music is morally wrong.

I'm not thinking of pop music, I'm thinking of contemporary music. You know that program in the afternoons on radio three, Music for Today? But I've got to tell myself it's not morally wrong. It's part of the soul.

It's the natural part of us. Well, that's the soul, as I see it in scripture. What's the spirit? The spirit is that faculty which man originally had, by means of which faculty, the topmost faculty in his being, he could get in touch with an invisible God.

He could move, it is, in an invisible realm. Indeed, by his spirit, the invisible was just as real to him as the visible, probably more so. And by means of this topmost faculty called spirit, he could understand God.

But that faculty perished, died after it, when sin came into the world. And it really was true of Adam, and the day that he took of that forbidden fruit, he died. He didn't die bodily.

He didn't die psychologically. But he did die spiritually. That faculty perished by which he was able to get in touch with God.

Whether there are any vestigial remains of that aptitude spirit, I don't know. Maybe. I haven't caught into that enough.

But I do know this, that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes into a life, that dead spirit is made to live again, and he begins to move as Adam did, in an invisible realm, at ease in it, happy in it, knowing that invisible God, in touch with him, able to commune with him, which never was possible before. Now this is what we mean by being born from above. Lovely phrase.

Not merely born again in the Greek. I think it's been born from above. This is what is meant by being, you who were dead were made alive together with Christ.

What really happens is that dead faculty is made alive as an interior resurrection when Jesus comes. And you're back where Adam was before he fell. Indeed, you're in a better place.

For in him, in Christ, the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost. So that's the soul and that's the spirit. Now what does Paul mean by what he calls the natural man? The revised version of R.S. Lee isn't an article on the unspiritual man.

It's natural man, it's really this psychicos man, this psychological man. Why he's tipped to this? He's a man who only has the natural. He's only got the soul and its capacities.

Not yet has this quickening taken place within him. But that soul, God's made it and it's very lovely. The soul, in many a person, can be very nice and gracious and courteous.

You can send the soul to university, it comes out well-educated. You can correct a child and the soul becomes a courteous, gentle man, gentle woman. And a soul can become religious.

It's quite capable of appreciating religion. The soul loves to go to the great cathedrals. It gets stirred at the great organ music.

And it can even get aroused by oratory. But it's only soul. It's soulless.

That man could get exactly the same emotions in a concert hall as he gets in divine service in one of our great cathedrals, the soul. Now such a man, good and nice as he may be, Paul says, cannot know the things of the spirit. For the simple reason he has never received the Holy Spirit, nor has his spirit been quickened.

Turning back to 1 Corinthians 2, verse 4, you have it there put in the plainest, most emphatic way. The natural man, the soulish man, the psychicos man, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they're spiritually discerned and it's a spiritual faculty which has not been quickened within him.

Can you have anything clearer? It matters not if he's got a degree in theology. It matters not if he's refined. We have it here.

He cannot know the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. You've only got to listen to any comment in the media, on the radio, television, or in the press, with regard to spiritual things, and you see they're completely at sea. When they're sent to report a spiritual meeting, they don't know what to make of it.

And all I can say, if all their other reports are as inaccurate and feeble as are their reports of the work of the Lord, I wouldn't trust not even the political commentators. But they're not. Oh no! In politics or sport, they're on home ground.

But when they come into a work where God's at work, they don't know really what it's all about, because they cannot understand it. Not only can they not understand the things of God, but they can't understand Christianity. Well, you know that only too well.

Maybe your old mum and dad can't understand it. They don't know what's happened to it. They don't know what's really making you tick.

And they can't understand the new birth. We don't know where the wind comes from or where it goes to. Now you understand these extraordinary mysteries.

We're an enigma unto the world. Don't be disappointed if you find that so. Take it to your heart as a further encouragement that you are indeed a child of God, by new birth.

So that's the natural man. But when that natural man, by the grace, the distinguishing grace of God, is awakened to his need, and repents of his sin, and puts his faith in Christ, that man receives what he hadn't received before, the Holy Spirit. Let's make it quite clear, the reception of the Holy Spirit isn't a subsequent experience to new birth.

The coming of the Spirit into the life effects new birth. You have that clearly stated in Romans 8, verse 9. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of his. If you haven't received the Holy Spirit, the Bible says you're none of his at all.

