

## 73. The Book of Romans 8:5-9

*Paul's Epistle to the Romans*  
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

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(12-11-24)

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We are currently in the third major section of the Book of Romans—a section that runs from Chapters 6-8 and deals with the **sanctification** of the believer in Jesus Christ. Tonight we find ourselves in the climax of this section—Chapter 8, which is a chapter of victory that ends with a shout of victory—“*We are more than conquerors*” (thru our relationship with Jesus and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit).”

In fact, the word *Spirit* (as in Holy Spirit) is used 23 times in Romans 8—more than in any other chapter in the Bible which is why it's chapter of victory! Romans Chapter 8 is one of the most comforting chapters in the Bible—in fact it is God's prescription for troubled hearts, His special remedy for the devil's 'guilt trips.'

Romans 7 is the chapter of guilt trips because it deals with the guilt and condemnation that comes from trying to keep religious rules and regulations to please God and earn His favor—this is legalism. The focus of legalism is *self*—what I do for God, which is why Chapter 7 is such a chapter of defeat and it ends with a cry of defeat—“*O wretched man that I am.*”

In Chapter 7 Paul uses the personal pronouns “I” and “me” and “my” 46 times indicating that the focus of Chapter 7 is “self”—which is why it's a chapter of defeat.

One of the problems in the Church today is that so many have turned the Church into a glorified '*self-help program.*'

They maintain that the goal of Christianity (and therefore church) is self-improvement instead of self-effacement—or in other words, what the Church really is, is a group of sinners saved by grace and now totally dependent on God's grace for victory and personal growth (sanctification) in the power of the Holy Spirit!

One pastor put it well—

“The problem is that too many Christians are looking for programs or principles that will give them victory in their Christian life. It is a 'How to' mentality—'*How to get over this? How to accomplish that?—What book can I read, what seminar can I attend—tell me how to succeed in my Christianity...etc.*' As long as your Christianity is based on 'How' you will continue to be a '*wretched*' man or woman consumed with guilt because of your continual failures in your flesh.

You see 'How' is rooted in self-effort and self-effort tries to use the power of your flesh to defeat your flesh and that's why it's doomed to failure and condemnation. What did Paul say at the end of Chapter 7—'*O wretched man that I am—**Who** will deliver me from this body of death?—I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord.*'

The secret to victory in the Christian life is not found in a principle or a program but in a Person—Jesus Christ!—not how but Who!

*How* speaks of doing—*Who* speaks of abiding and resting in Jesus. Thomas asked, '*How can we know the way?* to which Jesus responded—'*I am the Way...*'

The key to victory is Jesus Who lives in us by His Holy Spirit. Forget the programs and get into the Person of Jesus.” (John 15:4-5)

**Romans 8:1–4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.* <sup>2</sup> *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* <sup>3</sup> *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,* <sup>4</sup> *that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

This isn’t a conditional statement by Paul for getting saved or for staying saved—this is a description of those who are saved.

In other words, when Paul talks about those **“Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”**—he is not *calling* us or *commanding* us to walk in the Spirit, he’s simply saying that the evidence that you’re in Christ and a child of God will be that the *bent* of your life will be towards the Spirit not the flesh—you *will* walk in the Spirit!

**Romans 8:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> *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, the things of the Spirit.**

Your mindset makes all the difference in the world when it comes to daily living and the ultimate course your life will take—as someone has written:

*“One ship drives east and another drives west with the selfsame winds that blow.  
‘Tis the set of the sails and not the gales which tells us the way to go.  
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of a heart, as we voyage along through life—  
‘Tis the set of a soul that decides its goal, and not the calm or the strife.”*

In other words, *you* are not a victim of your circumstances—you decide the ‘*set of your soul*’—*you* decide which direction your life will take. Many people defy God and His will for the course of their lives. (Ephesians 2:10)

We see the rebellious fallen heart of man portrayed in defiance against his Creator’s right to reign over our lives in William Henley’s classic poem *Invictus*—

*“Out of the night that covers me black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeoning of chance my head is bloody but unbowed.  
Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade. And yet but the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.”*

**“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...” (verse 5)**

The **‘mind’** is different from the brain. The *brain* is a physical organ that is a part of our *physical* body—whereas the *mind* is the non-physical part of our being often referred to as the *soul* or *consciousness* of a person.

