

PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH • SERMON • THE CONQUERING KING,
PART EIGHT

Conquering the Flesh

When the enemy is you — an exploration of Galatians 5:16–25

Conquering the Flesh

The Conquering King, Part Eight — Galatians 5:16–25

Preached Sunday, September 13, 2026 by Pastor Jeremy Arnold

Galatians 5:16–25 • Ephesians 6:12 • Mark 7:21–23 • Romans 13:14 • 1 Peter 2:11 • Luke 4:1–13 • 1 John 2:16 • 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 • Titus 2:11–12 • Hebrews 4:15

For seven weeks we have watched the Conquering King take ground — Jericho, Ai, the kings of the south. This morning the battlefield moves. The enemy is no longer outside the camp, and no wall needs to come down. The same King who fights the enemies around us must also conquer the enemy inside us.

THE SERMON TEXT

Galatians 5:16–25 (ESV)

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

RECAP

We have been studying how God uses Joshua to lead Israel in reclaiming territory and fulfilling the covenant He made with Abraham. In the previous chapters we see physical battles that could be viewed as the manifestation of a much deeper supernatural conflict. In this series, *The Conquering King*, we see that God is not just conquering territory and fulfilling His covenant to Abraham — He is conquering the hearts of men.

Joshua shows us physical conflict involving God's people and hostile nations. Ephesians 6 reveals that our ultimate struggle is not merely against human beings but against spiritual powers. And Galatians 5 shows us another battlefield altogether — the battle within ourselves, between the desires of the flesh and the Spirit.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

The same King who fights the enemies around us must also conquer the enemy inside us.

Galatians 5:17 (ESV)

“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

Point

The battleground is in our hearts and minds.

REMEMBER ACHAN?

First he saw. Then he coveted. Then he took. Then he hid. There was a longing in his heart for the silver and the fine garments — things God had forbidden. So what happens when the greatest enemy is not outside the camp, but inside our hearts? Verse 17 says the desires of the flesh and the Spirit are against one another. That brings the battle inside.

Mark 7:21–23 (ESV)

“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

These are the things our flesh longs for — and the flesh can build an idol without ever carving one out of stone.

What an idol actually is

An idol can be anything that takes the place of God as the SOURCE of what we believe will satisfy us. The issue is when something created becomes the source of ultimate satisfaction, identity, security, or worship that belongs to God alone.

SO WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO?

Many of us try harder. Some get a case of the do-betters. Some turn over a new leaf. But look at what Paul actually says:

Galatians 5:24 (ESV)

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Let that soak in. What is he saying?

- He does not say manage it.
- He says put it to death.
- Crucify it — along with its passions and its desires.

Galatians 5:24 says those who belong to Christ “have crucified the flesh.” That is describing something already true of a believer because of our relationship with Christ. Christ has dealt decisively with the flesh — and therefore we must continually put its desires to death by the power of the Spirit.

We don't crucify the flesh so that we can belong to Christ. We crucify the flesh because we belong to Christ.

APPLICATION

Romans 13:14 (ESV)

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

1 Peter 2:11 (ESV)

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”

We do not overcome the flesh through human determination. We overcome by abiding in Christ, by walking in the Spirit, by trusting God’s Word, and by submitting ourselves to God’s will.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS IN THE DESERT

Luke 4:1–13 shows us how it is done. And John gives us three categories that help us recognise exactly what the devil reached for:

1 John 2:16 (ESV)

“For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life — is not from the Father but is from the world.”

1. Stones to bread — the flesh.

The devil tempted Jesus to command the stones to become bread. Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” (Luke 4:4)

2. The kingdoms of the world — the eyes.

The devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and offered them if Jesus would worship him. Jesus answered with the Word again: “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” (Luke 4:8)

3. The pinnacle of the temple — the pride of life.

“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.” And once more Jesus used the Word: “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Luke 4:12)

Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, submitted Himself to the Father’s will and answered Satan with the Word of God.

God has given us His Spirit and His Word. If we walk by the Spirit and submit to the truth of His Word, we can put the desires of the flesh to death.

THE WEAPONS WE FIGHT WITH

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (ESV)

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

Titus 2:11–12 (ESV)

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

IN CLOSING

Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Conquering the flesh isn't getting better at saying no. It is becoming controlled by the Spirit, so that something better begins to grow — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

— Pastor Jeremy Arnold

QUESTIONS TO PONDER THIS WEEK

1. The enemy inside.

Where is the real fight in my life right now — and am I still blaming something outside the camp for it?

2. Manage or crucify.

What have I been quietly managing that Paul says belongs on a cross?

3. No provision.

What provision am I still making for the flesh — what am I keeping within easy reach that I already know feeds it?

4. The fruit.

Which one of the nine is most missing in me right now, and what would it look like to ask the Spirit to grow it rather than to manufacture it myself?

GROW FURTHER

THE CONQUERING KING, PART SIX

Deception

The one chapter in the conquest where Israel loses without a battle — because the wrong thing looked right.

DEEP RESEARCH

Galatians

The letter behind this morning's text, measured against the Greek.

DISCIPLESHIP

Spiritual Formation — the Steps

What it actually looks like to walk by the Spirit rather than to try harder.

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:25 (ESV)