

The mindset of the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Well, I put Romans 8 verses 5 to 17. I think we're not going to quite do justice to the last few sentences, but we'll get as far as we can.

Paul has said in verse 4 that the work of God and the work of Christ is in order that the righteousness or the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us or fulfilled in us who do not live or more literally walk according to the sinful nature but according to the spirit. So that I think is where he is launching off from now. How actually does that work? What does this Christian life look like if it is the life that is able to fulfill the law in a way that the provisions of the Old Testament could never do?

What does this Christian life look like? So people might say, oh you Christians, you are people, if you're at all serious, you live a life of guilt and fear and that's the way it works.

Or somebody might say about Christians, well if what Paul is saying is true, that you have this sort of freedom, is that saying that Christians can live any old how?

[1 : 37] That you live a life of pleasure and license, license meaning you can do anything you want and that's how it works. Is that how the Christian life works?

And if you're a Christian you're thinking, well it isn't either of those two. And what about the inner conflict that Paul mentioned? How does that work out in the Christian?

He was talking about that in chapter 7. He says that he does experience levels of frustration in that within him there is more than one principle at work.

There is a principle of the Holy Spirit. There is a principle of indwelling sin and there is a conflict. Sometimes it's intense, sometimes it isn't so noticeable.

But it can lead Paul to say, what a wretched man I am. Which is what he says in chapter 7. What about that? How can this Christian gospel really produce holy people?

[2 : 45] Perhaps that is the profoundest question. In this world there are all sorts of people. Many of them are disappointing.

Just think for example of Bill Clinton. Think of perhaps the most powerful man in the world at one point when he was the president of the USA.

And yet morally a complete disappointment. Is there anything in this world that can produce people who really are saints?

Who really are holy people in some meaningful sense? And Paul says there is something that can do that. It isn't being a Jew.

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel can produce holy people. They are not perfect. But there is something about them that cannot be accounted for in purely human terms.

[3 : 52] So let's wind back a little bit. What has Paul been saying? He has been saying, in the form of a Christian telling somebody their personal history.

I was in sin. I was in condemnation and death. I was in Adam. But Christ came. He died on the cross and rose from the dead.

And I put my trust in him as God invited me to do. And I am justified. Justified means that God treats me not as condemned but as right with him, as righteous.

I am justified. I live the Christian life. Though still sin lives within. That's a summary of what he's been saying.

Or you could summarize it again like this. I am in conflict. I am in Christ. I am not in condemnation. I am liberated. And yet I've still experienced the terrorist attacks of sin.

[4 : 58] which won't overthrow the rule of Christ. But the attacks still go on. And Paul is saying, for people in that situation, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us.

So the question is, how? And that's what we'll look at. Now, in the reading that we read, which I've been working in my own head to try and take to pieces and see how it all fits together, Paul speaks, as it were, in two columns.

He talks about what the NIV calls the sinful nature. So, for example, in verse 4, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us who do not live according to the sinful nature.

So, sinful nature. NIV has translated it sinful nature. The original word is flesh. It might be helpful to know that that's the original, and I will probably use that word as I go through it, because that's the one that's stuck in my head.

The opposite, the alternative, is the spirit. Now, let's say a little bit about those two headings before we go any further.

[6 : 29] What does he mean by the flesh or the sinful nature? He means, flesh in the Bible fairly uniformly means unaided human power.

Unaided human power. So, for the Jews, they had their mark in the flesh, which was circumcision. And I think Paul has this in mind.

The power of doing something like circumcision. And as you can see, he's saying it doesn't make you holy. But you could include in that all sorts of human rule-keeping.

Humans can be quite good at keeping rules. Particularly if they've got a certain sort of makeup in their psychology. Human power can keep rules.

Not always, but it is possible. Or things about unaided human power like cleverness. Some people are just born very clever. Or they're born with a certain ethnicity.

[7 : 35] And I would say religion, by and large, comes under the heading of flesh. It's stuff that human beings do of their own power.

Perhaps reaching out to the supernatural, but it's their power. Their power to meditate, perhaps. To pray.

To go on a pilgrimage. Put themselves through all sorts of various tortures and difficulties. But it's, that Paul would say, that's flesh. Even though, Brian and Ho City Council would put it under the heading of spirituality.

It is still flesh. I want you to just understand that. And we're talking about things that are to do with self. So it's self-dependence, self-centered, self-actualization, things like that.

And when Paul talks about spirit, he's talking, on the other hand, not about unaided human power, but of supernatural power. Power from God.

[8 : 46] He's talking about not depending on self, but depending on God. So there's a genuine dependence on the God of the Bible, which puts us into the realm of faith.

And it puts us into the realm of grace. So grace is when God gives and blesses, not because of what human beings have achieved, but because it's from God to bless.

