



Romans 8:5-13

The Spirit Controlled Walk

Most people want a life that is meaningful and fulfilling. We want to be free from conflicts and stress. Even more so we want to be less frustrated in our walk with the Lord. Immature believers are filled with turmoil and spiritual stress and struggle.

Romans chapter seven teaches us if we try to live the Christian life in human effort we will fail miserably. We experience condemnation, hopelessness, entrapment, burn out and exhaustion. Romans 8 tells us how to move beyond that to a growing mature walk in the Spirit. The dominant note in chapter eight is victory.

Let me share with you a letter written by a sixteen-year-old high school student that illustrates this exchanged life. It is authentic and it is real.

Last week when delivering flowers to patients in Hospital Vozandes Quito I saw an eight year old boy in a coma from a serious car accident he had several months ago. His name was Toni. As I sat by his bed, a short lady came in with tears in her eyes and told me what had happened and she started to cry.

The mother told me about her poor farm in a nearby Quechua Indian village. She said that if the money didn't come in she would have to take Toni home. He had been in the hospital now for three months. He could hear and respond, but could not talk. Toni's mom asked him to blink his eye for a "yes" and a nod for "no."

I then went to the balcony and saw an old lady sitting on a bench and she asked me to sit down beside her. She told me that her son was in room #305 recovering from an operation. We began talking about what a beautiful day it was and how God created man. As we talked she asked me about my religion and asked what I was doing in Quito. I told her about our work with missionary radio station HCJB, the two mission hospitals, medical caravans and that I was a student in high school. I also explained why my parents lived here.

She told me that she had attended a Catholic Church in the village of El Corazon. She talked about how scared she was about death and how her husband had left her. She asked me questions like; "Do we have a priest who washes our feet? What about the Lord's supper and confession." With each question I tried to answer the best I could. I took out a little New Testament and a Gospel tract. We went step by step, verse by verse, picture by picture over the Cinco Pasos (Five Steps to Peace with God), a Gospel tract that I often use to present the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. As I shared Christ she believed on Him as her personal Savior. We both rejoiced, and so did

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believed on Him as her personal Savior. We both rejoiced, and so did the angels in heaven. I could see a twinkle in her eye of perfect peace. I have also had the privilege of giving my testimony in chapel at the Alliance Academy and on Christian Service Outreach trips to different parts of Ecuador. Sharing my faith in Christ has been a little scary at times but exciting too. I love the promise in Deuteronomy 31:8, which says, "It is the Lord who goes before you: He will be with you. He will not fail or forsake you: Do not fear or be dismayed." I open my mouth and He gives me the words to say and after I sit down I think, "Oh mercy, did I say that: No, He said it through me." I've been so blessed and look forward to talking to others about Jesus and how He can change their lives just like He changed, and is changing mine.

I chose that letter written by our daughter Paula over 12 years ago because it perfectly illustrates what it means to walk in the Spirit. How old you are, or how long you have been a Christian is not the issue, but are you yielded to the Holy Spirit in your daily life. Paula still lives this vibrant, wholesome witness for Christ as an adult. This is the secret to living the Christian life.

THE CHARACTER AND LIFESTYLE OF THE FLESH (8:5-11).

He has a fleshy mind-set (v. 5a).

There are two ways of looking at life. We will examine them separately for a few minutes to draw out the contrasts.

One is an attitude that tries to leave God out of the picture. The Apostle Paul calls it a fleshy mind set. "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" (8:5). The "flesh" mindset is dominated by I, ME, and MINE. It is selfish in outlook. Everything is centered on self and how we can satisfy ourselves. His mind is set on power, position, prestige, passion, and possessions. His dominating impulses are set against God. He takes legitimate human needs and fulfills them in the wrong manner. We can even do the service of God with self seeking motives.

In this passage Paul uses the word "flesh" to describe that weaker element in human nature that yields to sin. This passage brings out, moreover, that to have a mind of the flesh is downright hostile to God. It means to a soldier in the opposite army.

