

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." There are two ways of taking this: there is the spirit cleansed by God vs the spirit and the flesh together which are the sinful nature. And there is the spirit, the power of being an individual vs the flesh, the world of cause and effect. We in our human situation are not able ~~to~~ completely to separate these two aspects. The KJV says "the flesh lusts against the spirit" and has led many people to think that the flesh is per se bad. Monks have gone and shipped themselves and have tried to go without food, and tried to punish the body. The body they thought of as bad, and the spirit is all that matters! That is wrong. The flesh, the body, is something God created for our good and it is a marvellous instrument.

We noticed in the last hour something of the perfection and the wonder of the body that God has made and has given us. Greater than the wonders of any machine any man has ever made are the wonders of the human body. This body is the means in which we become aware of things around us. We get information about this world, and we affect our world (through the body). It is the instrument by which we (that is our spirit) our spirit which is eternal, affects and relates to our body. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria in John 4:24, where she asked him where to worship. In Jerusalem? In Samaria? Jesus said, God is Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The body is simply an instrument. Whether we worship in Samaria, or in Jerusalem or in Philadelphia is not particularly important except perhaps in relation to a temporary situation. But it is the spirit in relation to God that is important. The body, the flesh, is a valuable instrument.

The translators of the NIV seeing the way this flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh ~~has~~ led to putting the body down as bad, have translated "flesh" in these vv. as the sinful nature. They say the spirit lusts against the sinful nature and the sinful nature against the spirit. Of course it is true that when it says flesh here it does not simply mean body; although I believe that's an element in it. But I think they are wrong in making it sinful nature because I think that makes it a paraphrase rather than a translation. They may think that's what flesh means in that passage and I think it does, but I think it means more than that. I think that it also points to the fact that it is the spirit that is what matters.