



HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:5-6

Part 3

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8:5-6

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We will begin to look at [Romans 8:5-11](#) which in reality is a description of [Romans 8:4b](#) and what it means to “**not walk according to the flesh, but (to walk) according to the Spirit**”.

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, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Once again, Paul teaches through **contrasts** and by bringing to attention things that are opposites and things that are completely contrary to one another. They are two exactly opposite principles and two utterly opposed standards of life. However, the interest here is not simply to contrast these opposing elements, but to actually demonstrate **WHY** the persons in view do or do not walk after the Spirit.

In all of this, the genuine evidence of an individual’s true spiritual condition is always one of their **conduct**, their actions, and their deeds – saved or lost. The word “**walk**” in v4b is defined as their manner of life, their lifestyle, and how someone lived. The saved individual will live a certain way and the lost individual will live a certain way, and their lifestyles will always reflect their true spiritual condition. In order to be true to the exposition of these verses, it is only right to state that these verses give as clear of a definition as is possible the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. Paul just keeps repeating himself, and he does so with these contrasts. In [Romans 8:5](#) Paul states this,

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 – implied) the things of the Spirit.

The subtlety of difference in meaning between v4b and v5 is not that great. What is clear is that Paul still has in mind that those individuals whose lives are dominated by the flesh will be consistently opposed to the things of God in their life. The way that he expresses it here is having “**set their minds on the things of the flesh**”. I.e., they are **pre-occupied** with the things of the flesh as opposed to the things of the Spirit. If you look at their life, they are much more interested in things that are in opposition to the Word of God in contrast to the actual things of God themselves. The things of God do not receive attention in their life.

The verb to “**set the mind on**” literally means to think about, to exercise the mind, but also to set the **affections** on something. It is a word that refers to the habit of their lives because the verb “**set the**



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mind on” is in the present tense which means that they set it on something and keep setting it on something. It means to keep on being mindful of or aspiring for. It is a habit of their life. It is the Greek word “*phroneo*” and includes a person’s affections and will, as well as their reasoning. In other words “*phroneo*” refers not simply to intellectual activity, but also direction and purpose of heart. It is a very broad term that expresses any form of mental activity, or any exercise of the intellect, will, or any demonstration of someone’s feelings and emotions. When an individual sets their mind on something, it means that whatever they have set their mind on has become the object of their thoughts and their emotions, and ultimately, their wills. In the case of setting their mind on the things of the flesh, it does not necessarily have to be something sensual or immoral, but simply something that is not in alignment with the will and values of the Holy Spirit. People are constantly involved in many good and moral things that have no eternal value and that are not really honoring to Christ – and it includes those things.

Living is based on thinking. How someone lives is a by-product of how they think. When an individual is truly saved, there is a great change and a great transformation that immediately occurs. They are given a new nature, one that they did not previously have, and it might be added that that particular spiritual change within them is not something that is progressive. It is an immediate change of nature. Once they have a new nature, then the process of being conformed into the image of Christ becomes progressive. It takes an entire lifetime and beyond to be fully implemented into the believer’s life. However, the actual change of nature that causes the individual to even want to be like Christ happens immediately at the moment of conversion. Often Scripture identifies it as God giving a “**new heart**”. It can be thought of as God giving the believer a new disposition, a new perspective, a new outlook, or a new mindset. Whereas they previously thought and acted one way, now they think and act another. What they once disliked, now they love. What they once loved, now they hate. It is this new nature and this new disposition that causes a believer to **behave** differently than they did before their conversion.

An individual’s mindset, how they think and view things, provides an immediate indication as to where an individual is spiritually. An individual’s nature determines their mindset and how they think. The verb “**to set the mind on**” refers to that which pre-occupies a person and of those ambitions and goals that drive them. It refers to all of those concerns that often engross them. It refers to how they spend their time and energies and what they spend them on. It includes what they concentrate on and that to which they give themselves. If all of that is taken as a whole, it simply means that all of it is determined by what the individual is at the core of their being – whether still unsaved and living according to the flesh, or saved and living according to the Spirit. An unbeliever cares only for his sinful interests and has no genuine regard for God. He may be religious. He may even do some religious things. However, **at the very core of his being**, he has no real interest in the things of God. It simply does not exist. Much of his religious activity is only social. The exact opposite is true of those who live “**according to the Spirit**”. They aspire for and have their minds set on what the Spirit desires for their life. It is very real to them.



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Now, what is first learned from [Romans 8:5](#) is really very simple. It simply states that someone who lives their life without any regard for the things of God are doing so because they have set their mind towards doing those things. It is simply the way that they think. They would think like this:

“I do not need God. I do not desire to obey God. I do not want to commit my entire life to God. I am not sure that I even believe that there is a God.”

So because of that mentality, their life is a life of sin that dishonors God and ignores Christ. It is a life of personal indulgence, of superficiality, and of spiritual indifference. For me personally, the one single characteristic that frightens me the most for relatively unfaithful church goers is the term **spiritual indifference**. The church is engulfed in spiritual indifference, and somehow and for some reason many that preach and teach the Word seem to think that spiritual indifference, spiritual lethargy, and a spiritual lack of interest and coldness is not really a sign of spiritual deadness. In reality, the exact opposite is true. This spiritual indifference to godly things within a person’s life is the most frightening of all evidences of spiritual deadness and of a genuine lack of biblical salvation. How would an indifference to Christ, an indifference to His Word, and an indifference to His church actually be defined? Paul would define it as living “**according to the flesh**”.