It's to do with God's generosity and so on. So we're in the realm of faith and grace. We're not self-centered, but God-centered. And if we're God-centered, we're Christ-centered.

So that's the sort of distinction that he has. The flesh versus the spirit. And if you walk through the verses, if we go through the verses, you'll see that he keeps on like a tennis match to go between flesh and spirit.

Just follow it through with me. So in verse 4, and interestingly, he usually mentions the flesh one first. So the righteousness of the law is met in us who do not, NIV says live, more literally walk, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

[10 : 24] So walk. Not walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. Presumably walking according to the spirit.

Verse 5. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires.

Let me make that a little bit more literal. Verse 5. He doesn't this time say live. He says who are. Those who are according to the flesh.

And then he doesn't set their minds on. It's a long way of saying they mind. Just simply says they mind the things of the flesh.

And it doesn't say what that nature desires. It just says the things of the flesh. So if I translate it for you very literally, those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh.

[11 : 32] And then his contrast. But those in accordance with the spirit mind the things of the spirit. But rather, those according to the spirit.

He doesn't use a verb, but presumably it's the same verb that he used before. So they minded the things of the flesh. These people mind the things of the spirit.

Okay. I hope you're with me so far. And then he does the same thing in verse 6. The mind, verse 6. The mind of the flesh is death. The mind of the flesh is death. And then going over to the other side. The mind of the mind. The mind of the spirit. He doesn't use the word. The control has been put in by the translator. So putting it right down to its bare translation.

[12 : 36] The mind of the flesh is death. But the mind of the spirit is life and peace. The mind of the flesh is death.

The mind of the spirit is life and peace. And then he says a few more things about the mind of the flesh. So there's a little list of them here. Tell us about the mind of the flesh then.

Verse 7. The sinful mind is number one hostile to God. It's at enmity with God. It's opposed, strongly opposed to God.

The mind of the flesh. Lost my place. The mind of the flesh is hostile to God. Second thing he says. The mind of the flesh does not submit to God's law. So it's a word for falling into order.

[13 : 38] It's almost like a soldier's marching in ranks. When the law of God says, this is how to do it.

This is how to order things. Then the mind of the flesh is not doing that. I'm not going to be ordered around by you. If you say dum-dum-dum-dum-dum, I'm not going to do dum.

I'm going to do it my own way. It does not submit to God's law. And then he says, those, the controlled by is put in by the translators.

Those in the flesh are not able to please God. So three things there. Enmity against God. Not submitting to God's law.

And not able to please God. It's interesting this list of things he's saying about the flesh. In verse 9 he says, you Christians are not in the flesh.

[14 : 47] Translation says, you are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the spirit. More literally, you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If the spirit of God dwells in you.

And if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. So Paul is saying that to belong to Christ, if you belong to Christ, you have the spirit of Christ.

So that again, if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. So to belong to Christ is to have the spirit.

To have the spirit is to belong to Christ. If you don't have the spirit, you don't belong to Christ. So that's that. Just taking those verses.

And as you can see, he's contrasting in each case what it is to be in the flesh column and in the spirit column.

[15 : 52] So let's think about that for a moment. So thought number one, he paints a very negative picture of human moral and spiritual ability, which he does.

It's a very negative picture of human moral and spiritual ability. He says, if you are in the flesh, if you are in that column which was on the left-hand side on the screen, you are completely, totally sunk in terms of your relationship with God and your standing with God, you know people say there's a spark of goodness in everybody, don't they?

I remember a head teacher who I met at a conference. I said, I'm a Christian. And she says, well I'm a Quaker. And we both agree the same thing. There's a spark of goodness in everybody, isn't there?

Now let's try and be careful. Everybody is made in the image of God. So there is an infinite value attaching to everybody. But that is not the same thing as saying there is a spark of goodness within everybody.

What Paul is saying, that morally speaking and spiritually speaking, there is nothing pleasing in ordinary human nature.

[17 : 30] It's a very, very negative picture. And he says in terms of inner motivation, well, let's be honest, some people do very good things. Some people are admirable, perhaps in their giving, in their work for fellow human beings.

And I don't think Paul's trying to deny that, but he's saying, if you really boil it down to it's very, very basic, what is going on when these admirable people do these admirable things?

Are they doing it because they're submitting to God and wanting to glorify God and wanting to make it a living sacrifice to God?

And the answer is no. So from the point of view of relating to God, it is actually a non-starter. Now, do you hear what I'm saying?

People might do very creditable things. And if you look through the website of the, let me just try and think of what's his, Community and Voluntary Services Forum, Brighton & Hove is full of people who do remarkably creditable things.

[18:50] But, and I want to give full credit to that, and I think there's a sense in which God will give full credit to that. But if it is now scored on some sort of scale of how much that was done for God with a truly selfless, God-centered motive, unless those people were doing it in the spirit, if they're doing it in the flesh, they score zero.