In another place it says, the fact that you have received the Holy Spirit, with all the precious evidences of illumination and understanding and conviction of sin, is the seal of your salvation. As the old hymn says, soon as my all I ventured, on the atoning blood, the Holy Spirit entered, and I was born of God. It's a terrific thing, the new birth.

And I don't know that everybody who passes as a Christian has as yet received it. I think Wesley would have passed as a fine Christian, but in most circles, more dedicated than we are. But not yet had he ventured his all on the atoning blood, not yet had he received the Holy Spirit, and been born of God.

And when he did, what a tremendous thing it was, I think it's a bigger thing for a Wesley to be born again than a drunkard. It shocked people, they said, if you have not, we're not a Christian until yesterday, where does that put us, who are equally religious as he? Well of course, it put them on the wrong side, but they had the privilege of joining him on the right side, at the foot of the cross. Oh, it could be, this is where some of us are, we're only natural men, responding in a natural way, our emotions stirred as we would expect them to be.

And that's the reason why, when the service are all over, down you go again. It was just the soul being around. And maybe there's not being repentance at the foot of the cross, leading to the incoming of the dear Holy Spirit, producing a quickened spirit within you, and a complete new nature.

When it happens friends, it's the same old chassis, but a new engine. Ah, a new refit, right inside. And by that dear Holy Spirit, who comes in, when we venture out all upon the atoning blood, Jesus himself comes to dwell within us.

Sometimes we read in scripture, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, sometimes Christ dwelling in us. Well, it's the same. If you want to divide it up, it's by the Spirit that Christ, the Heavenly One, is made to dwell in our hearts, by faith.

Ephesians 3.16, that you'll die being strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man, in order that Christ might dwell in your heart. And the purpose of Christ dwelling in me, is not to improve my life, but rather to impart his life, and to live his life all over again in me. He wants to capture that amoral part of us, the soul.

That personality is a beautiful thing. I believe every man is really beautiful, if only Christ could capture it. And the soul, the natural, is intended to be the container thereafter of deity.

Not struggling, not trying, doing this supreme dead bottom, God in me, Christ in me, the Holy Ghost in me, and that's the highest destiny of this beautiful soul, this beautiful make-up of yours, to be a container of deity. And for that one, to express himself through that personality, in sweet and gracious ways, love being the first fruit of his indwelling. Now, that's the spiritual man.

The natural man, the psuchikos man, the soulish man. The spiritual man is the man who has received the Spirit, in whom Christ now is dwelling and expressing himself. There, then, are the two.

But then, you will notice, going back to 1 Corinthians 2, that Paul speaks of a third subdivision. You don't quite know where to put it. He talks about the carnal man.

And I've read it, 1 Corinthians 3, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. He didn't accuse of being natural man. But he said, I can't really call you spiritual man.

Something's happened to you, I don't doubt. But I can't speak to you as spiritual. And they were somewhere in between.

He calls them carnal. Rather like the Israelites. They had been brought out of Egypt, by the grace of God, in order to enter into a land that flowed with milk and honey.

And God's purpose was that they should have gone quickly from one to the other. But in actual practice, they got stuck for 40 long years in a barren wilderness, halfway. And we can regard that wilderness experience and life as what Paul means by being carnal.

Don't think, however, that that implies that in one bound, you're out of the wilderness and into Canaan forever. At any given moment, you may be in one or the other. But at any given moment, you may pass from carnal to spiritual, from wilderness to Canaan.

Now, what is the carnal man? When man fell, not only did his topmost faculty, the spirit, perish, and he was cut off from God, but another element entered into him. And this element is called in Paul's writings, and especially he uses this phrase more than any other writer, the flesh. The flesh.

You'll meet Paul talking about the flesh. He's had to contend with it in his own heart for years. He has to contend with it in the church.

It's one of the things he's, one of the, one of his foes. You've heard about the three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is the external foe, the flesh is the internal foe, and the devil is the internal foe.

And they keep us busy, don't they? All of them. And the most subtle is this internal foe, and that's what Paul talks when he talks about the flesh. Well, what is the flesh? It seems quite clear that the flesh is the self-centred principle.

