***After the Flesh; or, After the Spirit  
RO98-02***

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Please turn with me today to Romans 8:5-6, as we begin a new segment. Our subject is "Pleasing God."

**Jesus Christ Always Pleased God**

The God-Man Jesus Christ, from His humanity, could make the dramatic claim that He always pleased God, His Heavenly Father. In John 8:29, therefore, we read (the Lord saying), "And He that sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him." Now this claim was actually verified by God the Father Himself at the occasion of the baptism of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 3:16-17, we read, "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased." These are precious words, indeed, for God to say about any human being. It is true of the God-Man. This is precious indeed when said about us.

As the ministry of the Lord Jesus progressed, this capacity to please His Heavenly Father continued to be operational. So, near the end of His ministry, we read again, the Father confirming that He was pleased with what the God-Man was doing. In Matthew 17:5, on the occasion of the Mount of Transfiguration, we read, "While He yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased. Hear Him." So, the Lord Jesus ended His earthly ministry in perfect conformity to the will of His Heavenly Father, and consequently, was honored by being seated in heaven at the Father's right hand.

**Jesus Christ is Seated at the Right Hand of God in Heaven**

In Matthew 22:44, we have this ultimate expression of honor for someone who has pleased God the Father: "The Lord said unto My Lord, 'Sit down on My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool." This, which was to be done for Jesus Christ, was predicted long ago by David in one of the Psalms, which is quoted there.

Then in the book of Hebrews, several times we have this reference to Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. In Hebrews 10:12-13: "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God," from henceforth, expecting His enemies to be made His footstool, fulfilling exactly what David had foretold in one of the Psalms.

Then we have one more. In 1 Peter 3:22, we read about Jesus: "Who was gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."

Now the fact that He's at Father's right hand in heaven is of enormous importance. It does tell us that to the very end, He did please His Heavenly Father. Consequently, He secured for a salvation that is authoritative and secure. And it is not an indifferent thing to treat this lightly.

I remember seeing the late Bishop Pike of the Episcopalian church on one occasion on television as he was being interviewed about what he thought about the Bible as a book, and how he was explaining its limitations and its lack of absolute inerrancy. In the process, the interviewer asked him, "Well, what are some of the things that you don't believe that the Bible says about Jesus Christ?" And he said, "Well, I certainly don't believe any such thing about Him being seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father." Well, it wasn't long after that that the bishop died. And what a surprise he had on the other side – a surprise if he ended up in heaven to see, indeed, that that is where the God-Man is seated, declaring how He completely pleased the Father. What a great surprise if he ended up in hell and discovered, indeed, that the Judge of all the universe is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

So, it is a tremendous thing to be able to say, "I can please God the Father. A lot of Christians think they do, and most of them do not, unfortunately.

The Lord Jesus Christ, as a human being, we want to remind you again, functioned on a special divine power system which enabled Him to please His Heavenly Father. God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit, to indwell Jesus Christ, to guide His humanity into holy loving by the use of the doctrines of Scripture. That was the system. That was the plan. This power system enabled Jesus Christ then to walk in love, and thereby to fulfill the will of God, as the Scriptures tell us that it is love which fulfills all the law of God. The power system that Jesus Christ functioned on was based upon the Word of God, which He learned, and which He stored in His human spirit. The system for godly living which He used is now available to church-age believers. It has never been available to believers in any other age. Only in this age of the church have we had a complete canon of Scripture, and have we had the indwelling Holy Spirit to use that Scripture to enable us to live totally God-pleasing lives.

**Filled with the Spirit**

We have seen that the believer who is functioning on this power system is said to be filled with the Spirit; that is, he is controlled by the Holy Spirit. Three biblical requirements, we have found, must be met for Christians to be filled with the Spirit, and thereby to operate on this divine power system. The first one was: "Quench not the Holy Spirit," which means that the believer is to function on the power of the Holy Spirit to produce divine good works, not on the power of the sin nature to produce human good works. The second was: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," which means that the believer is to obey the Word of God as he finds it in Scripture. And the third was: "To walk by means of the Holy Spirit," which means to live by the moment-by-moment guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the enablement that we receive from Him. In other words, you are to respond to what the Spirit of God leads you to do, rather than to sin nature.

