

Title: After the Flesh; After the Spirit

Text: Romans 8: 5

Date: May 29, 2014

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

**Romans 8: 5: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.**

Here we have two different kinds of people—“they that are after the flesh” and “they that are after the Spirit.” These two kinds of people have their minds set on two different things—“they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit.” Which one are you? Which one do you mind?

**Title:** After the Flesh, After the Spirit

**Proposition:** Those who are after the flesh mind only fleshly things; those who are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit.

Which are you? Which do you mind?

Let’s take each word in this statement and learn what each part means.

**I. FIRST, LET’S CONSIDER THOSE WHO ARE AFTER THE FLESH—Romans 8: 5: they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;**

**Flesh**

The word “flesh” does not refer to our skin. It means the depraved sin-nature. All who are born “of the flesh” are “after the flesh.”

John 3:6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The first time we are born, every person is born of the flesh—of corrupt seed—so every person is of the flesh—every person is corrupt in their sin-nature. Corrupt seed is corrupt semen. We are conceived of corrupt semen from our earthly father. This began with Adam, passed from father to son, down to us

Adam was the federal head and representative of all mankind. So when Adam sinned against God in the garden, Adam became guilty before God and all mankind became guilty in him, not only that, Adam also died spiritually. (Gen 2: 7) 1. It means God took his holy Spirit from Adam and Adam’s nature became corrupt. When the Spirit withdrew, Adam died spiritually. Being dead spiritually, he began to die physically

Therefore, when Adam begot a son, his son became a sinner by conception, by natural generation, because his son was conceived of Adam’s corrupt semen. (Gen 5: 3)

Genesis 5: 3: And Adam...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image;...

This is why we must be “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”—In the new birth, inwardly, a new man is created by God after the image of God.

So be sure you get this: those spoken of in this verse as being: “after the flesh”, is every sinner who has not been born again by the Holy Spirit, of God’s incorruptible Seed. They have only the corrupt sin-nature, the flesh. Therefore, “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.”

### **Things of the Flesh**

“The things of the flesh” does not refer merely to the things we need in this life. We need things for our body’s health; we need things to improve our minds; we need things to improve our state of life: homes, food, money, material things; we need leisure, pleasure, to rest and rejuvenate our body. These things may be sought in a lawful way. So it does not merely mean these things—when it says they mind “things of the flesh.”

It means their motive for all things is sinful. Their will, their affections, and their motives are all only sinful all the time. They are in a state of enmity against God. Therefore the fleshly sinner does all things for self only. As God said in Genesis—“the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually.” The fleshly man will not and cannot deny self. Self is his god

There is no Spirit of God in the fleshly sinner’s heart therefore there is no love of God in the fleshly sinner’s heart, no faith in God or his Christ, “without which it is impossible to please God.” In the natural born state, the carnal mind is bound to the sin-nature, to the flesh. The fleshly mind can only mind fleshly things; the fleshly mind is totally contrary to the true and living God; the only things that the carnal mind pursues are found in 1 John 2:

1 John 2: 15: Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16: For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Everything that God hates: the fleshly mind loves, the fleshly mind judges to be good, the fleshly mind seeks and savors. But everything God loves: the fleshly mind hates, the fleshly mind judges to be bad, and the fleshly avoids it. This is so without even trying—it is natural to the fleshly, carnal mind. It cannot be otherwise. So it cannot do otherwise. **“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.”**

Sinner, does this describe you? Be honest, what is your mind set on! Is it set on fleshly things or on the things of God?

### **Inability**

What can the fleshly sinner do to change his state? Nothing. There is absolutely nothing a sinner can do to change this state of “flesh” in which he is born.

Job 25:4: How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

Job 14:4: Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

Not only can he not do anything to change his condition, he has no desire for his condition to be changed.

