

The Two Spiritual Conditions
Romans 8:5-8
August 13, 2020

Review

- Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives
- 5:1-11 Blessed results of justification
- 5:12-21 The reign of God's grace in the second Adam, and how it is superior to the reign of sin through the first Adam
- Ch 6 The triumph of grace over the power of sin
- 7:1-8:17 The triumph of grace over the power of the law
- 7:1-6 The Christian has been released from the law in order to come under Christ's authority and be joined to Him forever, and now serves God in the New Covenant way, the way of the Holy Spirit, not in the Old Covenant way, the way of the written code
- 7:7-13 The goodness and impotence of the law, as seen in the effect the law had upon Paul before he was joined to Christ
- 7:14-23 The goodness and impotence of the law, as seen in Paul's inability as a Christian, in and of himself, to obey the law, even with a new heart that truly delights in it
- 7:24-25 The cry of the Christian to his Savior to deliver him from "this body of death," both now in sanctification and in the future in glorification
- 8:1-4 God has done what the law could not do. God sent His Son to atone for sin, and condemned sin as Christ bore that sin. And now the life-giving Holy Spirit has set the Christian free from sin's penalty and power. God's purpose was that we would be made to obey the law of God, which we do as we walk according to the Spirit.

The contrasting mindsets of the unbeliever and the believer (5)

Question: What does it mean to live according to the flesh? What does it mean to live according to the Spirit?

Throughout this passage, the contrast is between the unbeliever and the believer (**vv 9-11**).

This passage is connected to **verse 4**, and explains how it is that the person who does not have the Spirit of God cannot fulfill the righteous requirement of the law, while the person who has received the Spirit in Christ fulfills the law.

Verse 5 contrasts “those who live according to the flesh” with “those who live according to the Spirit”

1. NASB “those who are according to the flesh...those who are according to the Spirit”
2. ESV interprets as a reference back to **4b** “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”
3. I agree with the NASB

Unbelievers “are according to the flesh.”

1. The flesh is fallen humanness
2. Verse 5 speaks of the unregenerate person’s fundamental bent or disposition being away from God toward sin and self

Believers “are according to the Spirit.”

1. They are indwelt by the Spirit and have been recreated by Him with a heart that is inclined away from sin and self, toward God
2. *MacArthur*: “The Spirit is to a believer what God the Creator is to the physical world. Without God, the physical world would not exist. It has been created and is continually sustained by the omnipotent power of God. So the Holy Spirit...is to the Christian. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent who creates, sustains, and preserves spiritual life in those who place their trust in Jesus Christ.”¹
3. Believers have a new nature that reflects the Holy Spirit who created that nature

Those who are according to the flesh “set their minds on the things of the flesh”

1. Their mindset, the orientation of their mind
2. Encompasses their thoughts, will, and affections

Those who are according to the Spirit “set their minds on the things of the Spirit”

1. Jonathan Edwards spoke of this in terms of having “holy affections”
2. **7:22**
3. Their innermost concerns have been radically changed by the Spirit

¹ *Romans 1-8*, 414.

4. **Matt. 5:6** “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
5. **Gal. 5:22–23** “...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

Because the Spirit has made the believer new, and the believer’s mind is consequently set on the things of the Spirit, the believer is characterized by walking according to the Spirit (verse 4).

The Christian’s new obedience to God is rooted in the transforming work of the Spirit, and thus is not a burden imposed from without but a delight embraced from within.²

The contrasting spiritual conditions of the unbeliever and the believer (6)

“For to set the mind on the flesh is death,”

1. Spiritual death
 - 5:12-21 taught that all died through Adam’s trespass
 - 7:9-13 taught that the law reveals the unbeliever’s dead condition
2. The person whose mind is set on the flesh is spiritually dead
3. Unresponsive to the things of God

“but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace”

1. Such a person has eternal life given by the Spirit (8:2)
2. Peace with God received in justification (5:1)

A professing Christian who has no sensitivity to the things of God, no holy affections, no will to obey God’s commandments, does not have eternal life.³

What makes a person a Christian is not a mere outward profession of faith, but a work of the Holy Spirit within that makes the mind new.

The hostility and inability of the unbeliever (7-8)

7a “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God,”

1. True of every unbeliever, whether religious or atheistic, whether outwardly moral or immoral
2. The unregenerate exalt self above God, which is hostility against the true God, who has said **Is. 48:11b** “My glory I will not give to another.”

² Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, 409.

³ MacArthur, 418.

3. Every unregenerate mind is set against the true will of God

7b “for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”

1. God’s law requires obedience done out of love for God (Deut 6:5), in faith (Rom 14:23), for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31)
2. A hostile mind cannot submit
3. Does not deny that the unregenerate person is responsible for his sins

8 “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

1. We were originally created to please God, and in salvation we are recreated to please God
 - **2 Cor. 5:9** “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim **to please him.**”
 - **Col. 1:9–10** “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, **fully pleasing to him**, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”
 - **1 Th. 4:1** “Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and **to please God**, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.”
2. The unbeliever is unable to please God

The unsaved person cannot live a truly godly life because he does not have a godly nature

This condition of the unbeliever can only be overcome by the Spirit of God

Conclusion

When the Spirit of life sets a sinner free in Christ, the Spirit...

1. Gives the person a new mind that is no longer centered on and ruled by the things of the flesh, but is centered on and ruled by the things of the Spirit
2. Frees the person to truly and joyfully submit to God’s law, and please God
3. Changes the person so that they walk no longer according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit

If you are in the flesh rather than the Spirit, turn to the Lord JC for salvation!

Question: How should the Christian apply this passage to his or her life?