Now the church-age believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Who is now the reigning authority in his life instead of the old sin nature. Previously in the book of Romans, we've gone over that extensively. It is important for you to review that once more in your mind, to remind yourself that what happened at salvation is that the reigning authority of the sin nature was removed, and the reigning authority of the Holy Spirit substituted. So, whatever you do in subjection to the nature, you don't do it as a slave any more. You do it by voluntary choice. Previously, you were a slave of the sin nature. That slavery has been terminated. So, the church believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Who is now the reigning imperial authority.

So, the Christian today has all the elements necessary to function on the divine power system used by Jesus Christ. We have the Bible, and we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Christian who rejects this divine power system, we are told, is a carnal believer. He then lives the same lifestyle as the unbeliever does. There is then no difference between what the Bible calls the natural man and the spiritual born-again man. God's desire, of course, is for every Christian to be filled with the Holy Spirit moment-by-moment, each day – for us to be victors, and not victims. The Christian must moment-by-moment, then, choose to obey what is called the law of the sin nature on the one side; or, the law of the Holy Spirit on the other side. And each of these laws produces predictable results: death; or, life.

So, today, we begin in Romans 8 with that background, picking up the line of instruction at verse 5. Verse 5 introduces us to two lifestyles, which we read about in verse 5-6. Verse 5 introduces us to two governing forces in those two lifestyles. Verse 5 reads, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but, they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The sentence begins with the Greek word "gar." It means "for." And what it is doing is connecting verse 5 to the last part of verse 4. The last part of verse 4 said, "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now this "for" is going to introduce a little clarification about what it means concerning "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

The unbeliever walks by means of sin nature. The believer walks by means of the Holy Spirit. And he's going to give a little more clarification about that. So, he's going to expand on actually two classes of people that are mentioned. Basically, we're talking about those who are saved, and those who are not saved: "For they that are." The Greek verb is "eimi." This is the word for the status quo – a state of being. It is in the present tense, which is the constant state of these that he's speaking of. It is active. It is true of them individually. And we have a participle in the mood, we have a spiritual principle being stated.

**The Flesh – the Sin Nature**

He describes a certain group of people that are: "after the flesh." The word "after" is this Greek word "kata," a preposition. And this word here means "according to." The idea really is "governed by the desires of" or "regulated by." So, first of all, he says, "For," in explaining the end of verse 4, "there is a certain category of people who are governed by the flesh." We've had this word for "flesh" several times: "sarx." And you want to get a clean definition of what "the flesh" means. Now it is true that sometimes "flesh" does refer to the human body, but generally when the apostle Paul uses the word "flesh," it has a moral connotation (an ethical connotation). And the word "flesh" means the animal lust patterns that are inherent in human nature, and the self-centeredness that is inherent in human nature. That's about as good a definition as you can get for what we call "the sin nature" – the sensual animal lust patterns that drive the sin nature, and the self-centeredness which is expressed in a variety of arrogance which controls the sin nature. If you get that clear, you'll go a long way toward understanding a lot of the Word of God. That's what the word "flesh" means.

So, it refers to a man in his natural state. It is not "*the* flesh" in the Greek Bible. It is simply "flesh" without the definite article, and thus it is stressing the quality of evil. He is stressing here a certain type of people who are characterized by just evil – not so much the sin nature, but just evil: "For those who are governed by the desires of the flesh (that is, the sin nature) – those who live as slaves to the evil of the sin nature." And he is referring here in verse 5 to unbelievers. Now it's true that Christians can live like this, but he's not talking about that here. In verse 5, he's referring to those who live under the control of the flesh system. We're talking about unbelievers.

**A Mental Attitude Frame of Reference**

These people, he says, "Do mind something." And here's an important word that you want to get acquainted with. It's "phroneo" in the Greek Bible. "Phroneo" means "having one's mind taken up with" or "having one's thoughts centered on." It connotes, we would say, "a mindset" or "a frame of reference." It's just the kind of way you look at things. Everybody has a mental attitude frame of reference. And everything that hits your mentality is processed through that frame of reference. Consequently, those who have a certain mindset, we are told, do certain things: they that are under the domination of the sin nature (unbelievers) have a certain way of thinking. They have a mental attitude, frame of reference.

