

# On the Struggle Between the Flesh and Spirit Which Occurs in a Christian

## St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

**Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.**

Every Christian has a two-fold birth, the old one of the flesh, and the new spiritual one, as is said above, and the one is contrary to the other. The birth of the flesh is flesh; the spiritual is spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn. 3:6).

But since these two births are opposed to one another, there arises from this a conflict and struggle between the flesh and the spirit within the Christian: "for the flesh I lusteth against the spirit, I and the spirit against the flesh. "

The flesh wants to put the spirit to death; the spirit the flesh. The flesh wants to control the spirit, the spirit the flesh. The flesh wants to be proud, boast, be puffed up; the spirit does not want this, but desires to be humble. The flesh wants to be angry; irritable, argumentative, to take vengeance in word or deed; but the spirit does not want this, but wants to forgive in meekness. The flesh wants to commit fornication and adultery; but the spirit turns away from this and desires to be pure. The flesh wants to have what is someone else's, to pilfer, to steal in every way; but the spirit turns away from this and wants to give away even what it has. The flesh wants to flatter, lie, cheat, swindle and be hypocritical; but the spirit hates this and wants to be truthful and to act straightforwardly. The flesh wants to hate another person, but the spirit wants to love him. The flesh wants to live in idleness, but the spirit turns away from this and wants to exercise itself in blessed labors. The flesh wants to have fun, get drunk, have banquets and dinners; but the spirit turns away from this and wants to live modestly or to fast. The flesh wants to seek out fame, honor, riches in this world; but the spirit despises all this and strives only for the good things of heaven, and so on. In this way the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

But a Christian, as one who has been renewed, must live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, and submit the flesh to the spirit, according to the

exhortation of the Apostle: "Walk in the spirit and do not do the works of the flesh" This is what it is "to crucify the flesh with the passions and desires" (Gal 5:16,24); "do not care for the flesh in order to fulfill its desires" (Rom. 13:14); "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11); "we should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) , not allow sin to rule over us, live for Christ, Who died for us and rose from the dead. Beloved Christians! Let us take account: do we engage In such a struggle; are we in the midst of this fight for salvation; do we walk. in the newness of life; do we oppose the tendencies and desires of the flesh; do we not permit sin to rule and have mastery over us? But those alone are of Christ, who have "crucified the flesh with the passions and desires" (Gal 5:24).

What is the use of being called a Christian, but not actually being one? It is not the name of Christian which shows forth a true Christian, but the struggle against the flesh and every sin.

One ought not to permit the flesh all that it demands: it demands food, it demands drink, it demands clothing, it demands rest, and so on.

What it needs, we will give it, but when it wants that which is opposed to the will of God and His law, we will not permit it, so that we may be Christians not only in name but in reality. Amen.