1 Corinthians 2: 14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Christ said,

John 5: 43: I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. 44: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

Those after the flesh can become religious. A fleshly man can feel a guilty in his conscience and be afraid of hell. He can desire to go to heaven like everybody else. He can decide to confess Christ, to be baptized, to join the church, even to attend services on a regular basis. Yet, while in the flesh, even his religion is merely his sinful flesh pursuing an idol-god created by his carnal mind. He can desire God's gifts but he cannot make himself desire the Giver or bow to the true and living God; he can say he is a sinner, but he cannot make his heart believe that all he is is a God-hater worthy of hell; he can turn his mind from outward fleshly sins and adopt a new way of life, but he cannot turn from his fleshly motives, his fleshly will, his fleshly desires and appetites to earn salvation by his works; he is captive to his flesh and cannot free himself. He cannot make himself seek God first in all things. This is why God the Holy Spirit says,

Romans 8: 6: For to be carnally minded is death;...7: because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

### **Necessity of New Birth**

Now get this: the fact all mankind is born the first time into this helpless, God-hating condition is why Christ said,

John 3: 3:...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The Lord Jesus is not suggesting that there are things a sinner can do "TO BE" born again.

Illustration: There was a book written by a famous, evangelist titled, "How to be born-again." That is the message of free-willism and works—that is minding the things of the flesh.

When Nicodemus said, "Can I enter my mother's womb a second time?" even his smart remark showed his mind was set on his flesh. All he could think of was what HE must do to be born again. But "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (Jn 3: 5) Christ declared you must be born again **OF GOD**, of God's grace, of God's word, of God the Holy Spirit. Christ declared this work is irresistible and is of God alone when he said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (Jn 3: 8)

### **Grace Alone**

Since this is the state of every sinner, there is nothing in any sinner to merit favor with God—"they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom 5: 8)

Hebrew 11:6: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

If God had chosen to leave every sinner in this state, God would be just to do so. If God left us all in this state then we would all stand before God in the day of judgment and be justly damned to eternal condemnation.

But, thanks be to God, God has graciously chosen to save some of Adam's fallen race from this state of condemnation. And he has chosen to do so through this means that we are engaged in here tonight—the preaching of the gospel which declares the three R's: ruined by the fall, redemption by the blood, regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Sinner, the first thing God will convince you of, is that you are a sinner, of the flesh, minding only fleshly things. Can you take your place in the dust, saying, "Truth, Lord?"

## **II. SECONDLY, THE VERSE SPEAKS OF THOSE THAT ARE "AFTER THE SPIRIT"—Romans 8: 5:...but they that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit.**

### **After the Spirit**

These who are "after the Spirit" were originally in the same sinful, God-hating state of flesh like every other sinner.

Ephesians 2: 1: And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Titus 3: 3: For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. 4: But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here are two scriptures which declares those God saves were sinners like all other sinners. Regeneration is by God's grace alone, not because of merit in us, not because of works we do. By God's grace, God exercises his right as God, to give spiritual life unto as many as he chose to be gracious unto.

Therefore, being born-again of God the Holy Spirit, these are described here as being "after the Spirit." It means they have an inner man which has been born of the Holy Spirit, conceived of the incorruptible Seed—of the grace and Spirit of God and by the word of God.

1 Peter 1: 23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24: For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

That is why he says in the next chapter, to lay aside the fleshly mind and "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (2 Peter 2: 2-3) Do you want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Son of God? The Holy Spirit gives life and God teaches us in our newly born, inner man, the good news that all we are is sin but God chose us, his Son redeemed us and His Spirit quickened us. Growth will come in the inner man through the Holy Spirit by the word of God. So desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

## **The Price of Mercy**

When born of the Spirit then God begins to teach us the great price he had to pay in order to give us spiritual life. In order to show us mercy and yet remain just, God had to give his only begotten Son. Christ is the Head and Representative of all God's elect. God must teach us this in order for us to believe God.

The Son of God had to come down from heaven, and be made of a woman. He had to take sinless flesh formed of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, and become a Man. He had to be a sinless Man to take the place of sinful men.

Christ had to be "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal 4: 4-6) He represented those the Father gave him. Christ lived a perfect life under the law then took our sins and laid down his life under the penalty of holy justice.

For God and for his people, Christ fulfilled the active precept of the law, which is "loving God and his neighbor as himself;" and he did so by satisfying the penalty of the law which is, "the wages of sin is death." On the cross, at one time, we see righteousness being worked out by his obedience unto death, while he satisfied divine justice. That is the glory of God! The righteousness of God! Christ is the glory and righteousness of all who trust in the Lord Jesus. When Christ said, 'it is finished'" all their sins were paid in full. (2 Cor 5: 21; Gal 3: 13) Now God is not only just, God is the one who justified his people of all our sins. (Rom 3: 26)

Romans 3:26: To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

## **Things of the Spirit**

God teaches us these things when we are born a second time of the Holy Spirit, so that God gets the glory of setting our minds on "the things of the Spirit." (v4) What are the "things of the Spirit?"