We may illustrate this word in Matthew 16:23, on the occasion when the Lord Jesus was telling His disciples that He is imminently going to die. They are headed for Jerusalem, and shortly, He will be crucified. And when He says that, Peter argues back and says, "That's never going to happen," meaning that: "We'll fight for you. We won't allow it. Don't even think about it. That cannot be."

Now Peter is thinking with a certain mental attitude. He has a certain frame of reference. He's thinking about bringing in the kingdom. He's thinking about the golden age. He knows that this is the King. This is the Messiah Savior. This is the One they've been waiting for. The time is at hand. John the Baptist has said it's at hand. Jesus has proven it's at hand. They're ready to go. He's sick of the Roman Empire. He wants to see the Jewish people take their rightful place as the leading nation of the world once more. He's ready to go. He's not about to let the King be killed.

However, unfortunately, his mental frame of reference does not take into account the requirement of national repentance for that to come about, nor the plan of God for the death of the Savior to pay for the sins of the world. Now the Lord Jesus understands that. He is progressing in the Father's plan. So, when Peter says this, the Lord turns to him and rebukes him, and He rebukes him relative to his "phroneo" – his frame of mental reference.

Matthew 16:23: "But He (Jesus) turned and said unto Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan. You are an offense unto Me. For you do not savor ('phroneo') the things that are of God but those that are of men:" "You don't think like God; you think like unbelievers. That's your problem, Peter." Oh, you're a born-again man, but right now you're not thinking like God. You're not thinking God's frame of reference. You're thinking like an unbeliever. And that, folks, is the problem that faces all of us. We have the misery (the curse) of the sin nature upon us. And if we don't handle it right, it is so easy for us to start thinking the way the unbeliever thinks. And everything that hits our minds then, with that frame of reference, gets processed through that destructive way which the Bible says is the death way.

In the New Testament, the word "phroneo" is used several times. I'll just mention them, and you might want to pursue them. In Philippians 2:2, we have it as "like-minded" and as "one mind." It's used twice there, referring to a mental attitude of love and peace as characterizing the Christian.

In Philippians 2:5, it has the word "mind" about a mental attitude of humility as the frame of reference.

In Philippians 3:15, "phroneo" is translated as "minded," where it refers to a mental attitude of persistently moving on to spiritual maturity.

In Philippians 3:19, "phroneo" is translated as "mind," referring to the mental attitude centering on earthly things – a person who is just interested in temporal things. And so on, throughout the book of Philippians, this is used several times, and it gives you a good, clear picture that it's just the way you think.

So, what he's talking about here basically is what is on a person's mind. What is on your mind (what your mindset is) is what you devote yourself to in terms of your time and money. You can tell a great deal about people in terms of their mental frame of reference. You can tell what their mental disposition is by just watching their lives, and seeing what it is that they devote themselves to, because what your mental frame of reference is, is what you will devote yourself to.

You may be devoting yourself and your time to your friends. That might be the big thing. You may be devoting yourself to your house. There's always somebody who's always building another room on the house, and who's always getting a little more new furniture, and re-designing something. There's somebody who is devoted to his family. That's the big thing. He may be so preoccupied with the family that maybe God has to remove some of the family so that you can get back on track. Or it may be your position – your seeking of fame. You may devote yourself; or, to travel to your garden.

Oh, that's wonderful. There's nothing like having a garden as a frame of reference of your life. I once got a man to plow up a plot of land, and planted a garden, and struggled with it all summer. I figured that I make 15 cents an hour for my time. It was a wonderful investment for all eternity.

It may be your boat. Oh, that's a great one. You love the boat, especially during summer camp time. There's nothing like having a boat to devote yourself to. Or it may be your guns. Guns are beautiful. That's the thing you devote yourself to: oiling; polishing; looking down the barrel and seeing if it's pitted; and, checking the ammo.

It might be your prestige; your position; or, some place of power that you'd like to secure. Or it might be your job. For some people, that's all there is in life. The whole frame of reference of the mentality – everything is processed through the mind, and the computer of the mind clicks it all out in terms of the job. That's it. Or it might be your car. There's nothing like spending time on your car. I notice some people that every time they walk by their car, they huff on the bumper and take out their handkerchief and polish it up. They just love their car.

