

In Romans 8:5 Paul writes, *“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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”* There are two kinds of people; those who live according to the flesh, and those who live according to the Spirit of God.

In Romans 8:5-8, Paul contrasts the difference between living according to the flesh and living according to the Spirit. In these verses, we find four aspects of this contrast.

The Mindset

The Holy Spirit writes the law of God on our hearts. This is only true for the believer; the unbeliever is not led by the Spirit, but rather is led by the flesh, thinking about how to satisfy their own desires. The person living in the flesh has a self-centered attitude.

Our sinful nature looks at every situation and decides how to live based on how it will be of benefit to us. It is a question of what motivates us: what are our ambitions? What are the concerns that engross us and consume our energy? The answer to these questions determines who we are, or better yet, whose we are.

If you are filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit, then your ambitions, motivation, and mindset will be to glorify God through your life. You live for a higher calling (see John 16:13-14). This does not mean that the unsaved person never does anything good, or that the believer never does anything bad. It means that the bent of their lives is different. One lives for the flesh; the other lives for the Spirit.

The Consequences

Romans 8:6 says, *“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”* The unsaved person is alive physically but dead spiritually. The inner man is dead toward God and does not respond to the things of the Spirit. He may be moral, and even religious, but he lacks spiritual life. The mind of the unsaved man leads him to death and eternal separation from God in Hell. Without Christ, this mindset is selfish and leads to death.

The person whose mind is set on the things of the Spirit, the person who has a personal relationship with Jesus, experiences life and peace. The person whose mind is set on the Spirit has peace with God (see Romans 5:1). Having peace with God, having eternal security, allows us to live at peace in this world. Trouble may come, but we can weather the storm because we experience the peace of God in our lives.

This is more than getting through this world to get to heaven. The Holy Spirit works in our lives as we make daily choices that lead to life or death. What we decide to watch or listen

to, what we do with our time and money, are all choices that either lead to life or to death. These are decisions that determine our pursuit of holiness.

The Hostility

Romans 8:7, *“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.”*

Our mindset determines our fundamental attitude towards God. If we have our mind set on the flesh, aimed at pleasing our sinful nature, we are hostile towards God. This hostility affects all our thoughts and attitudes towards God. Paul wrote that the person who is hostile to God does not submit to the law of God. That person is unable to follow the law of God because they lack the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Pleasing

Romans 8:8, *“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

To be “in the flesh” means to be lost, outside of Christ. The unsaved person lives to please himself and rarely, if ever, thinks about pleasing God. The root of sin is selfishness and pride.

How do we please God? (see Hebrews 11:6).

Pleasing God begins with saving Faith—placing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Then there is the daily living Faith, being led by the Holy Spirit. This means walking out the Christian life and making choices that sometimes look foolish to the world, but these choices please God when we walk by faith.

Are you alive or are you dead? Are you in the flesh or in the Spirit. Do you know Jesus as your Lord and savior?

You may be a believer, but are you alive? Let me explain. If you are a follower of Jesus, you should look and act differently. If the only difference the world sees in you is that you have a different Sunday morning schedule, then something is wrong. Being empowered by the Holy Spirit affects every aspect of our lives. It should make us look different and sometimes quite odd to the onlooking world.

But we don't like being odd; we like to fit in, but the result is that we are living like dead people, ignoring the Spirit and living for the flesh, our sinful self. Jesus died on the cross so that we may have life and have it abundantly (see John 10:10), so why do we settle for so much less?

It starts by acknowledging our position before the Lord. King David knew the secret as he prayed, in Psalm 139:23-24;

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!

As we invite the Holy Spirit's scrutiny, repent as He reveals things, renew our minds with His truth (see Romans 12:2), and walk in the Spirit daily, we experience life and peace!

Are you fully alive?

Are you making choices that produce life – led by the Holy Spirit?