

Death or Life and Peace
(Romans 8:4-8)

- I. This is a study in self-examination: are we predominantly *spiritually minded* or *carnally minded*?
- A. minded: Qualified by advs. (forming combinations which when used *attrib.* are often hyphenated): Having one's habitual thoughts, tastes, or sympathies, inclined in a certain direction.
 - B. mind: To bend one's attention to (e.g. something that one is doing or occupied with); to direct or apply oneself to, bring one's mind or energies to bear upon, or practice diligently.
 - C. Note the significance of the word "after" in **ROM 8:4-8**. What are you seeking? What are you following? What is leading you?
 - D. Mark it well. Life and peace comes only by being spiritually minded.
 - 1. The world has its own definition of *life*: uninhibited power, pleasure, acquisitions and ease. **EPH 2:3**.
 - 2. The world has its own definition of *peace*: nothing disrupting the pursuit of uninhibited power, pleasure, acquisitions and ease. **JDG 18:7**.
 - 3. Spiritually minded people will love life by discerning and eschewing evil, and doing good. **1PE 3:10-11; ROM 12:9**.
 - 4. Spiritually minded people will follow after the things that make for true peace: they will seek God and His righteousness.
ROM 14:19 c/w ISA 26:3; PSA 119:165; ISA 32:17.
 - 5. Spiritually minded people will cleave to the simple, profound words of **PRO 3:1-2**.
 - E. Mark it well. Carnal-mindedness:
 - 1. is death. **vs. 6, 13 c/w ROM 6:20-21**.
 - a. This may be a "sleeping death" of indulgence, indifference or ignorance.
EPH 5:14; 1TI 5:6; REV 3:1.
 - b. This may be a death of fellowship with God. **LUK 15:24; 1CO 5:5**.
 - c. This may be the death of the body through the consequences of carnal living or through the punitive hand of God in judgment. **1CO 11:29-30; ACT 5:5**.
 - 2. is enmity (active opposition or hostility) against God. c/w **JAM 4:4**.
 - 3. makes pleasing God impossible. **v. 8**.
 - F. Mind that the great goal of believers should be *pleasing God through Jesus Christ* (**COL 1:9-10; HEB 13:20-21**) but "...they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (**v. 8**).
- II. **ROM 8:1-16** sets forth our legal and vital salvation wrought for us by Christ, and also that which gives us evidence of it: the desire and doing of spiritual things by God's Spirit dwelling in us.
- A. Carnal and spiritual men are both known by their interests. **v. 5**.
 - B. Whatever is leading our desires and conduct determines our fate: life or death. **v. 13**.
 - C. God says, "Choose life." **DEU 30:19-20**.
 - D. Our interests are therefore the visible evidence of the condition of the soul in the present and a predictor of the fate of our soul in the future. **MAT 12:33-35; ROM 2:7-11**.
- III. Let not the relevance and importance of these things be overlooked.
- A. Jesus Christ warned about professors of religion deceiving themselves to hell.
MAT 7:21-23.
 - B. Paul's prophecy about the perilous times of the last days ignored things like natural disasters, political upheavals, economic failures, diseases, and even persecutions. The perils were fleshly interests, skin-deep religion, heretics, seduction, deception and despite

of truth: marks of carnal Christianity typical of our generation. **2TI 3:1-8, 13; 4:3-4.**

- C. That which should concern our own souls is carnal Christianity, hypocrisy. **2PE 1:9.**
- D. The building of hope of life and peace upon the foundation of carnal, superficial, anything-goes Christianity is to build upon fatally shifting sand. **MAT 7:26-27.**
- E. Because so many Christians in our generation are carnal, we need to guard against going along with the crowd in order to be popular and easy. **EXO 23:2; PRO 11:21.**