Your treasures are on earth, or you pursue your treasures in heaven. You can expand it. What your mind is centered on, because of the kind of mental outlook you have, is what comes out in your daily life.

**Corruption**

So, the apostle Paul is telling us that here is something very important in Romans 8. He is saying: "For those that are governed by the sin nature, do mind (they are preoccupied with) certain things, and they are, again, the things of the flesh." This is the same word "sarx" again, referring to the sin nature – a mental preoccupation with the things of the sin nature. What does the nature pursuit? Good things? Never. It is always evil things, even when they look like human good. Such an evil mindset is pursued, then, every moment of the day. And when you are controlled by the mental attitude of the sin nature, the result is that you will pursue what is evil; what is corrupt; and, what God condemns.

You have a splendid example of how this happened to the whole human race just before the flood, as recorded in Genesis 6, where a mental frame of reference took over, that was completely dominated by the sin nature. And the result was a society that rapidly devolved into the worst kind of corruptions. In Genesis 6:5, we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The sin nature dominated every second of the day. What was the result?

**Violence**

Verses 11-13: "And the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." You go from corruption to violence: "And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh (that is, all human beings) had corrupted (every human being had corrupted) his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'"

Now what is this verse telling us? This passage is telling us that when the sin nature dominates and controls a person's mind, he goes into a corrupt lifestyle. When it is widespread in a society, the whole society goes into a corrupt lifestyle. So, it's happening in America today. The whole society is going into a corrupt lifestyle, because so many individuals are now controlled by the sin nature. And when the sin nature controls, it goes to corruption. And what comes out of corruption? Violence. And what do we have today? Violence: violence toward children; and, violence toward the poor young woman who has a flat tire in an out-of-the-way place, in the dark of the night, and some violent character takes her life. The old people are afraid to go out after dark. People who are putting deadbolts all over the doors of their houses in order to try to find some security. From what? From the intrusion of violence.

When a society cuts itself off from the moral standards of the Word of God, which is what the sin nature always does, then corruption comes, and then comes violence. And the return is always traumatic. A society goes through a traumatic, bitter convulsion before they finally say, "We've had enough. We're going back to God."

Have you ever heard anybody say, "You can't turn back the clock?" The liberals like to say that all the time. That is the stupidest, most ignorant, dumbest thing that anybody can say. And don't you eat it: "You can't turn back the clock." What in the world must we do when we've lost our way, and gotten off track? To turn back the clock means that you can't go back to something in the past. But when you have abandoned God's path of righteousness, that's exactly what you have to go back to.

I was traveling to Minnesota one time, and we had been driving all night, and early into the morning. The sun was coming up, and we were driving along, and all of a sudden, I realized that the sun was on the wrong side of the car. And I said, "Hey, we made a wrong turn." We were 180 degrees in the wrong direction. But what did I do? I said, "Well, what difference does it make? The sun is on the wrong side. You can't turn back the clock. You can't turn back the sun. You can't change it." So, I just kept going, and ended up back in Texas. No, I turned around, and I did just exactly that. I put the sun on the right side of the car. I could go back. We can go back to the past. We can turn the past around. And what I did was went back up the road to the place where I made the wrong turn, and then I made the right turn, and we were back on track. How did I change it? By going back.

Some people say, "You can't go back and change the past." Yes, you can. That's exactly what you have to go back to. And don't you be kidded when people say, "You can't turn the clock back." That's their subtle way of saying, "Please, I don't want to go back to godliness. I don't want you to go back to the good old ways when people were prosperous and people were happy. I want to stay here in my pig sty, and in my barnyard morality. I don't want you to turn the clock back to God's ways." But that's exactly what has to happen.

That's what God does periodically with a nation. That's what the flood was all about. God said, "I'm going turn the clock back. I'm just going to turn this whole thing back. We've gone to corruption. The earth is filled with violence. And I'm going to stop it. And I'm going to put man back with these eight godly, born-again, righteous people of Noah's family, and we're going to get back on track again." And that's exactly what happened.