1 Corinthians 2: 9: But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10: But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11: For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12: Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

These very things we are talking about now! Grace to ruined sinners like us. Sovereign means God has the right to choose whom he will. Free means there was no merit in us. By sovereign, free grace God saves his ruined people. Redemption accomplished by the blood of Christ Jesus the Son of God. He paid the price owed. He is the Righteousness of his people. Regeneration accomplished by the Holy Spirit. "Irresistible" means we cannot stop the Spirit's work. "Effectual" means the Spirit gets the job done. We are regenerated by the irresistible, effectual power of the Holy Spirit of God. They that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit.

I have been talking to you about things every believer here knows. I have not said one new thing. The preaching of the gospel is not to declare new things; it is to "put you in remembrance" of the things God has freely given us.

1 Timothy 4:6: If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

Lamentations 3: 22: It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23: They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Once born of the Spirit, taught of the Spirit, believers mind the things of the Spirit because Christ is our Life! We cannot get enough of hearing and reading of the things which God has freely given us and continues to freely give us for Christ's sake. We cannot get enough of drawing near to his throne of grace. We cannot get enough of seeking to please God in all things.

What is the first thought that enters your mind when you awake in the morning? Those that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh. But they that are after the Spirit will soon be minding the things of the Spirit. We seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, these other things can wait.

Whenever bad happens where does your mind go? Those that after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh. But they that are after the Spirit will soon be minding the things of the Spirit, thanking God, because it could always be worse. We need the affliction to wean us from this world.

Whenever good happens where does your mind go? They that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh. Those after the Spirit will soon be minding the things of the Spirit, thanking God. Everything comes of his hand—good or bad—and all is good for the believer.

What is the last thought on your mind at night? They that are after the Spirit end their day minding the things of the Spirit.

Do you desire to have the time to study God's word? To read a faithful commentary on God's word or hear the gospel proclaimed? Those that are after the Spirit do.

### **To God be the Glory**

Who receives the glory for this? The Holy Spirit receives the glory. He has given us the mind of Christ and he continually turns our minds to Christ. Believer's still have our sin-nature of "flesh." It is as carnal as always. Our sin-nature greatly interferes with our thoughts, words and actions and causes us much sadness. We know our sin is against our Savior who loved us and gave his life for us. Our lukewarmness is against our Savior who served in great zeal for us

But our minds are no longer dominated by our flesh. By the Spirit of God dwelling in us, we have discernment to judge between spiritual things and carnal. We abhor that which God abhors and we love that which God loves. (Ps 119: 104; 128) This is natural to those born of the Spirit because this is the state we are in, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom 8: 9)

Be sure to get this: Motive is everything before God. A man can do a good work but an evil motive in his heart makes it an evil work. Those born of God have been given a new motive. We no longer have a mind to serve the flesh. By the mercies of God, our inward motive is to serve God because he loved us and gave himself for us without a cause in us, when there was every cause not to. After everything that Christ has done for us, it is perfectly reasonable to the believer, to present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." (Rom 12: 1) Our new motive and chief desire is to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 2: 5) It is because we are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." We are no longer carnal but spiritual, no longer in a state of unregenerate flesh, but in an eternal, unchangeable state of grace. (v9)

Now, read the verse again and understand, “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.” Unregenerate sinners mind only the things of the sinful flesh. Sinner, do you find God making you honest about yourself? Are you able to say, “Truth Lord?” If so, it may be that God has given you life and begun to teach you. Give yourself to mind the things of the Spirit. If you can then you will. If you have been made able then you shall.

“But they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” If you can say that you are born of God, who is to be glorified? Only God. If you rejoice in the things of God freely given to you, who gets the glory? Only God. If you can say that your flesh still plagues you far worse than you wish it did, who gets the glory for making you feel that sorrow? Only God.

Believer, we have been only flesh; now we are in the Spirit. So we can attest to how true both these statements are—“to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Oh, give all praise unto our God for his sovereign and free grace in Christ Jesus to helpless sinners like you and me! Life and Peace is ours! Brethren, mind only the things of the Spirit. Serve God with everything he has made you; serve God with everything he has given you. Christ said,

Matthew 6:21: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

**Amen!**