Paul uses an interesting word for letting the mind dwell on something. It means to think, be intent on, or to set one's mind on or heart upon something. It is the seat of intellectual and spiritual activity. It denotes the whole person thinking, feeling and choosing. It includes our outlook, assumptions, values, desires and purposes. Do we take the side of self and the flesh in opposition to God and His kingdom? Or do we have a mindset that seeks to be in tune with the Holy Spirit delighting in wherever He chooses to move?

What do you choose to let your mind dwell upon? We have a choice since we have believed on Christ as our personal savior. Here Paul is contrasting the two ways of thinking. You can be mentally preoccupied with something. He says they "set their minds on." It is a mind-set. Here the word for "mind" signifies the strong

something. He says they "set their minds on." It is a mind-set. Here the word for "mind" signifies the strong bent of the mind regarding the object desired. When the mind is described as fleshy it is set on the things that gratify our corrupt nature. Ephesians 2:3 gives a picture of the mind set of the unbeliever.

The writer of Proverbs saw this fact when he said, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7). You become like that to which you set your mind on.

The human mind works a lot like a modern missile guidance system. We can achieve what we see in our mind. Our imagination is the guidance system of our personality. Set your mind on flesh and you will produce the works of the flesh. The Christian has a choice.

Our actions and behaviors are determined by our mindset, and our outlook on life. As a man thinks in his heart (or mind) so is he. What we choose to dwell on determines how we behave. It is our thoughts, ultimately, which govern our behavior. It is a question of our preoccupations, our ambitions, and our interests, which engross us. What we set our minds on will ultimately determine how we spend our time, money and energy. It is what we set our minds on that determines how we live the Christian life. A mind under the control of the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit. A mind set on the flesh will produce carnal behavior.

A mind set on the flesh is death spiritually (v. 6a, 13a; I Tim. 5:6).

"For the mind set on the flesh is death" (8:6a). There is a consequence for this life style. The apostle Paul repeats the warning in v. 13, "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die." Later Paul wrote Timothy and described the results of such a life, "But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives." Her mindset resulted in spiritual death.

A fleshly mind set is hostile toward God (v. 7a). Cf. I John 2:15-17

"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*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (vv. 7-8). It is in open rebellion toward God.

The Apostle John defined this mindset: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." The problem for the believer has always been how to be in the world and not buy into its philosophy of life. Far too often we try to compromise with the world, we want to be socially accepted. We look at appearance, performance and status to find fulfillment. The world's system and philosophy has always been in total enmity with God. How tragic when Christians don't realize that and try to copycat the world's system.

He is rebellious toward God's Word (v. 7b).

The person controlled by the flesh is hostile toward God. He refuses to submit to God's will. He wants to do his own thing in his own way. When we are yielding to the flesh we are in open rebellion toward God. "It does not subject itself to the law of God."

He is incapable of pleasing God (v. 7b-8).

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No matter how hard we try to please God while we are acting in the flesh we cannot. When our minds are controlled by the flesh we can not please God. It is impossible.

He did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (v. 9b).

Note the strong contrast in the next verse. "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." If you have been born again you have the Holy Spirit within you. If you have never been born spiritually you do not have the Spirit dwelling in you and you need a spiritual birth. You don't have to go pleading for more of Him. What you need to do is yield to Him. Instead of rebellion against Him, you need to yield to His indwelling presence.

The Christian lives in a physical body like other people, but they are not obliged to it. The world system doesn't characterize them. They belong to another realm, or another dimension. They are "in the Spirit" of God. Paul speaks of our being "in Christ," and Christ being in us. Believers live very close to God and in His constant presence. He is not an occasional visitor. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence within us. He is a permanent dweller. The Spirit of God has come to live in believers. This is our strength. It is our life.

He did not belong to God, and has never been born again (v. 13).

We do not owe the flesh anything. The only payday sin has is death. Paul says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh —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."

What is the fruit of this mind-set? Cf. Galatians 5:19-21

The Apostle Paul gives us a list of the works of the flesh. How would you like to be married to someone like this? We could ask the question how will I know one if I saw one?

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

This is what the mind set on the flesh will produce in your life. If you dwell on it you will produce it. Let your mind be under the control of this way of living and you will live this kind of lifestyle. You will produce what you set your heart to.

