

## The Spiritual Mindset Romans 8:5-8

### Intro

It was a summer afternoon some years ago when I entered a small room where a worship service was being held with a young man in his 20s leading our time of worship together.

After some opening remarks, the well-meaning young man instructed us about what was going to happen next.

“Go ahead, get comfortable have a seat, lie down on the floor if you like. What I’m going to do now is play some worship music and what I would like you to do is to empty your mind completely. Let all your thoughts go. And with an empty mind look deep inside yourself as the music plays and try to find a spark of energy within you. That spark is the Holy Spirit. I want you to focus on that energy and give yourself over to it and in doing so we are going to soak in the love of Christ over our time together.”

And as ethereal, repetitive music began to play on a tape player and people began to lie down on the floor. And with a degree of strong discomfort I quietly made my departure and went on with my evening.

Now, maybe some of you enjoy this sort of spiritual practice - I’m not here this morning to give you a hard time but let me share what made me uncomfortable with the whole thing.

It was this instruction: “empty your mind” empty your mind so you can experience more of God. But listen, listen we are never instructed in Scripture to empty our minds in order to experience God. Oh no, quite the opposite. Throughout Scripture God calls us to engage our minds and our thinking in order to experience more of God’s love. To fill our minds with the truths of his grace, his mercy, his loyal love in Christ Jesus so that, in the power of the Spirit we comprehend and experience him relationally and emotionally.

One can have powerful emotional, spiritual experiences through many kinds of religious and spiritual practices - apart from Christianity - One can have powerful emotionally satisfying experiences through smoking weed and listening to Radiohead. God instructs us to fill our minds with truth and then right and wonderful and God-glorifying emotions can and will follow. Consider Phil. 4 familiar verses

**[5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:5-7)**

Not there is a glorious promise of the peace of God which surpasses understanding for the anxious. Lest we tempted to think that this peace is simply a supernatural reality descends upon those who ask for it - does happen at times. There is an engagement with our intellects we are called to

- consciously move to prayer and supplication with thanksgiving - an awareness of what we have to be thankful for - answer 10,000 reasons to start

- to consciously commit our requests and our concerns to God - mind engaged
- In the good of communion with God where we are aware of what we have to be thankful for and that he has heard our requests there is peace beyond understanding for us that guards our hearts and minds

God engages us at the level of our thinking and our mindsets. Don't check your brain at the door of Christianity.

But make no mistake, Christianity is no mere intellectual exercise, it is to have the deepest parts of our psychology come under the influence of the Holy Spirit. To have our very mindset - the way we think about the world, God, other people, our money and possessions, our future transformed and shaped by God himself.

To live fully is to have our God-given intellects engaged with the truth of the Gospel and realities of God himself and to have our minds set ablaze by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit - experiences and emotion will follow make no mistake

Our text speaks to the relationship between the mind and the Holy Spirit as the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit continues to teach us about life in the Holy Spirit - the only kind of life that is truly Christian

The relationship between the mind and the Holy Spirit is unfolded to us in our text. More clearly - the mindset - where our inner life is directed

2 options. 2 points - explore 1. The Fleshly Mindset 2. The Spiritual Mindset

## **I. The Fleshly Mindset**

- A. Two kinds of people in the world - those in the flesh and those in the Spirit - only two options and we have seen this sort of thing throughout Romans
  1. Dead in Adam or Alive in Christ
  2. Under the dominion of law or under the reign of grace
  3. A slave of sin or a slave of righteousness
  4. Chapter 8
    - a) The condemned and those who will never be condemned v. 1
    - b) Those who are under the law of sin and death and those who are alive and free under the authority of the Holy Spirit v. 2
    - c) Those who walk according to the flesh and those who walk according to the Spirit v. 4
  5. No gradations here - you will find yourself in one category or the other - Paul says you either live according the flesh and have a mind set on the things of the flesh - a fleshly mindset - or a mind set on the Spirit - a spiritual mindset - so what is this fleshly mindset? First let's define our terms for what Paul means by flesh.
    - a) What Paul is talking about is the reality of fallen human existence - weak and inclined away from God which is the reality that each one of us are born into in Adam. It is human existence in the realm of fallenness, weakness, and sin.