That wants life all the time to revolve around oneself instead of revolving around God. Before Paul, man was easily, happily, delightedly God-centred. But when he fell, not only was he cut off from God, but this other element entered in, and thereafter his natural thing is to become centred on himself.

He wants everything and everybody else to revolve around himself. Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction.

He wants everything and everybody else to revolve around himself. It'll wonder that there's trouble, for one home with more than one centre isn't going to work, and a world with a thousand centres isn't going to work either. The whole business was intended to revolve around God, and all the planets would have found their orbit, peacefully and harmoniously.

But each planet wants the universe to revolve around itself, and it's the flesh which is the element that produces that. Eddie Young last week talked about the sin nature. Well, that's a good phrase.

It just means this, the flesh. And it's not without significance that the central letter of the little word sin is I. I. Whether your sins are gross or refined, if it's I in the centre, that's sin. Take a dictionary and look up all those compound words beginning with self.

Self-interest, self-glory, self-consciousness. There you have a great catalogue of sin. And so this has come into man's being, the flesh.

Now it's described pretty clearly and ruthlessly in Romans 8. Turn over there if you would. Romans 8 verse 7. And once again we're going to look at the authorised. I think this helps, but even that needs a little amplification.

Romans 8 verse 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God. And it really means the mind or disposition of the flesh. Carnal mind means the mind or disposition of the flesh.

Now what is the disposition of the flesh? This awful thing that's come into us. Listen. It is enmity against God.

Its natural thing is to defy God's wishes in preference for his own. The flesh, the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. I say, look at this.

It is not subject to the law of God. And if that isn't strong enough, neither indeed can be. No matter how much you religious it, whatever the word is.

No matter how you dress it up. It is not subject to the law of God. Neither indeed can be.

Now the strange thing, however, about the flesh is, although this is absolutely basically true, it is capable of moral effort. Indeed, in one place Paul talks about seeking to be made perfect by the flesh. The flesh would even aim at perfection.

The flesh can have many good intentions and can work hard and pray much. But it is the flesh that's doing it. Although it can seem to be so good and doing so much, its deep character has not changed.

Self is still the centre. And in my labours for God, or my attempt to be a different person, it's rarely that I might stand better in people's eyes, or get a better feeling on the inside, or ease the situation. And self-interest, on those occasions when the flesh does attempt moral effort, is the real motivation.

And for that reason, all the good intentions and new promises and consecrations which the flesh can make in the believer are always going to come unstuck and don't last for long. And its true character will very soon reveal itself. Do you know the flesh is probably more active in Christian circles than anywhere else? It's the flesh that's made your church what it is, and you what you are.

Paul wrote this to a good, charismatic Christian church, the church at Corinth. But he says you're carnal, there are divisions among you, there's bitterness, and many other things. Oh, you haven't said goodbye to the flesh just because you've joined an evangelical church.

You may run into nastier forms of it. Then in that liberal church, there was a little bit of the milk of human kindness going on there. When the flesh becomes dominant in the saint, and when the flesh has a chance to express itself through scripture, standing up for truth, arguing, fighting, it's in its ugliest form.

And I've been involved in all that. And Paul tells us what its ultimate and natural works are in Galatians 5. Step over to that if you will. Verse 19, Galatians 5. And here he details, my, does he know his foe? He does.

Does he go to town? We need it. Thank you, Paul. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these.

Now I'm not going to go into them in detail, we'll spend through that another morning. But you can see the first glance, the first form or so, are sex sins. And then the next are sins that seem to be associated with the occult.

And then, well you've got some real old English words here, variance, ebulations, and so on. That's where perhaps your revised standard version will help you. Then there are more refined, but more deadly forms of the flesh, jealousy, and factions, and groups, and disagreements.

The flesh, the works of the flesh. But without going into them in detail, a mere glance at them shows you that at bottom they are all simply expressions of self-centeredness. And it's self-centeredness that not only produces the gross sins, I don't care what the law says, I don't care what the old-fashioned standards are, I'm going to indulge myself, you may say wrongly, in the realm of sex, or drink, or something like that, that self-centeredness, that's what it springs from, that's all, I don't care, I'm going to have it.