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. It's a very, very strong negative statement.

I've tried to qualify it, and there are qualifications to it, but there is a starkness to it as well. Those who are in the flesh cannot submit to God, and what they need to do is to cry out to God for mercy. That's what those verses are saying. Please don't think, well, I've got a spark of goodness in me. I was born with a spark of goodness, and God knows I'm not as bad as other people.

That's not the way to see it. Unless you've been born again by the Spirit of God, you cannot see the kingdom.

[20:13] You cannot enter the kingdom. You need to be changed. You need to be forgiven, and you need to cry out to God very seriously for mercy.

With all your MBEs and CBEs and all the things you've got, for all the good things that you've done to human beings, yet you need to cry to God and say, Lord, quoting Isaiah, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

I need your mercy. I need your forgiveness. I need your Spirit. Okay, that very, very negative, first of all, view of human moral and spiritual ability.

Same thing that I notice here. He paints a non-Pentecostal view of the Spirit in believers. In other words, he is most definitely not saying that having the Spirit is a second stage experience.

Let me explain briefly that the fully paid up Pentecostal view of the work of the Holy Spirit is that, number one, you become a believer in Jesus Christ and then at some later time you have to ask separately for the Holy Spirit and if you are granted the baptism of the Holy Spirit you go from stage one to stage two and those are two different things and, you know, there are many Christians who are still only on stage one and haven't received the Spirit.

[21:56] That's the official Pentecostal view and I hasten to say there are many people who are dear Pentecostal believers who probably wouldn't say that and might not even think it but there is that view and if you look on the official website of such and such a Pentecostal denomination that's what it says.

Well, Paul doesn't. Paul says, no, no. If you're a believer you have the Holy Spirit. If you don't have the Holy Spirit it isn't that you're a believer who's in stage one, you know, a sort of third class Christian and you haven't got to the next stage.

He says, if you don't have the Spirit you're not a believer. He doesn't say it perfectly clearly, doesn't he? If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ.

All believers, says Paul, if they're believers, have the Holy Spirit. And he says, the Spirit is the gift of Christ to all his people.

Now I can qualify this and say that people are sometimes very definitely more full of the Holy Spirit or less full of the Holy Spirit and there are particular experiences in which the Holy Spirit might particularly bring things intensely to people.

[23:21] But that is not the same thing as saying that there are Christians who are believers who do not yet have the Spirit.

That is what Paul is disagreeing with. If you're a believer you have the Spirit. So that's observation number two.

And another observation, did you notice how he ties together a number of different ways of expressing the believer's relationship with either the flesh or the Spirit?

He talked about being in. You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. He talked about being in. He talked about walking according to.

That's what he said in verse four. Walk according to the Spirit or walk according to the flesh. And then several times, and I think this is the one that he used most, is the idea of minding.

[24 : 25] The mind of the flesh. The mind of the Spirit. The mind of the flesh. Minding the things of the Spirit. Minding the things of the flesh.

And I don't think we can get away from his emphasis. It's not the only emphasis but it is an emphasis on the mind. And he is talking about the mind of...

So I think our idea of mind is probably right. Like minding the gap. The things that the human is caring about.

Do you mind what they say about you? Well yes I do. It means I care about it. Do you mind the things of the Spirit? Do you care about those things? It's also to do with understanding.

I don't think we could use the word mind without including the idea of understanding. Do you understand the things of the Spirit? The things that you think about.

[25 : 28] What your mind dwells on. What your mind mulls over. Are you minding the things of the Spirit? Or the way we see things and appreciate them.

Half an example came to mind. The way that Maria and I went out and she saw something completely different to what I saw. I can't remember what she saw. I mean for example she saw flowers and I saw the way that the rivets on the garden shed were put together or something like that.

You know we just saw completely different things. And it's saying do you mind the spiritual things? Are you thinking spiritually?

Do you see things in a way according to the Spirit or according to the flesh? So minding walking being he ties them all together.

The one I think that he emphasizes most is minding so I can ask the question what do you mind? It's an interesting question. what is your mind set on?

[26 : 45] When you see a situation do you mind it? Do you think of it according to the flesh? You know what can I get out of this? What will you know in a self sort of way or do you look at it from the point of view of the Spirit and think how does God fit into this?

How can God be brought glory through this? Do you see the sort of thing I'm saying what do you mind? Now our minds are rather peculiar things perhaps I should speak for myself but we don't always you know our minds can be distracted and our minds can be overwhelmed and our minds can be on one thing and then flip to something else but it's still a question what does your mind go to?

What is your mind what things do you mind? and then I can ask this question what mind or mindset do you cultivate? Now I know Paul doesn't say it here but in another place he will say talk about sowing to the Spirit and I think it's legitimate to ask this question what mindset do you cultivate? And there is such a thing as cultivating the things in our mind isn't it? We feed our minds with stuff we choose to feed our minds with stuff actually don't we?

