



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

True Christianity

November 3, 2019

Romans 8:5-11

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⁵For 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. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, 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. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

(Pastor prays)

When I was a kid, my parents bought some new furniture for the den. It was made out of a revolutionary material called naugahyde, which was a fancy name for vinyl. The material was designed to look like top-grain cowhide leather at a fraction of the cost. But for a small boy who liked to lay on the couch without a shirt on, that naugahyde was a significant skin hazard.

On a Saturday morning if you laid on the couch to watch cartoons and didn't have on a shirt, there was a good chance you would be hermetically sealed to that naugahyde couch and the paramedics would have to come and free you from its suction on your skin. Because although that couch was designed to look like real leather, it was a cheap imitation.

And this morning we are introduced to a passage that's designed to help us discern true Christianity, real Christianity from a cheap, fake imitation Christianity. Let's see if we can put this passage in context.

At the end of verse 4, Paul mentions two classes of people: those who walk according to the flesh and are unredeemed and those who walk according to the Spirit, those who have been converted by God's grace through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And this morning I want you to think carefully with me. Based on evidence alone, are you walking according to the flesh or are you walking according to the spirit? Because there is an unbreakable connection between the spirit and life on one hand and the flesh and death on the other. And this passage makes it clear that being in the flesh and being in the spirit is a contrast between being a Christian and not being a Christian.

True Christianity is not the family you grew up in, it's not whether you've been baptized or confirmed or even prayed the sinner's prayer. True Christianity is not whether you went to public school, Christian school or were home schooled. As a Christian there must be something supernaturally different about you. And today I'm asking the question, is there? Is there something supernaturally different about you? Dustin Bengtson asked, "Is Christ real to us?" That's the work of the Spirit. Is Christ glorified through us? That's the work of the Spirit. Is Christ revealed in us? That's the work of the Spirit. The Spirit always puts the focus on Christ! Let's say it like this...

Christian Living is Essentially Supernatural Living

We live differently.

We have a different mindset.

You'll see that phrase, mind or mindset, several times in verses 5-8. Let's look at verses 5-6.

⁵For 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. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Mindset or *phroneo*. An absorbing object of thought or interest or affections or purpose. It describes that which preoccupies us: the ambitions that drive us, the concerns that engross us, our time and energy, what we concentrate on or what we give ourselves to.

And in verses 5-6 Paul gives us two categories: the flesh and the spirit. Let's read it again.

⁵For 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. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

We will deal with the flesh first and see if this describes you. Those of the flesh allowed their lives to be determined and dominated by the natural outworking of human nature. The use of the word “flesh” by Paul means the whole of our humanness. He expands on this thought in Galatians 5: 19-21. ¹⁹*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

And, look, yours might not be a world-class sin. Yours could be something as noble as doing everything for your children and your child then becomes your idol because that child has taken the place of God as the focus of your life.

Paul will go on to say in verse 6 that the mind set on the flesh is death. Our mindset has eternal consequences. And our nature determines our mindset, not the other way around! This is not “he's like this because he thinks like this.” It's the other way around. “He thinks like this because he's like this.”

Verse 6 is haunting. To set the mind on the flesh is death. It doesn't say to set the mind on the flesh *leads* to death. It's that you are *already* dead in sin. Doing terrible things doesn't *send* you to Hell; it indicates you are already *going* there.

It's what Jesus said in John 3 16-18: ¹⁶*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*

Since the mind set on flesh is death, verse 7 says that it's hostile to God and rebellious. Verse 8 says those in the flesh cannot please God. Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, there is darkness and rebellion and hurt. It's terribly frustrating if you are claiming to be a Christian but lack the actual evidence to back that mindset. Your fundamental attitude toward God is the reason that the mind of the flesh is death. It's because it hasn't submitted by faith to the lordship of Christ. The mind of the flesh is marked by antagonism. An antagonist to His name, His Kingdom, His covenants, His will. An antagonism to His lordship, to His day, His word, His people, His way, His church, and His glory. And verse 8 tells us that that mindset cannot please

God. Pleasing God. Does your life right now please God? Are you living your life in such a way that people will see it and say, “that guy, he's been dealt a bad hand but the way he's handling it, he's obviously a Christian.” Or is your life and attitude an activity and lifestyle like everybody else's? Then your mind is set on the flesh and your mind set on the flesh is death. It's hostile to God and doesn't submit to God's law because it cannot. You need the life-giving spirit of God that fills you through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

I wish today you would quit claiming to be a Christian and actually come to Christ so that you might have a mind set on the spirit. This passage also describes the mindset of a believer, especially in verses 5-6. Let's read it again and as we do, pay attention to how a Christian is described in those 2 verses.

⁵For 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. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit. Before we talk about what the Christian looks like, let's remember what the word “mindset” means. It's your interest and your affections. It's that which preoccupies the mind. It's the ambitions that drive us, the concerns that engross us, and verse 5 says those who live according to the Spirit have ambitions that are primarily spiritual.

Look, here is the separation between the sheep and the goats. Those who belong to God are concerned about Godly things. It's what Jonathan Edwards would call “holy affections. “Those of the Spirit are saved, redeemed, forgiven, regenerated and are being sanctified. And if there is no evidence of the Spirit working in your life, it's not a *rededication* you need, it's a *dedication*, a repentance from dead works and a breaking up dead thoughts. You need to crucify the old self and take up the way of Jesus. Put your faith in Jesus.

A mindset of the Spirit loves the word of God, hates his own sin, seeks the Lord in prayer, loves to worship. A mindset that loves the Lord's day and the Lord's church and believes in the mission of the Gospel. It's a mindset that pursues holiness, is quick to repent; it's filled with humility, loves theology and cares for people's souls and is swallowed up in grace. A mind set on the spirit is dead to sin or at least killing sin and alive to God. It is alert to spiritual things,

eager to correct wrongs and thirsty for God. Is your mind set on the flesh or is your mind set on the Spirit? It gets better in verse 6. We have a different mindset.

We have a different outcome.

We've looked at the negative part of verse 6. Let's look at the positive. To set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. That is peace with God, peace with yourself, and peace with others. Life and peace. The cross of Jesus gives us life and peace.

Peace is the inner assurance that past sins are forgiven. Peace is the inner in assurance that present events, no matter how painful, are being overruled for good. It's peace that empowers the single Christians to live out God's glory and call in thousands of different ways that point to Christ. Peace is the inner assurance that there is nothing that might occur in the future that will be able to separate us from the love of God found in Jesus Christ. Peace is freedom from guilt, freedom from restlessness. Peace means a settled contentment in Christ regardless of the heartache. Peace means a sense of security that overrides anxiety. In short, it is a peace that surpasses all understanding and will guard your heart and mind when you are in Christ Jesus.

The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Truthfully, as you look at the evidence of your life, is there any real reason to think that you are walking in the Spirit?

I'm asking you today to turn *from* your sin and turn *to* Christ. You've heard me explain it a thousand times, but here it is again:

Our Holy God is the creator of the whole universe and everything in it. He created man in His own perfect image, but when man sinned it created a chasm between God and man and condemned man to death because the penalty for sin is death. Jesus Christ, the son of God, was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life. He willingly gave His life on the cross to cover our sins and provide redemption for man.

The Bible says in Romans 10:9, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

(Pastor prays)