Now Paul says, let me show you a better way. We have a choice as to what we allow our minds to dwell on. Here is another way, indeed, a better way.

THE CHRISTIAN'S MIND-SET (8:5-11)

The believer is eternally secure in Christ (8:1).

Verse one is like a breath of fresh air. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We can never lose our salvation because it does not depend on us but on God. Once we are *in* Christ by faith, it is the Lord who keeps us there forever. In Romans 8:35-39 Paul gives us a list of things that can not rob us of our salvation. It covers everything.

Do you wake up every morning and say to yourself, "I am a child of God. I have been forgiven of my sins. I am accepted in God's family. He has marked me out as His own. He has put His Spirit within me, releasing to me the full life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every power that Jesus Himself had to perform His life upon earth, I have in Him. I am equipped to handle whatever comes today. I can take whatever life throws at me because I have Him and all the fullness of His life." This is where the believer finds his identity, security, significance and sufficiency. It comes from Christ dwelling within us by His Holy Spirit. The world system will leave you high and dry every time. Only Christ satisfies.

The Spiritual mind-set (v. 5b).

The Holy Spirit creates in believers a deep seated orientation toward righteousness. Verse five reminds us of the Spirit controlled mind, "those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The Christian's mind is to be constantly set on the things of the Spirit and what He desires. The principle of the renewed nature dominates his thinking and therefore his actions.

Romans 12:2, says, "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." You see, we now have a choice. We are no longer slaves to the flesh. We do not have to let sin rule our lives. We have been set free. We have a new master.

The apostle Paul stresses this battle of the mind in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. "*We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."

True believers have "life and peace" (v. 6b).

The way of holiness is the way of life and peace. This passage stresses that there is no other way to find life and peace. The carnal life is filled with stress. The Spirit-controlled life is filled with peace.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (v. 6). The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Spirit. It is a whole different life style. Jesus said, "My peace I give to you."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusts in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). Jesus said, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). In John 10:10b, Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly." Men search in vain in every other location. We find life and peace in Christ alone.

Christians are "in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (v. 9).

The transforming power of the Spirit abides in all believers. Every born again believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in Him. He doesn't have some of the Spirit, or a portion of the Spirit. He has all of Him. We don't need more of the Spirit we need to yield ourselves to Him without any reservations. We cling on to areas of our lives that need to be in submission to His will. When you read His Word and there is the pull on the heart by the Spirit or inner prompting and prodding we must yield to His leading. When He points out sin in our lives we need to confess it and stop doing it. When He points us to a great promise or illumines our mind as to who we are in our position before God we need to believe Him. It is His Word.

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Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). This is an intimate love relationship with Christ. It is walking in the Spirit. It is a humble submission to Him.

The Apostle Paul said the same thing, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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. . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-17, 25).

We are spiritually alive (v. 10).

"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (v. 10). It is true our physical bodies remain subject to physical death. We will die. However our inward man is being renewed into the everlasting image of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul writes, "we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." There is continual refreshment for the Spirit controlled believer, even though the renewing of our image in the likeness of Christ is a gradual process of spiritual growth. (Cf. Col. 3:10-11). A. T. Robertson writing in *Word Pictures* reminds us, "The restoration of the image of God in us is gradual and progressive (2 Cor. 3:18), but will be complete in the final result (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2)." The renewed spirit has God begotten, God sustained life.

We have the power of the Resurrection life (v. 11).

Paul continues in verse eleven, "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." The spiritual resurrection life is present in us now. We have the supernatural power to live the Christian life, and produce righteousness. Now we have a choice, and the power to act on it (6:11). Before we became Christians we were slaves to sin, but now we have been liberated and we have the power to live it because the Spirit of Christ lives within us.

The result of a Spirit mind-set (Gal. 5:22-23).

What does this kind of mind set produce? It has a distinctive aroma of Christ all about it. Paul describes the fruit of the mind set on what the Spirit desires in Galatians 5:22-23.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Now, how many of you would like to have a child lived like that? Wouldn't you rather have a spouse who had these characteristics? Wouldn't you rather be this kind of a person? Man, I do! The mind that is under the influence of, dominated by the Holy Spirit produces this kind of life.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS BELIEVERS TO LIVE CHRIST (8:12-13).