- b) The fleshly mindset is the mind that is directed toward, attracted to, and motivated by the values of this world - it is the mindset that embraces the values of this fallen world as pre-eminent
      - (1) Bigger is better - in accumulation of stuff is contentment
      - (2) Self-actualization and self-fulfillment is the aim
      - (3) Pleasure and comfort are ultimate goals
      - (4) Finding identity in the things we own or in social and economic advancement - our identity in sexual orientation and practice - to place our own innate desires above all other considerations
        - (a) In essence as one pastor has said - to be in the flesh with a fleshly mindset is to have the heart charmed, fascinated and rewarded by the treasures of this world apart from God
  - 6. The fleshly mindset exists outside of Christ and his grace and it is in fact the realm in which we all exist apart from the grace of God
    - a) We live out the reality of our existence in the flesh with minds energetically engaged to worldly values and apart from grace we know no other way - it is our mindset
- B. V. 6 informs us that the result of this mindset brought forth our living according to the flesh - well...it is death "for to set the mind on the things of the flesh is death."
  - 1. And this warning, this warning is most peculiar to the worldly man or woman for his mindset, her mindset is that the charms, treasures, and rewards of this life have the prospect and promise of life in them.
    - a) The siren song of upward mobility - the allure of recognition and applause from others
    - b) The contentment promised in the pursuit of the American dream
    - c) The pleasure promised in the sexual encounter
    - d) The seduction of fulfillment through attaining the perfect body through diet and Crossfit and p90x and Tai Bo, and hot yoga - or conversely the promise of chocolate and alcohol and delicious foods to fill ourselves to contentment
      - (1) Not saying that success, working out and staying healthy, or even sex is inherently wrong - these things can be good and wonderful in their proper place - for instance the godly joy of sex within the context of the marital one-flesh union between a man and a woman is a precious gift - the fleshly mindset breaks out beyond God-ordained boundaries and looks to these things as ultimate things
      - (2) The fleshly mindset says - here is my deliverance. Here is my salvation from sadness, guilt, shame, and anxiety.

**Illustration:** I was made aware of a pop cultural phenomenon that appears to be sweeping the nation under the auspices of a tidying-up movement. One guru in particular has written a book out of which has come a show about tidying-up that. I watched an episode of the show recently in order to understand this phenomenon and as I watched the show - this woman offered much in the way of helpful, practical systems to get rid of excess and stuff and get organized but I could not help but think to myself. This has the potential to be the perfect sort of counterfeit American gospel:

- One feels overwhelmed by the amount of stuff they have accumulated - there is anxiety and grief over the fruit of their "sins" of excess"
- They are instructed on how to fix their problem. It begins with thanking the house they live in and then as they get rid of items thanking the item for its service to them - not just silly - reflecting an

Eastern animism - attributing a soul to inanimate objects recognizing the divine in everything - here though is an awareness of transcendence

- The house is cleared of all the excess that has caused such anxiety and conflict - repentance
- And through their hard work they arrive at a place of peace and harmony - salvation
  - e) Not everyone who enjoys this program sees it this way - or that you can't enjoy her helpful guidance in a number of ways - I guarantee it fits right in with the proliferation of endless self-help books that promise to bring us peace and wholeness
- 2. One may enjoy a transcendent experience of life-change that is accomplished through the good work - but it cannot touch the soul at its deepest place of need. We may find fixes that help us improve our lives - life-hacks - but we aren't doing well with this mindset

**Illustration:** We are the most prosperous country in the history of the world - access to seemingly endless entertainments and pleasures - 14-44 the leading cause of disability is depression, 15-34 2nd leading cause of death is suicide.

