

Romans 8:5-11

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you (NRSV).

The flesh vs. the Spirit is a theme that is repeated multiple times in the Bible. The kingdom of God and the heavenly realm vs. worldly realm is a main theme of Jesus. Many times he teaches about the kingdom of heaven and how the divine nature is a sharp contrast from human nature.

If you live by the flesh, then you live a life of sin and the penalty of sin is death. Living by the flesh leads to death as a consequence of sin and living by the Spirit is a life of peace. You have peace with yourself and live a life of peace. You have peace with others as you are an agent of love, forgiveness, and diversity. You have peace with God that significantly enhances your quality of life and enables you to have a life of harmony and tranquility.

The Apostle Paul takes our knowledge of the conflict between living by the flesh and living by the spirit to a deeper level of understanding. The Apostle Paul teaches that sin is not just something you do or have done as an accidental slip up. Sin is not just an outward action; sin also lies within the realm of thinking. The Apostle Paul addresses the thought process. If you live by the flesh, you have a mindset on the flesh. You are thinking about the sins of the flesh. These sins are not just carnal sins; these sins include all of the numerous biblical vices. If you live by the Spirit, then your mindset is on the Spirit, you think about the Spirit, and live a life of peace. It is a holistic understanding of our actions and thinking that includes all of the self; the heart, mind, and soul. It is the essence of our inner being. When you are one with the Lord, it is not just an action that you are to take, but includes your mind. This is a matter of Spirit thinking, getting your mind in tune with God is a necessary step of getting the holistic self congruent with the divine nature of God.

The Apostle Paul teaches a very tough lesson. Flesh thinking goes against God and is actually hostile to God. This is a powerful concept that the Apostle Paul is teaching. He used hard words for a hard lesson. The mind that is set on the flesh, worldly things, and human desires, is hostile to God. It is one thing to slip up, make a mistake, and seek forgiveness, but it is another thing altogether to be hostile toward God. Being hostile is like an enemy such as North Korea being hostile to the United States. We think of sin as an action that is forgiven by grace but we don't typically consider that thinking of worldly things is hostile toward God.

The Apostle Paul continues the tough lesson and adds another strict condition. If you do not submit to God, then you cannot please God. Again, this is something that needs to be emphasized. You cannot please God if you do not submit to God. The goal of all religious people is to please God. We try with all our might to please God and we pray for God be pleased with us. Now here the Apostle Paul states that if you do not submit to God, you cannot please God. Pleasing God requires submission to the will of God.

The Spirit of Christ is in contrast to the old system based on law with the consequences of sin being death. The law does not rescue you from death. Christ's atonement is something the law cannot achieve. The Spirit is alive in the believers. You must have the spirit of Christ. If you do not have the Spirit of Christ in you, then you do not belong to him. This concept is absolute. There is no half-way. There is no partial devotion, no room for complacency; you can't be part time Christian or half way Christian. The Bible teaches the necessity of belonging in Christ. This is serious, this means oneness, wholeness, and completeness. You are to be one with Christ in all of your heart, mind, and soul. It is biblically mandated that your complete self is to be one with Christ.

The scriptural lesson is also another lesson on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is living within you and taking up residence in your life. The Holy Spirit is in your heart, mind, and soul, it is the essence of your being. The Christian is in the Spirit and the Spirit is in the Christian. When Christ is in you, then you are one with Christ, you are like Christ. This means that you are different from the other people within the realm of contemporary society.

God takes action in Christ and by the Spirit gives life to those that have their minds set on Christ. The Christian has assurance, a personal guarantee, that they will follow Christ in the resurrection. The mindset is not just how one feels but how one thinks and responds. We are to be one with Jesus in heart, mind, and soul.