When Paul talks about the **mind**, he's not talking about the ability of the brain to think or to reason—he is talking about the mind in the sense of—the *'focus or pre-occupation'* of one's life.

To be **'carnally minded'** speaks of someone who is dominated *by* and preoccupied *with* the things that pertain to our body appetites under the control of our fallen nature—what Paul called "the lusts of our flesh." (Gal. 5:16)

To be **'spiritually minded'** speaks of someone who is *dominated by* and *preoccupied with* the things of the Spirit of God.

The battle in the Christian life is for control of our mind—for control of our thinking—"For as a man thinks in his heart so is he!"

One pastor said this—

"Every day we need to ask ourselves—'What is going to control my mind today? Am I going to feed the flesh or the spirit? Where am I going to go? How am I going to be entertained? Who am I going to hang around with and what am I going to put into my mind by what I look at and listen to?' And as the day unfolds the thing I constantly need to ask myself is—"Am I going to live for God and feed the spirit or am I going to live for and feed the flesh?"

**Romans 8:5–6 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> **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, the things of the Spirit.** <sup>6</sup> **For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**

As we said last time—Paul is going to be using the word **"For"** numerous times from verses 5-8 and when he does understand that he is *comparing* believers with unbelievers.

Paul is not contrasting *carnal* Christians with *spiritual* Christians—he is contrasting **believers** (those who are *in Christ*) with **unbelievers** (those who are *in Adam*)—verse 9 makes that clear:

**Romans 8:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**

Donald Grey Barnhouse—

"According to the Word of God, there are only two kinds of people in the world, those who have been born once and those who have been born twice. God will never divide people into what the world calls educated or uneducated. He cares not about the cultured or the savage; religious or irreligious; rich or poor; high or low; noble or ignoble. Our present text shows that the only difference God recognizes is that between the men who do not have divine life and those who do...those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit."

So, in the eyes of God there are really only two groups in the world, two kinds of people—those who set their minds on the things of the flesh; and those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit. (It is true that there are degrees within each category—Explain).

All throughout this passage Paul is teaching by contrast:

1) *In the flesh—In the Spirit*

- 2) *Death—Life*
- 3) *War with God—Peace with God*
- 4) *Pleasing self—Pleasing God*

So, in verses 5-9 of Romans 8 Paul is comparing *believers* with *unbelievers*—the reason being is that he wants to show the fundamental difference between those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ—

- I. **Two Divisions-verse 5**
- II. **Two Dispositions-verse 5**
- III. **Two Destinies-verse 6**
- IV. **Two Dominions-verses 7-9**

Our first fundamental difference:

- I. **Two Divisions-verse 5**

**Romans 8:5**  
**For those who live according to the flesh (sinful nature)... those who live according to the Spirit (new nature)...**

In the eyes of God, the whole world is divided into these two groups. Now after dividing the world into two groups—Paul now gives the **disposition** of each.

- II. **Two Dispositions—verse 5**

**Romans 8:5 (NKJV)**  
<sup>5</sup> **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, the things of the Spirit*.**

So, here Paul gives us the disposition or *tendency* of each. The word “**set**” is the Greek word *phroneo* and it means the ‘*orientation*’ or ‘*inclination*’ or ‘*bent*’ of a person’s life.