But the other more reformed, refined sins are just as much self-centeredness. But in itself, it's not necessarily wrong. The question is, who uses it? Who's captured it? The flesh or the spirit.

Now, the second thing, way in which we can act, we can act out of the flesh, which means that the flesh has captured, at least for the time being, you, your ego, the natural you. And how easily that can happen. How easily I find it, things really got to happen, or something got to be said, and the flesh in me reacts, and captures the whole situation.

And my tongue isn't speaking words of love. My mind is having arguments. It's not with my mouth, in my mind, I have mental arguments with people.

Oh, how quickly this terrible thing with us can capture the soul, and we act out of the flesh, we become carnal. And Romans 8 says, to be carnally minded is death. It's death to blessing, it's death to spiritual life.

When the flesh reacts, it's hard, bitter, or covetous, and it's captured me, and I can act so easily. I can rationalize it so it sounds as if I'm doing it all for the Lord. Maybe some of the things, maybe the stand I take, may be for the Lord, no doubt at all.

I'm not going to say, it might not be. That bold stand for truth, it's right. But sometimes the spirit in which we do it, is of the flesh.

It may not always be done in love. Well, that is. And then the third way in which we can act, is out of the spirit.

First fruit of whom, is love. And when he's captured us anew, you're working now in the spirit, in cooperation with him. He uses the natural.

He uses the thing. It's not functioning on its own. We're not playing a gimmick in our Christian service.

It's the spirit using that. The same natural, where before it was acting on its own, or dominated by the flesh, is dominated now by the Holy Spirit. And knowing my own heart, that's not likely to be without many a repentance and judgment of myself and the flesh.

Because we are full of it. The flesh is there. But oh, thank God, as we shall see in coming days, there's a way of freedom from continually being dominated by the flesh.

A way in which we may be continually dominated by the spirit. But as I say, only because there's a way of continual return to the cross, where this can be constantly renewed, not otherwise. And to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

My last sentence is this. A bit more than a sentence, I guess, but only a moment. It isn't only the flesh, the soul dominated by the flesh, which has got to be judged and confessed and repented of, but there are times when the natural, the perfectly good natural has to be surrendered.

Oswald Chambers says, the natural, if surrendered at the call of God, becomes spiritual. But the natural, if we refuse the call of God to surrender it on a definite occasion, and indulge in, becomes carnal. What do I mean? Well, there are certain natural things.

It's natural you want to be heard, not to sit dumb. You want to express yourself. That's one case, for instance.

The spirit might say to you, give others a chance, be quiet. And if that very natural desire is surrendered, and it might mean a big surrender, it might mean a preacher is not going to have a precious opportunity to preach. He loves it.

It's true. No one gets so blessed as those that preach the gospel. It's not wrong to desire.

But God may say, you prepare to surrender the natural, and the dumb may be, the natural becomes spiritual. But if we refuse the call of God, and push on, and it may not be to do with speaking, it may be some other thing. We will, must be heard.

We become bored, we lack love, and that very natural gift of loquaciousness can become carnal. Of course, that's no problem to some of us, because some of us haven't got it, so it's just fine. Well, it may be your natural gift of being quiet, if not surrendered to, could become carnal.

If the spirit says, you are to speak and break your silence, and you surrender your natural reticence, that surrender will lead to spirituality, to more of his fullness. But if I refuse, carnality comes. Well, there are more things.

You have to think that one over a bit deeper. But I'm grateful to Oswald Chamberlain. So in these days, we're going to speak together.

I'm as much in need as you, to find the way out of the wilderness of being carnal, into the land of milk and honey, where the spirit comes in flowers, and makes heaven, and Christ, and everything else, gloriously real. Let us pray. Jesus, thank you for this word.

Thank you for, in thy word, giving the explanation of the complex creatures we are, and yet not so complex after all, Lord. All we need to know is thee, and to be willing to you continually, to be capturing that self which otherwise would be dominated by this terrible thing within us, the flesh. And even today, may there have many of us be saying, Lord, I'm willing to sacrifice the natural, that you might reign, if that's what you want.

Lord, I'm willing to judge those reactions in my heart. Jesus, move in, and help some of us who are only natural men, to have this precious initial experience in these days together. Amen.

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