So, the apostle Paul says that those who are under the domination of the frame of reference of the sin nature are people who view life from that frame of reference, and who pursue the things that that corrupt nature wants to bring.

**Governed by the Spirit**

On the other hand, he says that there is a difference: "But." This is the Greek word "de." This word indicates a contrast. Again, he says, "But those who are after." The word "after" is the same word "kata," meaning "governed by." But this time, it is governed by "the Spirit" (the "pneuma"). This refers to God the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers. He is the main topic here in the context. So, when it says "Spirit," it's still talking about what the context has been talking about. And the context is talking about God the Holy Spirit. It is, again, without the word "the." It is not "*the* Spirit." When it doesn't have the word "the," then it doesn't stress so much the individual as it does a quality. What it is stressing here, when it says, "Spirit," it means God the Holy Spirit, but it is stressing a quality about him, as before, it said "flesh," stressing corruption and evil. Here it says "Spirit" to indicate the quality of his holiness.

Of course, that's what Romans 8 is all about: how are we going to be a holy people? The reference here is to those who are the slaves of the Holy Spirit through regeneration. So, it refers to believers. So, in the first part of verse 5 (in that sentence) you have unbelievers: "They that are after the flesh" – those are unbelievers. They operate on a mental frame of reference that seeks the things of the flesh. But, "They that are after the Spirit" – what do they do? You have to add the words "do mind." They are not in the Greek: "Do mind the things of the Spirit;" that is, the things that are compatible with divine holiness. And there he is talking about those who are believers. It refers to those who are under the control mentally of the Spirit of God, and who move in the direction of His will and His emotions.

So, we translate verse 5 in this way: "For those who are governed by the desires of the flesh, the sin nature set their minds on the things of the sin nature. (Those are unbelievers.) But those who are governed by the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." And those who are believers. In Romans 8:5, then, the apostle Paul makes it very clear that the sin nature of the unbeliever is totally antagonistic to God, and totally antagonistic to God's purposes. There is a definite connection between a person's essential nature and the things that interest him – the things he has a taste for. If he has the nature of an unbeliever, then he has a taste for the things of the sin nature, with all the corrupt things that that implies. If he has the nature of a believer, then he has a taste for the things of the Spirit of God and all that that implies.

It is true that when you become a Christian, your tastes will change. It is true that you may have been a very vile type of person in your lifestyle before you became a believer. But when you do become a Christian, you lose your taste for that. That becomes an offense to you. You recoil from that, and you have a totally different view of life, and you have a totally different outlook. Why? Because your mind has changed – because the control element has gone from the sin nature, which is a beastly, deadly thing, to the preciousness of the guidance of the Spirit of God. There is a definite connection between your essential nature and what interests you – what you have a taste for.

**The Things of the Sin Nature Lead to Death**

Since the unbeliever is spiritually dead, he's governed by the sin nature, so he seeks the things of Satan. The things promoted by sin nature lead to death. And that's what he's going to point out, as we shall see in a moment. The things of the sin nature (you want to remember) lead to death. They have the stench of death upon them. That is true in eternal things, and it is true in temporal things. The things of this nature lead to death now.

**AIDS**

We have only to look at the rampant epidemic of AIDS. And there is fear and consternation in the homosexual community because that vile perversion of the sin nature is producing exactly what the Bible says: death. And God is stopping the sin with death. That's how God stops sin. He stops sin with death. He stops the evil perversion of a whole society by bringing death. He'll bring drought; He'll bring famine; and, He'll bring diseases of every kind, and He'll wipe out masses of pagan societies with their corrupt viewpoint. And He will stop what they're teaching, and He will stop what they're doing with death. The product of the sin nature is death. It is seen with AIDS; it is seen with gluttony; it is seen with the use of drugs; it is seen with the use of alcohol; it is seen with the use of tobacco; and, it is seen in many respects. The sin nature says, "Hey, you do this." And God says, "OK, you can do it, but I want you to know that that has the stamp of death upon it. Keep doing it, and you'll pay the price of death for it. It's true eternally, but we need to remember that it's true in time as well.

