

## **Romans, Part 21**

The mind that is controlled by the Spirit of God is different from a mind that is controlled by fleshly or carnal desires. The normal human mind is controlled by the desires of the flesh. When our mind is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and peace because the Holy Spirit directs our minds to things that please God. Throughout Romans, Paul addresses the battle of the mind. Each of us wage war in this area. Paul's epistles mention the mind and its function in 78 verses. In Romans 1, the wrath of God was revealed against the ungodly and unrighteous. God revealed His invisible attributes in the things He created. With everything God made, He revealed His eternal power and Godhead, (Romans 1:19-20).

**Romans 1:21 NIV84** For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Let's attempt to understand the impact of what they knew. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and had fellowship with God in the garden in the cool of the day. After sin entered, man and all creation experienced a dramatic fall from grace. It is difficult for us to imagine the duration of man's life. Adam was 930 years old when he died. He was alive to see the birth of Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech, the father of Noah. During the time of Noah, the thoughts of their minds became futile and darkened. They had been exposed to the testimony of Adam, Enoch, Methuselah and Noah. When mankind rebelled against God, "although they claimed to be wise, they became fools... therefore God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired," (Romans 1:24). "They traded the truth about God for a lie," (Romans 1:25). "That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires," (Romans 1:26). This is not only applicable to Noah's generation, it also applies to everyone who abandons the truth about God. The consequences of refusing to accept the truth about God and His word opens individuals to practice all manner of evil.

**Romans 1:28 ESV** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

The thoughts of our mind determines who we are and what we do. Our destiny hinges upon this. In Romans 7, Paul acknowledges the battle of the mind. Paul spoke about the war that was going on between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit.

**Romans 8:5-9 ESV** 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. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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. Those who are in the flesh cannot

please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

What occupies our thoughts is important, but there is more going on here than changing our focus. We have a great amount of control over the things that occupy our minds. However, when we refuse to submit to God's control and acknowledge Him as Lord and Master, we are given over to a base and condemned mind to do what should not be done, (Romans 1:28).

*We cannot achieve the mind of the Spirit without the Spirit of God dwelling within us.* The carnal or fleshly mind is hostile or at enmity against God. The carnal or fleshly mind does not and cannot submit to God because it is controlled by the old sinful nature. Those who are controlled by the carnal or fleshly mind cannot please God.

*What are the carnal mind and spiritual mind?*

The carnal mind is the mind we were born with. It is the mind without the Holy Spirit's influence and control. The "carnal mind" refers to the mind that is given over to the desires of the flesh and focuses upon its urges and desires. The carnal mind gives its attention, pursuits and control to the old sinful nature that was inherited from Adam.

*There are three directions of thought the carnal mind takes.*

*The carnal mind may focus upon the base, immoral, violent, material, and physical.*

Most people assume the "carnal mind" is focused or consumed with the lust for sex, power, money, houses, lands, furnishings, recognition, and position. The carnal mind is filled with and focused on the earthly and worldly desires and the fulfillment of those desires.

*The carnal mind may focus upon what is refined, educated, moral, accepted, and honorable.*

The "carnal mind" may be focused on the welfare and comfort of one's self and of their society. A person can do all of that and still be as hostile toward God as the immoral person. The people of Noah's generation and Sodom and Gomorrah came to believe their lifestyles were acceptable.

*The carnal mind may focus upon benevolence, good works, ceremony and ritual.*

A mind for religion is not necessarily a mind for God. We can be very religious and not be right with God. The function of institutional religion is not necessarily the mission of God. The carnally minded person may be committed to religious practices instead of knowing or having a personal relationship with God. Such a focus is fleshly and carnal.

*The Book of Romans addresses the spiritual mind.*

The spiritual mind is the natural mind of man that has been renewed and transformed by the Spirit of God.