IV. We may be both *spiritually minded* and *carnally minded* but not at the same time. **ROM 6:16.**

- A. They can no more commune than light and darkness, sin and righteousness, Christ and Belial. **2CO 6:14-15.**
- B. To be spiritually minded is to mind those things which God's Spirit has told us in the Bible are of greatest importance: God, Christ, Scripture, His will, kingdom and righteousness, and heaven.
- C. To be carnally minded is to mind this world, the lust of the flesh, self-will, power, money, praise of men, etc.
- D. It is the great delusion of Satan to convince men that they can simultaneously serve God and mammon. **MAT 6:24; 1JO 2:15.**
- E. The measure of spirituality or carnality is generally provided to the world by the individual.
 - 1. His passions tell much. What is he most energized and excited about?
 - a. Does he anticipate a worship service more than a ball game?
 - b. Does he rejoice in God, Christ, salvation, etc. more than material success? **PSA 4:7.**
 - c. Are his affections on earthly things or heavenly things? **COL 3:1-3.**
 - d. God is to be our *first love*, not a casual interest. **REV 2:4.**
 - e. God is to be gloried in more than wisdom, wealth or might. **JER 9:23-24.**
 - f. Being on God's side should be more important than family. **EXO 32:26-28 c/w MAL 2:4-5.**
 - 2. His works tell much.
 - a. Does he only have time for his own pursuits? **LUK 14:16-20.**
 - b. Does he profess to know God but in works deny Him? **TIT 1:16.**
 - 3. His words tell much. What does he talk about most freely? What is the nature of his speech? Consider **MAT 12:34.**
 - 4. His priorities tell much. What does he emphasize? How does he order his free life?
 - a. We are to seek God's kingdom and righteousness first. **MAT 6:33.**
 - b. We are to seek and prefer the company of true believers. **HEB 11:24-25.**
 - c. We should highly value our part and participation in God's house. **PSA 84:10; 27:4.**
 - d. We are to treasure and train our children in God's ways. **EPH 6:4.**
 - e. It is a maxim of life that we will make time for the things that we genuinely deem important.
 - 5. His submissiveness (or lack thereof) tells much.
 - a. Does he bristle at anything that counters his ideas or conduct?
 - b. Does he submit only so far as it is easy and facilitates his goals?
 - c. Does he reject pastoral oversight?
 - d. Does he marginalize certain duties as insignificant or optional?
 - e. Mind that we are all subject to one another and to higher powers (**1PE 5:5; ROM 13:1**) and to all of God's laws, even the lesser ones. **PSA 119:128; MAT 5:19.**

- V. Our mindedness is also a matter of focus. Is it predominantly on earth and the present, or on heaven and eternity?
- A. We are to lay up treasures in heaven by investments there. **MAT 6:19-21.**
 - B. We are to focus our efforts towards things which cannot be seen. **2CO 4:18.**
 - C. The Thessalonian saints were not waiting for a windfall, a change of political power, acceptance in the community, conversion of friends or family, a spouse or even the next electronic gizmo. They were waiting for Jesus from heaven. **1TH 1:9-10.**
- VI. The measure of success also reveals much about one's mindedness.
- A. It is a corrupt mind, not a spiritual mind, that equates gain with godliness. **1TI 6:5.**
 - B. Athletic success is insignificant compared to godliness. **1TI 4:7-8.**
 - C. Godliness alone is the great gain of the spiritually minded man. **1TI 6:6.**
 - D. What if you were a world champion athlete with multi-million dollar income and endorsements but lost your soul to the lusts of the flesh or lost it eternally? **MAT 16:26.**
 - E. By contrast, a materially poor man of faith living according to the Spirit is richer. **JAM 2:5; PRO 15:16-17.**
 - F. The spiritually minded man is content in prosperity or poverty because he has Christ. **PHIL 4:11-13; HEB 13:5.**
- VII. We need to strive to draw clear lines between carnal mindedness and spiritual mindedness.
- A. All that we do, from small to great, is done to God. **1CO 10:31.**
 - B. God-blessed distractions like marriage, children, jobs, food, pleasures, etc. must even be kept in balance lest God be crowded out of our lives. **1CO 7:32-33; JOH 6:27.**
 - C. Our *moderation* is to *be known to all men* (**PHIL 4:5**): to spouses, children, employers, etc. People in general should be able to see that God and spiritual things limit our dedication to everyone and everything else.
 - 1. moderation: The action or an act of moderating (abating the excessiveness of). 2. The quality of being moderate, in various senses; now only with reference to conduct, opinions, demands, desires, or their indulgence; avoidance of extremes; self-control, temperance.
 - 2. temperance: The practice or habit of restraining oneself in provocation, passion, desire, etc.; rational self-restraint. Moderation in action of any kind.
 - 3. Christ warned against excesses in the stuff of life. **LUK 21:34.**
 - D. If we save our fleshly lives in order to have both existences, we lose both. **MAT 16:24-25.**
- VIII. We err by defining “things of the flesh” as being only the base, abominable sins which we hate.
- A. Have you ever noticed how it is relatively easy to avoid “big” sins that disgust you but not so easy to avoid “little” sins that don't disgust you?
 - 1. There may even be things you didn't know or believe were sinful.
 - 2. Ignorance or unbelief are considerations, yet sin is sin. **LEV 5:17; LUK 12:48.**
 - B. Sodomy, murder and witchcraft are works of the flesh but they are not alone. **GAL 5:19-21.**
 - C. What about other more “tolerable” sins like unthankfulness, hatred, anger, envy, debate and bitterness?
 - D. What about “good sins” which the world approves of: covetousness, greed, emulation, extortion, boasting?
 - E. Spirituality means learning to hate every false way. **PSA 119:128.**