I'm not undermining physical realities - you may be suffering from depression - my heart more importantly Christ's heart toward you is mercy and kindness

But how can it not be that in the massive rise in these things in the face of the greatest prosperity the world has ever known we are finding that the promises of our culture have not delivered us to wholeness and happiness. The hedonistic western experiment has failed us at the level of our inner lives and at times at the expense of our souls.

- 3. But more than all these things - we well to note that the death described here - this death is ultimate - it is to die apart from Christ and to face God's judgment for our sins regardless of how poor or successful we have been in our lives

**For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)**

- 4. Listen - one need not walk through this life a miserable person - one can happily go their way with this mindset on the flesh - go to school, get some friends, work hard, achieve some measure of prosperity, vacation at Disney World - retire at 65 - die at 85 and go to their death in a fearful condition of soul
- C. V. 7 Here's why to have this fleshly mindset is death
  - 1. Mind set on the flesh is hostile to God - at enmity with God and therefore under the righteous wrath and judgment of God - under the condemnation of God because of sin
    - a) Oh, and scarily - those in the flesh with this mindset CANNOT SUBMIT TO GOD'S LAW - not just unwilling but unable

**The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)**

- b) And so those in the flesh - hostile to God and unable to submit to God because of the fallen human condition - CANNOT please God

- (1) Religions and spiritualities may appease the mind and bring about life-change but they cannot please God
- (2) I understand we are a complex of many things - throughout the world there are unbelievers who are good parents, selfless volunteers, loyal friends - lives that are in many ways commendable - but apart from divine grace and the work of the Holy Spirit - one cannot please God in the flesh because there remains CONDEMNATION FOR SIN

D. Here is the fleshly mindset

1. To have the heart charmed, fascinated and rewarded by the treasures of this world apart from God
2. Underneath this a hostility to the one true God - experiencing estrangement from God and death - all of us are born into this reality of the flesh - but PRAISE GOD there is an alternative!

## II. The Spiritual Mindset

A. Go back to v. 5 - those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. The Spiritual mindset - what is it?

1. It is to live under the authority and influence of the law of the Spirit described in v. 2 - to experience life and liberty from the dominion of sin and death through the Spirit - to have the trajectory of our existence completely changed
2. It is to have our minds set upon the things of the Spirit. What are those things?
  - a) God's Word as inspired and illuminated by the Spirit
  - b) The beauties and glories of the risen Christ of the cross
  - c) The realities revealed to us by the Spirit - our salvation, our adoption, our acceptance with God, our glorious, eternal future - we'll explore in Ch. 8
    - (1) That we are not condemned through the substitutionary death of the Son v. 3
    - (2) That we are children of God and may call God Abba Father v. 15
    - (3) That we live in the groaning of this fallen creation with the Spirit pointing us towards the redemption that is coming v. 23
    - (4) That we have a helper in our weakness - the Spirit who intercedes on our behalf v. 26-27
    - (5) That nothing can separate us from the love of Christ
      - (a) Oh, these and more are the things of the Spirit that the spiritual mindset sees and the heart is charmed, fascinated, and renewed by these things not by the things of this world FOR standing over all stands our glorious Savior - THE LORD JESUS CHRIST - all-sufficient, endlessly glorious, infinitely gracious, the One whom the Spirit reveals and magnifies

B. Here - here in this realm - in this existence v. 6 here is LIFE AND PEACE

C. And opposite to the fleshly mindset in v. 7 - we are now not hostile toward God - no we are forgiven and justified by God and our hearts are wide open towards him because of his grace and through the power of his Spirit - all by his grace

1. And therefore, we DO submit to God's Law not in order to gain our acceptance before God but because we hear his commands as the instruction of the Father who loves us and whom we love