We are under obligation.

We have a debt. Negatively, we do not to live according to the flesh. If we are living according to the flesh we will die.

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The media in Bogota was dogging Al Wheeler after the murder of Chet Bitterman. They came up to Al after word of discovery of Chet's body in a public bus where the M 19 killed him. The M 19 hijacked a public transportation bus and rode around in it during the night in the southern part of Bogota. With the radio blaring loudly one of the men pulled out a gun and shot Chet in the heart with one bullet. Then they slowly stepped off the bus one by one and disappeared in the night.

A little later in the day the reporters asked Al Wheeler, "Mr. Wheeler, we understand that you were really the one the M 19 was after. What is it like knowing someone, a friend, died in your place?" Al paused, and characteristically ran his fingers through his wavy hair, pushing it back, said, "It makes me feel very sad to know that Chet died for me. But it is a keen reminder that Chet wasn't the first person who died for me. Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ came to this earth and died for me on the cross and rose from the dead. He died for you and me. And I am eternally indebted to Him."

Paul is always reminding the believer that we are under obligation. We owe a debt. Not that we can ever pay for our salvation. But we owe a debt of gratitude.

We are responsible to the Holy Spirit to "put to death the deeds of the body" (vv. 12-13).

Paul stresses our responsibility by saying, "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" (8:12-13).

Mortify means cut it off, put it to death. Living the Christian life is serious business.

Jesus placed a strong emphasis on repentance in Matthew 5:29-30. "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell." It must be slain, or it will slay us. He is not talking about literally chopping off the hand or foot or pulling the eye out. But you get the picture! That is just how severe a judgment it calls for in our lives. The severity of the responsibility is seen again in Paul's language in Galatians 5:24. "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

Alexander McLaren declared: "There is no such thing in the Christian conflict as a painless development. We must mortify the deeds of the body if we are to live in the Spirit. The Christian progress has in it the nature of a crucifixion. It is to be effort, steadily directed for the sake of Christ, and in the joy of His Spirit, to destroy sin, and to win practical holiness."

Russian lumberjacks were cutting timber on a high mountain slope. In order to get the trimmed logs down to the river below they sawed logs and made a huge ramp down the mountain side so the trees would slide rather freely down the mountain side until they landed in the river below. There the lumberjacks would gather up the logs and float them on down river to the sawmill. Late one afternoon as the lumberjacks were headed down the mountainside one of the men was walking down the wooden slide because it was easier walking than the rugged mountain terrain. As he skipped along he got his foot caught between two pieces of wood. No matter how hard he pulled and tugged and pried he could not get his foot out of the crack. Suddenly there was a shout high up the mountain signaling a tree was coming down the shoot. As the giant log got closer and closer it signaled instant death for the lumberjack. In an instant he whipped out his hatchet and chopped off his foot freeing himself just in the nick of time. There are some things in life that call for urgent action. Some things need to be cut out of our lives to free us from greater spiritual danger.

Jesus said, "You will know the tree by its fruits." What kind of fruit is your tree producing?

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SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES FOR US TODAY

1. Are you absolutely sure about your relationship with Christ? Robert Haldane wrote: "Multitudes who profess to have received the Gospel, are walking after the flesh, seeking to satisfy their conscience, and saying peace when there is no peace." It is absolutely imperative that we know Jesus Christ in an intimate love relationship. This is not religious jargon or religious faddism. It is a serious call to come and be a disciple of Jesus Christ. You can have His peace and sense of forgiveness right now by trusting in Him as your personal Savior. Take a few moments and examine your life before God and make sure of your relationship with Him. There is an excellent help in *A Free Gift for You*. It will show you the way to Christ.

2. Is your mind set on the flesh, or the Spirit? One way you will know for sure is by examining the fruit of your mind set. If your mind is set on the flesh you will reap the works of the flesh. If you are focusing on the Spirit controlled mind set you will produce the fruit of the Spirit. It is my prayer that you will find the great joy of walking in the Holy Spirit today.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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