- IX. Consider some scriptural examples of spiritual mindedness.
- A. Jesus Christ was as spiritually minded as a man could be. **JOH 3:34.**
 - 1. Prior to His entrance to public ministry, He was a carpenter. **MAR 6:3.**
 - a. Remember that He was raised by a godly carpenter. **MAT 13:55.**
 - b. His parents had obviously seen to His mental and spiritual training. **LUK 2:46-52.**
 - c. How greatly do godly parents figure in the spiritual mindedness of their children! Jesus was sinless, and trained to be spiritual and handy.
 - 2. One may be actively engaged in a trade or profession yet be spiritual!
 - 3. Spiritual mindedness includes not being *slothful in business*. **ROM 12:11.**
 - 4. Spiritual mindedness does not mean floating through life disengaged from man's first calling (*work*, **GEN 2:15**), thinking about sweet things.
 - B. Anna was a very holy widow who prized God's house. **LUK 2:36-38.**
 - 1. Although she had not remarried, she had not given herself over to the flesh.
 - 2. She was exceptional: Paul did not use her as a model for all widows because not all widows are spiritually minded. **1TIM 5:11-15.**
 - C. Are you as conscious of God's pleasure and of family sinfulness as was Job? **JOB 1:4-5.**
 - D. The great saints of Scripture prized spiritual things to the loss of carnal things. Consider Abraham, Moses or Paul.
 - E. By contrast, think of Esau or Lot. **HEB 12:16; 2PE 2:7-8.**
- X. Spiritual mindedness does not mean living in a monastery or convent in a curious uniform, or forbidding marriage and certain foods. Such thinking is that of a *seducing spirit*, not God's spirit. **1TI 4:1-3.**
- A. It is not forbidding oneself the measured enjoyment of that which God has given the sons of men to lawfully enjoy! **ECC 5:18-19; 1TI 6:17.**
 - B. Beware of religious asceticism (severe self-discipline and severance from all forms of indulgence) which pretends to a superior spirituality by forbidding what is to be lawfully used or enjoyed, as did the Pharisees. **MAR 7:1-5.**
 - C. We are forbidden from setting up artificial standards of righteousness in the absence of clear Biblical command or precept. **COL 2:20-23.**
 - D. Perhaps you have heard things like:
 - 1. Thou shalt not drink alcohol.
 - 2. Thou shalt not dance.
 - 3. Thou shalt not speak bluntly or speak of bodily functions.
 - 4. Thou shalt not wear colorful clothing.
 - 5. Thou shalt not watch movies or TV.
 - 6. Thou shalt not play cards.
 - 7. Thou shalt not work on Sunday.
 - E. The above-mentioned things of life require wisdom and discernment to be brought to bear upon their use or they will counter spiritual mindedness, but to forbid them is going too far.
 - F. Pharisees love to make a "...fair shew in the flesh..." (**GAL 6:12**) to *appear* to men as righteous. **MAT 23:5, 28; LUK 20:46.**
 - 1. Remember that Satan has *ministers of righteousness*. **2CO 11:14-15.**
 - 2. They will make much of *personal* righteousness and *artificial* righteousness while denying Christ's satisfying righteousness.
 - 3. Beware of the super-righteous whose self-appointed abstinences create such a

superior picture of Christian living that it gives you unfounded guilt or breeds in you a spirit of envy. **GAL 5:21.**

- G. We are to avoid judging others for things no worse than we allow in ourselves.

MAT 7:1-5.

1. Imagine the Pharisee who declares the consumption of any alcohol sinful while eating himself into morbid obesity, which is condemned by rules against *gluttony* and *intemperance*. **PRO 23:21; ACT 24:25.**
2. Imagine the Pharisee who is too pure to say, “piss” but has no qualms about amending the Holy Bible to take that word out of it! Modern versions have consistently edited verses to eliminate such “unseemly” words.

- XI. Our great problem is that we are dual-natured beings. **ROM 7:22-23.**

- A. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. **MAT 26:41.**
- B. Our fleshly nature under sin has lost its love for God. Satan and the world love the old man and the old man loves them reciprocally.
- C. The world, the flesh and Satan conspire together against any attempt by our spiritual man to attain unto more spiritual mindedness.
- D. Evil communications corrupt good manners (**1CO 15:33**) and we are awash in them!

- XII. There are some steps we can take to increase our spiritual mindedness.

- A. First of all, admit that we are our own problem and create our own problems, not God. **PRO 19:3.**
- B. Remember that carnal things may include those things which you admire and desire.
- C. Believe you can be more spiritually minded by rearranging your lifestyle, keeping yourself in the love of God waiting for eternal life. **JUDE 1:21.**
- D. Put a check on the fleshly inputs in your life which are competing with your spirituality. Remember the old parable about the evil dog and the good dog: the one that thrives is the one that is most fed; the one that dies is the one that is not fed.
- E. Fathers bear a great responsibility in encouraging spiritual mindedness in the family. Do not trivialize the importance of personal and family devotions.
- F. You will walk more in the Spirit (**GAL 5:16**) by meditating more in God's word, and so overcome the flesh. **PSA 119:1-3.**
- G. You will pray more to connect your interest to God. **1TH 5:17.**
- H. You will value the fellowship of like-minded believers over most anything. **PSA 119:63; MAL 3:16-18.**
- I. You will crave assembling with the saints to worship your Creator and Savior because congregational worship pleases Him. **HEB 10:23-25.**

- XIII. There is no greater relief than to know by faithful spiritual living that there is no condemnation to you. **ROM 8:1.**