The unbeliever who is under the sin nature does not welcome the divine viewpoint of the Holy Spirit. That's why unbelievers do not like Christians. That's why you hear so much antagonism toward biblical believers. 1 Corinthians 2:14 puts it this way: "The natural man (the unsaved man) receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they're foolishness to him." All you have to do is watch a Phil Donahue program to see how much foolishness there is in how the unbeliever views the Bible, and that what it has to say is a bunch of foolishness: "Neither can he know them (these spiritual things), because they are spiritually discerned." You have to have spiritual capacity to understand them.

In Romans 8:6, Paul moves on to two results. In Romans 8:5, we have two governing forces: the force of the sin nature; and, the force of the Spirit of God. Now we have two results in verse 6. Again, because he's going to give an explanation, the verse starts off in the Greek with the word "gar" ("for"), indicating a clarification of the two spiritual conditions in verse 5 presenting, additional reasons why believers do not characteristically walk by means of the Holy Spirit: "For to be." "To be" is not in the Greek. It leaves out the verbs in order to make it very emphatic. That's how the Greek language does. And he wants to summarize something very emphatically. The word "carnally" looks like an adjective there, but it's really the word "sarx" again, for "flesh." It's the noun.

**Death**

The word "minded" is another noun. It looks like this: "phronema." "Phronema" means "the thought." In the Greek language, when a word that ends in "ma" like that, it's giving you the product – the result of something. So, he's talking about what is the result of some pattern of thinking. The idea is a state of mind here again, which governs decisions. We would translate this: "for the mind set on the flesh," or "the mind set on the sin nature:" "is death." And it's "thanatos." "Thanatos" means the absence of life.

**Spiritual Death**

Here it refers to the absence of eternal life of the unbeliever who is enslaved by the sin nature mentality. Spiritual death means separation from God even though you are physically alive. This is indicated to us in Ephesians 2:1, where we read, "And you He has made alive (that is, spiritually alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins." Even though you were physically alive, you were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. So, the spiritually dead (those who are in the control of the sin nature) – the have the frame of reference of thinking of the sin nature, and they are dead. They have upon them the stamp of death. The death-producing character of the mind governed by the sin nature is totally incompatible with the state of salvation to eternal life. We're still talking about unbelievers here in verse 6. A mental attitude which produces a lifestyle of death is not normal for the believer who is characterized by a lifestyle of life.

So, any human being revealing the sin nature mentality by what he pursues and does in life is spiritually dead. If we see a person who is producing a lifestyle that is characteristic of what the old sin nature proposes, we know that person is, in all likelihood, spiritually dead. For them there is a future of pain; suffering; tears; and, terror. These doomed people often think that they're actually expanding their consciousness of light, until the emptiness hits them; until disease hits them; until physical death hits them; or, until something disastrous overtakes them. Then they realize that they were not expanding life – that they were not productive of something better. To be controlled by the sin nature mentality is death.

However, then it says, "But." And here we have the word "de" again, a conjunction indicating a contrast: "to be spiritually minded," and here again, it's not an adjective. It's the noun for God the Holy Spirit: "pneuma." And again, we have the same word "minded" that we had a moment ago: "phronema." "Phronema" refers to what you have on your mind – the content. It refers to the object of your thought.

**Life**

So, we translate this: "But the mind set on the Spirit." For the mind set on the sin nature is death: "But the mind set on the Spirit is life" ("zoe"). That connotes the absence of death. It refers here to the spiritual life of a born-again believer who knows God. So, he possesses fellowship with God.

This is expressed in John 17:3 this way: "And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent." That's the life he's referring to here.

We have this also in 1 John 1:3, illustrated in this way: "That which we have seen and heard, we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." If you are born-again, then you can have fellowship with the true and living God eternal fellowship.

**Peace**

So, those who have the mindset of the Spirit of God; that is, those who are Christians, are characterized by life, and by one thing else: peace ("eirene"). "Eirene" means concord. It connotes the absence of strife; the absence of fear; and, the absence of suffering. It's tranquility in the soul. It is the peace of God which comes with personal regeneration. It comes with knowing that your sins are forgiven. This is the peace that comes with knowing that the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed to you, and thereby you have justification.

