

Romans 6... 7... 8

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Romans 8:5 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, the things of the Spirit.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Romans 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

If you are a Christian, God the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Romans eight describes His effect within you in three words: Life, Leading, and Love.

Life...

...is the predominant word in verses one through thirteen. *Life* or *live* occur seven times. God the Holy Spirit in you, indwelling you, empowers your new nature to walk after God. You can express the life of God by His indwelling Spirit.

Leading...

...is only directly mentioned once, in verse fourteen, where you are told, **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.** But it is the theme all the way down through verse thirty. Through God's *providence* and through God's *predestination*, the Holy Spirit is leading you along the path prepared for your life. You can expect the leading of God by His indwelling Spirit.

Love...

...is the focus of the concluding verses. You read, **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us...** The chapter ends with the **love of God which is in Christ Jesus.** You can experience the love of God by His indwelling Spirit.

Life, leading, and love are a good way of understanding what it means to be a Christian. You have life in Jesus and your life is said

to have meaning, purpose, and direction. Since it is God Who has given you such life, you can count on His leading you at all times. And, even when His leading is obscured by sufferings in this life, you can be certain of His unfailing love for you!

Life, leading, and love are obscured by the ongoing battle we have against the flesh. In verses five through eight we are given a key to overcoming the flesh and walking in the power of the life within us. It has to do with our **minds**. Specifically it has to do with what we **set** our **minds** upon.

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When we go to Disneyland we take the 43 to the 99. After we merge with the 5 we stay on it all the way to Disneyland Drive. There are other routes. But usually we trust the good 'ole 5. It is the course we **set** to get to our destination. Our relative speed; where we stop to eat; the lane changes; all are subject to the **set** course.

In our text we're talking about arriving at a destination of spiritual maturity based on my mind **set**. On my spiritual walk I can **set** my **mind on the things of the flesh**. If I do my destination will not be spiritual maturity. I will remain immature and stunted in my growth.

- being changed to bring change -

The things of the flesh includes thinking about and pursuing sinful pleasures and passions. Even as a Christian I can get caught-up in them. But **the things of the flesh** can also include worldly principles and practices. These are far more subtle to recognize.

A for instance using our church as an example. When we wanted to build on our five acre parcel we ran into the fact that we did not have enough money. Now we could have decided to try to raise money. For us it would have been to set our minds on the things of the flesh. It would have been using worldly methods to accomplish a spiritual goal.

It's important we understand that the **flesh** can include this whole, huge area of things that are worldly while not seeming sinful.

Another way of describing what it means to set our minds on **the things of the flesh** is to say it is giving priority in life to things in the material realm. It is here where too many believers live their lives. It can even seem successful; the flesh is a master of deception. (Just think of the Pharisees!).

We want to understand, therefore, the realm of the Spirit and instead set our minds there.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

Carnally minded is another way of expressing a worldly, material mind set. It is **death**. That doesn't mean I'm not saved, or I am living in habitual sin. It means my efforts and activities are all being done in a physical energy that lacks the life of the Spirit of God. I'm like a person on life support, only in this case the things keeping me 'alive' are all works of the flesh. If I removed them I would see that my efforts have no life, no leading, from the Holy Spirit.

Outwardly there may be little difference between the activities, even the seeming successes, of the carnally minded and the spiritually minded man. But inwardly the spiritually minded man experiences **life and peace**.

Jon Courson's pithy comment:

With the... mind... lodged between the spirit and the flesh, the question becomes one of what will control my mind. Will it be the spirit, as my spirit is linked to God's Spirit? As the day unfolds, will I be a spiritual man? Or will I be carnal, wondering, *Where am I going to go? How am I going to be entertained? What am I going to eat?*

The carnal mind (or mind set) is far worse than settling for second best:

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Enmity means *hostility* or *opposition*. When I set my mind on worldly, material priorities I am opposing the things God wants for me. I can

even be hostile to obeying the Lord. I don't want to forgive, or forebear, or be patient, or show longsuffering. I do want to manipulate or intimidate; I do want to receive recognition for serving the Lord.

The carnal mind (mindset) **is not subject to the law of God**. It is not *subordinate* to the spiritual intent of God's Law. I may be keeping the letter of the law; but I am failing to keep its spirit.

I can be angry, bitter, resentful, rude, etc., all the while thinking I am walking with God and that my reactions are justified.

Romans 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Wow. To the extent my priorities are worldly and material I **cannot please God**. Period. End of discussion.

Other people, other believers, can look at me and envy me for my seeming success and spirituality. But if my methods are carnal then it is all an outward hypocrisy.

How does this work out in practical, everyday living? Let's use marriage as our example. When a couple is experiencing problems often their first solution is to do something in the realm of the world. They move to a new house or city; they establish a date night. Nothing necessarily wrong with those things. But they are not in and of themselves spiritual. Usually the real problem in the marriage is an underlying spiritual issue. There is resentment... bitterness... unforgiveness. Those things must be dealt with spiritually. A new house or a dinner date won't overcome them. One or both spouses must be broken and reset their mind(s) on the things of the Spirit.

Set your mind on the things of the Spirit of God!