**“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh”**

One commentator gives us deeper insight into the Greek word for ‘**flesh**’ (*sarx*)—  
*“The translation of **sarx** as “sinful nature” has a good side, too, because it frees us from thinking only of what we call ‘fleshly’ sins. The word includes those sins, but it also includes many things that we do not associate with being fleshly. Take a very moral person, for example. He or she does not indulge in debauchery—but does this mean that such a person is therefore thinking spiritually rather than according to the sinful nature? Not at all. In an unsaved state, the cultured, well-spoken moral person is as devoid of the Spirit of God, and is therefore as lost, as any other.”*

### III. Two Destinies-verses 6-7

#### **Romans 8:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Notice that Paul doesn't say to be **carnally minded leads** to death, he says that to be carnally minded—'**is death!**' By the same token, he doesn't say that to be **spiritually minded leads** to life—he said '**it is life**'—it's an equation not a consequence.

In other words, the person who does not know God through His Son, Jesus Christ, proves it by walking according to the flesh—because he or she is living in a state or realm of death (spiritual death):

To be spiritually minded is a quality of those who have eternal life because they have made peace with God through Jesus Christ and have been taken from Satan's kingdom of death and darkness into God's Kingdom of light and life—

#### **Colossians 1:13–14 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

#### **Romans 5:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Physical death is when the soul (consciousness) is separated from the body—spiritual death is when the soul is separated from God.

A person can be alive physically but dead spiritually—

#### **Ephesians 2:1–2a (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked...

D.L. Moody said—*"Unbelievers are born once and die twice; Christians are born twice and die once."*

#### **Romans 8:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal [unsaved] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

As someone has noted—

*"Rooted in carnal mindedness is a rebellion against God and the commandments of God—regardless of any religious trappings a person may wrap themselves in."*

If any proof were needed—it is seen most clearly in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ orchestrated by the most religious people in Israel.

The carnal mind is enmity against God because it is a product of the fall and therefore is incapable of desiring or keeping the law of God. (Romans 3:10-12)

This isn't necessarily talking about an atheist or a grossly immoral person—

**Luke 6:46 (NKJV)**

<sup>46</sup> “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”

**IV. Two Dominions (Over Man)—verses 8-9**

**Romans 8:8–9 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

*Dominion* is defined as—“the rule or power to rule; sovereign authority over a country or territory”—or in this case, ‘the rule or domination over an individual.’

Notice we’ve gone from “*according to the flesh*” and “*according to the Spirit*” (verse 5) to an entirely different level where Paul is talking about being “*in the flesh*” and “*in the Spirit*” (verse 8).

There is a progression in the way Paul describes both categories of people—they are first of all “*according to*” and then they are “*in.*”

The terms move from the pattern of one’s life—to the sphere of one’s life.

- The reason people *walk* (live) according to the flesh is because their minds are *dominated* by the things of the flesh.
- The reason for that is because they are “*in the flesh*” which means that they are being controlled by their fleshly fallen nature.
- But it also speaks of a state of *being*, not the practice of *doing*—what you are, not what you do.

**The same goes for those who walk “in the Spirit”**—they’re being controlled by their new nature (the nature of God in Christ) because they now exist in the realm of the Spirit—they’re new state of being.

**“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God”—(verse 8)**

It is no surprise, that those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Think about it—they are in a fallen state of being, the flesh, and in the flesh nothing good dwells (Romans 7:18)

There is nothing an unsaved person can do to **please God**—no good works, no religious observances, no sacrificial services—absolutely nothing! We can only please God by being *in Christ* (saved)—apart from Jesus all our so-called righteous deeds are worthless—

**Isaiah 64:6 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our [self] righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.

**Pleasing God is the goal of the Christian life—**

**Revelation 4:11 (KJV 1900)**

<sup>11</sup> Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

When many unbelievers hear this they get upset and say, “I don’t think it’s fair that God created me to bring Him pleasure—I don’t want to bring God pleasure, I want to live to bring myself pleasure!”

Next time I’d like to look briefly at some of the things the Bible says pleases God. (Practically for those who are in Christ and therefore positionally pleasing to God)

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