- a) That's what Paul is referring to in v. 4 - the righteous requirements of the Law are now fulfilled by those who walk in the Spirit
  - (1) How do our imperfect, faltering efforts fulfill the requirements of the Law?
    - (a) Romans 13 - love fulfills the law reflecting the great commandment given by Jesus
    - (b) As we, by God's grace, empowered by the Spirit seek to love God and others our obedience is offered to God through Christ - beautified and made true
- 2. And unlike the fleshy mindset described in v. 7 - WE ARE ABLE TO PLEASE HIM - WE HAVE THE CAPACITY AND THE DESIRE TO LIVE IN SUCH A WAY THAT BRINGS PLEASURE TO HIM! And OH, EVERY REDEEMED SINNER IN THIS ROOM SAYS YES LORD! I WANT TO PLEASE YOU!
- D. None of this - in none of this do we boast of ourselves - if we dare boast it is only in the achievements of the risen of Christ of Calvary for it is his work and his activity, his Spirit that explains how we have arrived IN THIS HAPPY CONDITION!
- E. Application
  - 1. CALL TO UNBELIEVERS - invitation - to turn from what this world offers and take Christ as he is - know peace with God, no condemnation, life in God BY FAITH
  - 2. Beloved - these verses aren't for the spiritually elite among us - no v. 9 - YOU ARE NOT IN THE FLESH BUT IN THE SPIRIT IF IN FACT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU - 2 WEEKS
  - 3. Our fundamental, spiritual existence doesn't waffle back and forth between being in the flesh and being in the Spirit - the Christian life is life in the Spirit with this spiritual mindset - BUT experientially we do - because of remaining sin - the residue of are fallen flesh - the power of sin broken but the presence remains
    - a) We can find ourselves living like we are still in the flesh - our hearts can be charmed and fascinated by what the world offers - we so often fall and fail but for us - there is grace - there is power - there is hope - there is maturity and growth - there is deeper and more glorious experiences of communion with Christ held out to us through the Spirit who meets us at our deepest places of failure and need with grace.
      - (1) Where do you struggle with a fleshly mindset? Where is your heart tempted to be charmed and fascinated by the values of this world rather than with pleasing Christ? KEN'S SERMON ON WORLDLINESS
        - (a) Lust, selfish-ambition, materialism, covetousness, bitterness, anxiety
          - i) Appropriate concern can lead to sinful anxiety where we fail to trust God but the Spirit - the Spirit calls to consider God and trust him
      - (2) I can ascertain something of your spiritual condition if I ask "how much desire do you have to please the Lord?"
      - (3) Oh, for those who do - every Christian here has at least this spark of fire - oh may we all desire to please him - there is much grace and power for us. You have the Spirit of God at work in you energizing you to move away from sin and self and toward the unspeakable privilege of knowing and rejoicing in Christ and living to please this ONE OH THIS ONE!
    - b) In all of this God intends that our minds and hearts are increasingly filled with that most supreme of all things of the Spirit - the love and glory of Christ

**If you are a Christian, but bored, maybe you need to lose something. You cannot just add Jesus on to an already crowded life. So, what do you need to off-load, so that your heart can feel the surpassing worth of knowing Christ? And do not stop off-loading until that sense of privilege in Jesus really starts**

**to percolate. When our hearts thrill to his surpassing worth, the world loses its appeal. (Ray Ortlund Jr., *Supernatural Living for Natural People*, p. 41)**

- (1) What do you need to off-load to experience more of that increasing sense of privilege in Jesus?
- (2) What do you need to remove from your life so that your heart thrills to his surpassing worth?
- (3) What move can you make today, this week to further distance yourself from the allure and appeal of this world - live more deeply the good of our spiritual mindset and to experience more of Jesus?

**Close**

Mind and the Holy Spirit are not opposed - oh no they are great friends in our Christian lives

Let us be those who live out of the good of the Spiritual mindset that is ours because of the Gospel and through the Holy Spirit

To sing as we will in a moment - and ever and always - to have our mindset be - All to Jesus, I surrender, all to Him I freely give - I will ever love and trust Him, in his presence daily live

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Living Hope Church.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:**

By Benjamin Kreps

Website: <http://livinghopechurchpa.com>