**Eternal Security**

This is the peace that comes from eternal security – the peace that comes from the knowledge of the eternal security in the family of God which has been provided for you. This refers to the calm within one's own soul – the calm of the person who stands in the expectation of some dying and facing a holy God who must execute justice.

Romans 5:1 puts it this way: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is beautifully stated: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Verse 6 says, "For the mind set on the sin nature is death. But the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." The mind set on the flesh (the sin nature) is the mind of the unbeliever. The mind set on the Spirit (on the Holy Spirit) is the believer's mind. The state of mind governed by the Holy Spirit is expressed in the pursuit of the things in life that produce life and peace. It is the Christian, with his Holy Spirit-guided mind, who is the one who really knows how to live, and who really enjoys life, without ending up with disastrous, bitter consequences.

This isn't just a temporary tick at the moment. It is true enjoyment. And he has peace through what he is doing. All who are justified through Jesus Christ possess this kind of peaceful sanctification.

So, a person revealing the Holy Spirit mentality by what he does and what he pursues in life is the person who is spiritually alive, and at peace with God. And that is the thing that most people do not have. No matter how they may rage against being born again, and about saying that if you're not born again, you're not going to heaven, and all that, in the quiet moments in the middle of the night, there is no peace in their souls. They are in great turmoil. They fear having to come face-to-face with that God.

Now when you're young and in your great capacity of strength, you can play high, wide, and handsome. You can be really smug, and you can really be arrogant, and you can really pass off the things of God. But I have stood in the presence of people, where I have talked to them. And while I'm standing there, a few minutes later, they're stone dead. And I notice that at that point, there's no more human arrogance. If they prepared for dying grace, they go out with class and with ease. If they have not, they're hanging on with uneasy terror, and with concern, because they don't know what's on the other side. It is the Holy Spirit-controlled mentality which can only come to a believer that has peace in the face of a God who is holy, and who will execute justice.

The Holy Spirit-minded believer, therefore, in all that he does, exudes the exhilarating quality of being alive toward God, and at peace with that God. He is our friend. He is no longer our judge, and thus one whom we would view as a threat. The enjoyment of the salvation life and peace of the believer is only hindered by your own reversion into carnality, and thus by the loss of your temporal fellowship with the Father.

Isaiah 26:3 taught the Jews long ago this principle in these words. If you're God's child, only you can mess it up, in terms of your daily earthly walk: "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusted in You." You have perfect peace because you have your mind on God. That was the prophet's way of saying the very same thing that Paul is saying. Those who are spirit-minded people produce a life of peace, and a life of real living.

So, this is very fascinating introduction to God-pleasers. This passage tells us how to please God. You and I, as those who are in Christ, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, have the capacity to please God.

Now in verse 7-8, we're going to come into some very significant declarations of things that we tend to forget about the sin nature. Therefore, we tend to forget about people who are not Christians. Every time you go to make a political vote, if you understand verses 7-8, you'll approach that with a different attitude altogether. It will be necessary for you to realize that you are voting evil into a position of power if you are voting for a mentality (an unbeliever's mentality) who can only function under the corrupt systems of the sin nature – nothing else. And what does the sin nature mentality produce? Death. And look at where we are today.

All over this country, there is the hand of death, in every institution and every area of life, and it is getting worse. Why? Because the people who are running the country are sin nature-dominated mentalities, and all they can produce is a corrupt viewpoint, even when they do something such that everybody says, "That's wonderful. That's a great service. That's a great sacrifice. We honor you. We praise you. We exalt you." God says, "Your filthy rags are not impressive to Me, and that's all you have. People honor you? Your name goes up someplace. They put an image of you someplace." But God says, "You're a filthy rag, because what you produce is the sin nature.

Now if we understand that about unbelievers, and how seriously our God looks at that, then Paul can go on in the rest of the book of Romans, which he is intending to do, and say, "Now let's just put that in the frame of reference. Will you as a Christian want to go back to the barnyard morality? Will you as a Christian want to go back to that human viewpoint in government; in education; in religion; in society; in your job; and, whatever? Here is how really destructive it is. You have upon yourself the kiss of death. And Instead of having life in the fullest, and peace with God, you throw it all overboard. The next two verses are enormously important, and we'll look at those next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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