And I'm asking what mindset we cultivate and preachers are always going to say this aren't they?

[28 : 21] They're going to say if we read the Bible we are cultivating a mindset to do with the things of God if we pray we are cultivating a mindset to do with the things of God if we don't read our Bibles we are sort of inviting that many other things will come in and fill our minds aren't we?

And if we don't pray very much then we are cultivating a mindset which will be influenced by all sorts of other things so I'm asking that question about the mind what mindset do you cultivate and I'm thinking it would actually be rather helpful for Christians in Paul's terms here if we cultivated the mind of the spirit so let's take it on a little bit further and I'm not sure I can get too much further on this occasion but let's go back to what he says in verse 9 you however are not in the sinful nature but in the spirit you are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the spirit if the spirit of God lives in you and I'm just noticing what he says about the spirit now the spirit of God lives in you what an amazing statement if you're a

Christian the spirit of God lives in you and then he goes on to say more or less the same thing again if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ so he's saying the spirit of Christ lives in you he's not building up a list of different spirits he's referring to the Holy Spirit in several different ways the spirit of God lives in you the spirit of Christ is in you and then verse 10 he says Christ lives in you so the spirit is so close to being Christ that he can say if the spirit lives in you Christ lives in you if Christ is in you and then he goes on to say your body is dead because of

sin yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness and if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who lives in you so he's going off now in the direction of the resurrection he'll come back from that and resume that thought in a few in a paragraph or two but let's just see where he does go with this he says here's a

Christian Christ lives in you here's a truth about the Christian that there is a principle of death at work your body is dead because of sin but there's something else going on in the Christian verse 10 because of righteousness the spirit is life now he the translator says your spirit is alive it might be your spirit is alive it might be a little more brief than that the spirit is life the body is dead because of sin but here's something else the spirit is life because of righteousness and Christ lives in you so there is the life of the spirit within you so resuming his way of referring to the spirit he now talks the spirit of him who raised

Jesus from the dead is living in you so he's now referred to as the spirit of the raiser from the dead who is obviously the father interesting that he said he's the spirit of God he's the spirit of Christ he's Christ he's the spirit of the one who raises from the dead he's the spirit of the father in other words so a very rich way of referring to the spirit and he then refers again to resurrection the spirit of the father will make alive our mortal bodies through his spirit who lives in you so that's to do with the resurrection and he'll pick up on that in due course just mention one other little line of thought that he has here which is in verse 12 therefore brothers we have an obligation he does mention an obligation though most of what he says is just description how can it be how does it work that [33 : 19] Christians can be holy people well most of this is what he's doing is describing it but here he's saying well actually there's an obligation involved and he makes seems to me a little pun on life and death which works like this we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to it so he's telling us brothers and sisters we all have flesh we all know the things that the flesh pulls us towards but we are not under obligation to the flesh flesh does not have the right to tell us this is what you should be thinking this is what you should be doing this is how you should be seeing things and we defy the flesh in other words we're not going to give in to that exhorting us we're not obliged to the flesh and then this is two ways of putting it to do with life and death if you live according to the flesh you will die if you live according to the flesh you are in the realm of death you will die that's the equation live life becomes death if you live according to the flesh you will die that's it pure and simple his alternative but if by the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live so I tried to use the word death again and I came up with deathify

I think I need to stop myself making up any more new words but if you deathify so I'm trying to get death into that sentence if you deathify if you put to death by the spirit the deeds of the body you will live there's his little conundrum if you live according to the flesh you die if you bring death to the deeds of the body you will live and that's not unaided human moral activity it is moral activity but it's not unaided if you put to death the deeds of the body by the spirit you will live so I'm afraid that's as far as we can go let me summarize some of the things we've seen we see the certainty of bodily resurrection and he's going to go quite a long way down that road so as if you're a

Christian now spirit now then there is a T that's me isn't it am I making funny noises let me tighten this thing up a bit if you are a Christian now you will be raised on the last day if you're a Christian will be raised on the last day I think it's the battery going actually if you put me onto this microphone then I'll just the spirit within you is the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead and that which he did for Jesus he will do for you there's a link there the certainty of bodily resurrection same thing that he's mentioned this obligation we do not have an obligation to the flesh the flesh will tell us that very strongly and will try and tempt us deceive us pressurize us and will unfortunately sometimes succeed but when that's not where we're at that's not the obligation that we're under this is the way of life for the

Christian and it is strangely a way of life and death it's I think both a promise and a battle cry this is the Christian life if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you know the deeds of the flesh if you kill off those thoughts those reactions that way of seeing things that way of acting if you kill that off that's the way you will live those Thank you.