**Romans 12:1-2 NKJV** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Notice the connection of the body and the mind. The actions of the body and the thoughts of the mind must be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The “*renewing of your mind*” is a function of the Holy Spirit that brings new ideas and attitudes to your mind. This transformation comes by not being conformed (*modeled and complying*) to the world and flesh but to God. It is impossible to present our bodies correctly to God without the mind being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 8:5-6 ESV** 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**. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

*It is impossible to “live according to the Spirit” until the Holy Spirit has taken residence within us and we surrender to His control and allow Him to direct our minds.*

The person who walks or lives after the Spirit “*sets their mind on the things of the Spirit.*” From within the believer, the Spirit of God attracts and directs the believer both to desire and do God's pleasure. The Holy Spirit is present to keep our mind and thoughts and develop God's character and fruit in our lives.

**Galatians 5:22-23 ESV** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

This fruit is the product of the Holy Spirit and not the result of a life controlled by the old nature.

**Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT** Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, **let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature**, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

*“Putting on our new nature” is the action of being conformed and transformed into the image of Christ.*

Notice the action of the Holy Spirit renewing your thoughts and attitudes. God has a goal for what He is doing in your life.

**Romans 8:29 NKJV** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Before you were born, God knew you and planned to conform or transform you into the image of His Son. Two things must be done in our lives for this to happen.

**Romans 12:2 NKJV** And **do not be conformed to this world**, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Conform means to adjust or adapt to different conditions, to be similar or in line with. The idea is to be formed or molded by the values, attitudes and actions of the world. Transformed means to change the essential form or nature of something, to become completely different, to be changed. Spiritual transformation starts in the inner man and is a work of the Holy Spirit.

*Notice the two parts to having the mind of the Spirit.*

*There is the part that only the presence of the Holy Spirit can do, then we must personally cooperate with the Spirit.*

I cannot have the mind of the Spirit without the Spirit. Even when the Holy Spirit directs and instructs, we can resist and follow our old carnal mind. In Noah's generation and in Sodom and Gomorrah the people had righteous individuals attempting to influence their thoughts and actions. Their hearts and minds were corrupted and they turned against God. We must keep our mind upon knowing, believing, and understanding God. The Holy Spirit will constantly conform us more and more to the image of Christ. We keep our mind by casting down imaginations and taking captive every thought and make them obedient to Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:5).

**Romans 8:6 NKJV** **For to be carnally minded is death**, but **to be spiritually minded is life and peace**.

*The carnal mind leads to death.*

This word "death" refers to "spiritual death." Spiritual death is separation from God now and eternally. Even if the person is alive, their soul is spiritually dead. That person who is carnally minded is separated and cut off from God. The carnally minded person cannot ignore God now and expect to have fellowship with Him eternally in heaven. We cannot focus upon the flesh now and expect to focus upon God in heavenly bliss. We cannot have a worldly mind now and expect to have a spiritual mind in the next world. We cannot reject God now and expect to be accepted

in eternity.

*To be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

The spiritual mind is filled with life and peace. The person with a spiritual mind has full assurance and confidence because they know, believe, and understand God. The person with a spiritual mind is full of peace with God and they have the peace of God. They know they are in a right relationship with God. The Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are a child of God and an heir of God. They walk in the peace of God, knowing that God is watching over them and working all things out for their good even when circumstances of life are not favorable. They know they shall be given the glorious privilege of living eternally in God's presence. Life and peace are the destiny of the believer with the mind of the Spirit.

*Why does the carnal mind dwell in death?*

**Romans 8:7-8 NKJV** Because the carnal mind is **ENMITY** against God; for it is **not subject** to the law of God, **nor indeed can be**. So then, those who are in the flesh **cannot please God**.

The word **ENMITY** gives the answer. "*Enmity*" means "*actively opposed and hostile toward.*" God is holy, righteous, and pure. The carnal mind is opposed to God by its very nature and behavior. "It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." The carnal mind is not "*like*" God and cannot please God.

*The Spirit of God can transform the mind of man.*

**Romans 12:2 NKJV** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

**Romans 12:2 NLT** Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

True conversion is recognized in our attitudes, changes in the desires of the heart, and the things we do. It is evidenced in our thoughts, speech and behavior. We are changed from the inside out not the outside in.

**Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT** Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true.

**Philippians 4:7 NKJV** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**Romans 8:11 NIV84** And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.