

## Romans Session 101

### Life in the Spirit 6

#### The Spirit Changes our Nature and Empowers Us for Victory 2

*Romans 8:5-13 (NASB)*

<sup>5</sup> *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

<sup>6</sup> *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,*

<sup>7</sup> *because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,*

<sup>8</sup> *and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

<sup>9</sup> *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

<sup>10</sup> *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

<sup>11</sup> *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

<sup>12</sup> *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—*

<sup>13</sup> *for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

Paul has just been telling us that the mind that is set on Christ is life and peace. They are synonymous.

They are one and the same thing.

So that is to say that the mind set on Christ is synonymous with the Christian, a person who has been born again, given spiritual life by God's grace working through His faith.

Only the person who has a new life in God has peace with God.

The obvious corollary of that truth is that it is impossible to have a **mind set on the Spirit**, which includes having spiritual **life and peace**, and yet remain dead to the things of God.

A professing Christian who has no sensitivity to the things of God, no holy affections. Does not belong to God.

Nor does a merely professing Christian have a battle with the flesh, because he is, in reality, still naturally inclined toward the things of the flesh. He longs for the things of the flesh, which are normal to him, because he is still in the flesh and has his mind wholly set on the things of the flesh.

An unbeliever may be deeply concerned about not living up to the religious standards and code he has set for himself or that his denomination or other religious organization has set, and he may struggle hard in trying to achieve those goals.

But his struggle is purely on a human level. It is a struggle not generated by the love of God but by self-love and the subsequent desire to gain greater favor with God or men on the basis of superior personal achievement.

Whatever religious and moral struggles he may have are problems of flesh with flesh, not of Spirit against flesh, because the Holy Spirit is not in a fleshly person and a fleshly person is not in the Spirit.

As Paul has illustrated from his own life in Romans 7, the true Christian battles with the flesh because his mortal body still hangs on and tries to lure him back into the old sinful ways.

But he is no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit.

Speaking of true believers, Paul said;

*Galatians 5:17 (NASB)*

*<sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.  
But he goes on to say;*

*Galatians 5:25 (NASB)*

*<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*

*Galatians 5:16 (NASB)*

*<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

In other words, because a believer's new nature is divine and is indwelt by God's own Spirit, he desires to behave accordingly.

It is important to note that, when he speaks of sin in a Christian's life, Paul is always careful to identify sin with the outer, corrupted body, not with the new, inner nature.

A believer's flesh is not redeemed when he trusts in Christ.

If that were so, all Christians would immediately become perfect when they are saved, which even apart from the testimony of Scripture is obviously not true.

The sinful vestige of unredeemed humanness will not fall away until the Christian goes to be with the Lord.

It is for that reason that, the New Testament sometimes speaks of a Christian's salvation in the future tense.

*Romans 13:11 (NASB)*

*<sup>11</sup> Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.*

Referring to those who were already saved, Paul says later in this chapter;

*Romans 8:23 (NASB)*

*<sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

Paul in explaining this to the Corinthian believers he said;

*1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (NASB)*

*<sup>42</sup> So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;*

*<sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;*

*<sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

No matter how self-sacrificing, moral, and sincere the life, of an unredeemed person may be, his religious efforts are selfish because he cannot truly serve God, **because his mind, is set on the flesh.**

Paul again, uses the term *phronema (the mind)*, which refers to the content, the thought patterns, the basic inclinations and orientation of a person.

This inclination, or bent, of **the flesh** is even more deep-seated and significant than actual disobedience, which is simply the outward manifestation of the inner, fleshly compulsions of an unregenerate person.

Every unredeemed person, whether religious or atheistic, whether outwardly moral or outwardly wicked, is **hostile toward God**.

An unsaved person cannot live a godly and righteous life because he has no godly and righteous nature or resources.

He therefore cannot have a genuine love for God or for the things of God.

His sinful, fleshly mind **does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so**.

Even an unbeliever whose life seems to be a model of good works is not capable of doing anything truly good, because he is not motivated or empowered by God and because his works are produced by the flesh for self-centered reasons and can never be to God's glory.

It clearly follows then, that if the fleshly mind does not and cannot subject itself to the law of God, **those who are in the flesh cannot please God**.

Men were created for the very purpose of pleasing God.

At the beginning of the practical section of this epistle Paul says;

*Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)*

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

*<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

In the same way he admonished the Corinthians;

*2 Corinthians 5:9 (NASB)*

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*

Also, in Ephesians;

*Ephesians 5:8-10 (NASB)*

*<sup>8</sup> for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light*

*<sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),*

*<sup>10</sup> trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

And in Philippians;

*Philippians 4:18 (NASB)*

*<sup>18</sup> But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

And he exhorted the believers at Thessalonica;

*1 Thessalonians 4:1 (NASB)*

*<sup>1</sup> Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.*

After describing the spiritual characteristics and incapacities of those who are in the flesh, Paul again addresses those who **are not in the flesh but in the Spirit**.

As Jesus explained to Nicodemus,

*John 3:6 (NASB)*

<sup>6</sup> *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

Sinful human flesh can only reproduce more sinful flesh  
Only God's Holy Spirit can produce spiritual life.

The real test of faith is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.  
Paul says you can be sure of your salvation;

<sup>9</sup> *"if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."*

*Oikeo (dwells)* has the idea of being in one's own home.

In a marvelous and incomprehensible way, the very **Spirit of God** makes His home in the life of every person who trusts in Jesus Christ.

The opposite of that is also true.

*"But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The person who gives no evidence of the presence, power, and fruit of God's Spirit in his life has no legitimate claim to Christ as savior and Lord.

The person who demonstrates no desire for the things of God and has no inclination to avoid sin or passion to please God is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus does not belong to Christ.

In the light of that truth Paul admonishes those who claim to be Christians:

*2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB)*

<sup>5</sup> *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*

**If Christ is in you**, Paul continues to say to believers, **though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness**, that is, because of the divinely-imparted righteousness by which every believer is justified.

*Romans 3:21-26 (NASB)*

<sup>21</sup> *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

<sup>22</sup> *even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;*

<sup>23</sup> *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

<sup>24</sup> *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;*

<sup>25</sup> *whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;*

<sup>26</sup> *for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

In light of that perfect righteousness, all human attempts at being righteous are but rubbish;

**Philippians 3:8 (NASB)**

***<sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,***

Summing up what he has just declared in verses 5-10, Paul says:

**Romans 8:11 (NASB)**

***<sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.***

It again was the Holy Spirit who was the divine agent of Christ's resurrection.

And just as the Spirit lifted Jesus out of physical death and gave Him life in His mortal body, so the Spirit, who dwells in the believer, gives to that believer new life now and forever;

**John 6:63 (NASB)**

***<sup>63</sup> "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.***

**2 Corinthians 3:6 (NASB)**

***<sup>6</sup> who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

So, we see that the changes in our lives comes only through the Holy Spirit of God. God Himself changes us to make us adequate to be servants of the new covenant, or the new kingdom.