

This faith-journey is a battle, and we are commanded to fight



*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*  
Romans 8:13

## **Put to Death the Deeds of the Flesh**

Currently we have nightly Zoom prayer calls during the week. The prayer leader generally picks a chapter from the Bible and we pray-read through the verses as a group. Cumulatively these have been very enriching times for me. One of the more significant times was in praying through a Scriptural passage that

related to our responsibility to war against the deeds of the flesh.

I had an important realization that the battle against the flesh was a normal one in our walk as a Believer and that I had an active responsibility.

As we prayed through one of these passages (and there are a number of them), I was struck by the violent nature of the struggle that we are in. What encouraged me as I prayed was that the struggle is normal. Just this morning in my devotional time I read another list of these where Yeshua listed out the things that defile us from Mark 7:20. He lists "*evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness*" as those things inside a person that defiles them. As I read these descriptors I found a cluster of these that I struggle with more than others--especially when considering Yeshua's standard for purity on a heart-level.

I think one of the devil's tactics is to remind us of the things we struggle with and then accuse us with the thought that a real Believer wouldn't have these struggles. That's not what these biblical passages reveal. As we consistently come to Yeshua with these struggles, He will help us. Here's a couple of the things that I'm learning in my commitment to resist these deeds of the flesh.

First of all, I am not to be surprised at the struggle. I know over my life that I'm gaining ground overall, but it's still a struggle that can be pretty intense at times. It is normal in the life of a Believer to struggle against sin, and we are to actively resist.

Secondly, we are to agree with YHWH about His perspective of these things. In our present godless culture, it's easy to justify unrighteous behavior if we look to the people around us and not to what the Word of God says. Part of agreeing with Him is in actively taking our stance against what the Bible says is wrong,

and then owning our part in these things by repenting, starting afresh, and asking Him to help us. The devil wants to discourage us in the struggle and have us acquiesce and admit that this is just "who we are"...with his desire being that we no longer actively partner with God against these deeds of the flesh. At the very least he wants us passive and not vigorously resisting these things.

Thirdly, we are to personally resist. God will not do this for us. He will help us (note the "by the Spirit" qualifier in the Romans 8:13 passage above) but we have a major part in this. The best way I have found to start the personal resistance is with my mouth by talking to God. Something on the order of, "Lord I'm struggling with bitterness and unforgiveness with this other brother. Father, Your word states that this is improper in the life of a Believer. I repent of this sin before You. Forgive me Lord and give me a clean heart. I set my heart to actively resist these sins and ask You to help me." I remember a couple of years ago when I was having a harder than usual period of struggle. I realized that though I wasn't justifying the bad attitudes and behavior, I wasn't verbally engaging with God in repentance and asking for His help. As I changed this and began to talk to God, the battle became easier.

Finally, we are not only resisting the bad, but we are putting on the good. These both are done in tandem. Positive deeds of the Spirit is what we are to "put on." I like how Colossians 3:9-10 puts it: *we are "stripping off the old sinful nature with its wicked deeds and putting on our new nature which is being renewed as we grow in the knowledge of God"* (my paraphrase). Later in 3:12, it describes what we are putting on: *"compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving anyone who offends us."* As a Believer we're called to both resist the bad while embracing the good.

In closing, dear saint are you surprised by the intensity of the battle? Are you growing weary and discouraged? YHWH wants us to gain a heavenly perspective by being aware of the battle and our responsibility in it. He will strengthen us and help us as we wait upon Him and ask Him to do so. Pray for me to be divinely active in the fray. I'm praying for you too.