

# The Mind Set On the Spirit

by John Edmiston

## Walking In the Spirit – Series 3 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

**Romans 8:4-10 ISV** *so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (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 our minds on the flesh leads to death, but to set our minds on the Spirit leads to life and peace. (7) That is why the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile toward God. For it refuses to submit to the authority of God's law because it is powerless to do so. (8) Indeed, those who are under the control of the flesh cannot please God. (9) You, however, are not of the flesh but under the control of the Spirit, since God's Spirit lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. (10) But if Christ is in you, your bodies are dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

In the last couple of studies we saw that the born-again Christian has a glorious new nature, which is born of God and which is sinless.

We also saw that this new nature struggles against the old nature and in particular against the flesh. The Christian is caught up in a spiritual tug-of-war as the Spirit and the flesh battle it out (Romans 7). In Galatians 5:16-18, we are also promised that if we walk in the Spirit we shall in no way carry out the desires of the flesh. So how do we do that? The answer lies in today's verses – Romans 8:4-10 above:

Verse 4 – tells us that we will completely fulfill all the righteous requirements of God's law if we live (walk) according to the Spirit. All that is required for holiness is for us to follow God's Holy Spirit every day. That will be sufficient. We will then have our new nature activated and empowered and be able to live lives that are holy and righteous and good.

Verse 5 – points out that there are two kinds of people, the carnal who set their minds on things of the flesh and the spiritual who set their minds on spiritual things. What you habitually think about determines what kind of person you are. If you habitually think of fleshly things, that indicates you are a fleshly person. On the other hand if you habitually think of spiritual things, that indicates that you are a spiritual person.

Verse 6 – contrasts the consequences of these two ways of thinking. The mind set on the flesh leads to death. The mind set on the Spirit leads to life and peace. Obviously if you want life and peace you must set your mind on things of the Spirit. Your mind should be filled with compassion and humility and love and kindness and set on things above to the glory of God. You must have the humble, lowly servant-like mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 11:28-30).

The mind is like a electrical switch that can be set on various channels and which receives power from Heaven or from Hell. When the mind is set on the Spirit we receive power from Heaven. When the mind is set on the flesh we are ruled by devilish impulses and dark wisdom.

**James 3:13-18 ISV** *Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good life that his works are done in humility born of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your hearts, stop boasting and lying against the truth. (15) That kind of wisdom does not come from above. No, it is worldly, self-centered, and demonic. (16) For wherever jealousy and rivalry exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. (17) However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, willing to yield, full of compassion and good fruits, and without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. (18) And a harvest of righteousness is grown from the seed of peace planted by peacemakers.*

If we set our minds on the flesh we will reap death, darkness and chaos. On the other hand if we set our mind on the Spirit we will reap wisdom, life and peace. The choice is yours and you must make it anew each day.

**Philippians 4:8 ISV** *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is fair, whatever is pure, whatever is acceptable, whatever is commendable, if there is anything of excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy-keep thinking about these things.*

**Colossians 3:1-4 ISV** *Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep focusing on the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. (2) Keep your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. (3) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ your life is revealed, then you, too, will be revealed with him in glory.*

In order to do this I recommend that you have a daily time of prayer and bible reading and that you participate in as many godly activities as possible and abstain from all carnal and worldly activities and that you flee from that which wars against the soul (pornography, certain violent or trashy TV programs, gossip magazines, etc).

Paul drives the point home in verse 7 by telling us that the flesh is powerless. It cannot fulfill God's requirements because it lacks the correct nature. A warthog wallows in the mud because that is its nature. It is not going to lick itself clean like a cat does because it does not have the nature of a cat. The flesh has the fallen nature. It is natural for the flesh to sin. That is what it does. It refuses to submit to God's law. It always wants its own way and its own desires.

Verse 8 goes on to say that those who are 'in the flesh' – that is those who are under the control of the flesh, cannot please God. It is as simple and as black and white as that. You cannot educate the flesh into compliance with God's righteousness. The flesh will always desire sin and even when the flesh takes a religious turn it will be powerless to do any good (2 Timothy 3:5).

In complete contrast Verse 9 says that all true born-again Christians are 'in the Spirit', and are not in the flesh. We have the Spirit as part of the promises of the New Covenant. He is the promised Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:14) and verse 9 tells us that God's Spirit lives in us and is the Spirit of Christ. Indeed we are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 9:16) and Christ dwells in us (Romans 8:10). Now, in a sort of paradox, even though we are in the Spirit we still need to set our minds on the things of the Spirit! In the last part of verse 9, Paul turns this into a test of true Christian faith. If a person cannot set their mind on spiritual things, if there is nothing of the Holy Ghost about them, then they are carnal and not of Christ.

Lastly verse 10 informs us that Christ dwells in the believer and that this divine indwelling is a powerful life-giving Presence. Even though our bodies are dead because of sin, and even

though our flesh nature leads to death for the body; yet our new nature is alive because of the imparted, imputed and indwelling righteousness of Christ.

Paul pulls no punches. You have two choices and only two choices. Either you set your mind on the flesh and destroy yourself, or you set your mind on the Spirit and reap life and peace. You cannot play it both ways. Defeated Christians keep setting their minds on the garbage in their lives instead of on God. You cannot keep anything fleshly or carnal in your life. You cannot keep visiting that dubious website or holding onto that grudge or flirting with married people or loving money or being stingy and hard-hearted. You cannot be carnal, competitive, ruthless and selfishly ambitious. Those days are over if you are in Christ.

Every Christian has to make a conscious decision about their mental habits and their lifestyle. Will they focus on faith or upon doubt? On God or on self? On lusts or upon God's promises? We have to pray in the Spirit and fight the good fight of faith. This is not easy but it is worth it.

One tip - do not fight your evil thoughts. Simply dismiss them and refocus on God - and let the Holy Spirit take care of them. For instance if your mind is filled with lust make the decision to find something else to think about. Go put on some Christian music and start worshiping. Once you start worshiping the evil thoughts will subside.

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