To “**live according to the flesh**” simply means that **a person does not know God**. Whenever they hear the Word of God being taught or preached it means nothing to them. They have no understanding of it. It bores them and puts them to sleep. When Paul uses the word “**flesh**”, he is referring to a person’s fallen human nature apart from God. It is a man living and operating by his impulses and without God in his life. He has no interest in the things of God. He sees no value in the Bible. He does not see the Bible as authoritative over his life, but relative – something in which he can pick and choose what he likes. He does not see it as the Word of God, but just as a word – and one that he can take or leave as he pleases. He does not want Christ to be Lord over his life, but rather he wants to be his own lord. The New Testament knows nothing of such a bent to genuine spiritual life. [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) states it this way,

¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

[John 3:6](#) says,

⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

For those in the flesh, all of life revolves around themselves – what they like, what they want, what makes them happy, what gives them satisfaction, what they do not like, how they want to talk, how they want to live, where they want to go, what they want to do with their life. It is a very selfish life. It is a life characterized by selfishness and invariably leads to unhappiness, depression, discouragement, dissatisfaction, a lack of fulfillment, a lack of self-control, a loss of peace and contentment, and a regretful bitterness towards God. It is a hard life. The Bible is very accurate when it states that “**the way of the transgressor is hard**”. It is. It is very difficult and leaves a person empty, searching, and unfulfilled. Unfortunately, they never think that Jesus is the answer, when in reality He is the only answer.



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Technically, the word “**flesh**”, or “*sarx*”, refers to human nature as opposed to the new man, or the new nature that God has given to the believer. Human nature is corrupted, directed, and controlled by sin. It describes the outlook orientated toward oneself, an outlook that is prone to sin, opposed to God, and which pursues its own ends in a self-sufficient independence from God. It includes all of the ungodly motives, affections, principles, purposes, words, and actions that sin generates through and within the human body. It is that urge within toward total personal autonomy and rebellion, toward being our own little gods accountable to no one, responsible to no one, obeying no one, respecting no one, and running our own little worlds to suit ourselves. It is that continual tug of self-centeredness and selfishness within each individual that keeps them from being completely yielded to Christ. The flesh is self-reliant and does not delight to yield to any authority but its own, and any efforts to reform or purify it are in vain and totally unprofitable. The flesh is always opposed to the Spirit of God - always. People that live or walk according to the flesh are energized by evil desires and guided by false and deluding perceptions that distort God's will and His nature. The flesh simply represents that which is alienated from God and devoted to sensual self-gratification and pursuit of worldly pleasures and possessions. So, when Scripture speaks of someone being in “**the flesh**”, it means that the individual is basically controlled, manipulated, and dominated by their sinful human nature. A person so described is not a believer.

Even as a Christian, there is still this remnant of the flesh within our physical bodies with which each believer constantly has to battle. It is not that a believer has two different and opposing natures. Rather, it is that they have a new nature, but they also have the flesh. Thankfully there is a significant difference between a believer and a non-believer. Believers now have the life transforming power of the Holy Spirit to say “yes” to God and “no” to the flesh. The Spirit indwells each believer, and He is the source of new desires and a new perspective. Even more, the spiritual power unleashed in the resurrection is made available to every believer in and through the indwelling ministry and power of the Holy Spirit. If any believer chooses to rely on and walk after the Holy Spirit and if they will commit themselves to His control, then they will experience the spiritual power of God working within their life.

Do not lose sight of the fact that the **contrast** in these verses is the point. It is between those “**who live according to the Spirit**” vs. those who do not. Genuine believers set their mind on “**the things of the Spirit**”. “**According to the Spirit**” describes a mind possessed by the Spirit and thus controlled and dominated by the Holy Spirit. This is a completely opposite disposition, character, and nature than those who are “**in the flesh**”. One demeans the Holy Spirit’s work and the other fully embraces it. For those “**who live according to the Spirit**”, they submit to the guidance that the Holy Spirit provides. They focus their life on those things that they know He defines as priorities for their life. What the Spirit does and wants to do in their life is their absorbing interest. It is what motivates and stimulates them, what provokes them and encourages them. It is the very opposite of being absorbed with oneself, and the reason for this is because now the believer has a new nature.

In other words, those who belong to God are concerned about godly things. As Jonathan Edwards liked to say, they have “*holy affections*” and deep longings after God and for growing in the things of



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God. As Paul has made clear in [Romans 7](#), even God's children falter in their obedience to Him. However, they nevertheless joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. [Romans 7:22](#) says it this way,

²²For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

So, despite their spiritual failures, the basic orientation of those who set their mind "**according to the Spirit**" is to seek those things that have to do with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired and wrote the Word. So, the more of God's Word that a believer knows and loves, the more of God's Spirit the believer will experience.

It really is important for a believer to have a strong grasp of what the Holy Spirit is saying in these verses for one simple reason. It is so that they will not become confused about who is and who is not a genuine believer. That is part of the whole purpose of these verses – to give clear assurance to those who are saved. This entire chapter is about eternal security – knowing that we are saved. **If we ignore the distinctions that clearly define salvation vs. non-salvation, then the unfortunate consequence of that will be that unbelievers will be led to think that they are believers.** Nothing could be more tragic, more catastrophic, and more disastrous for their life. **There must be salvific distinctions. It does not matter what someone says.** When their life does not reflect the things of the Spirit, when the direction and disposition of their life is not according to the Spirit, and when they are spiritually indifferent to the things of the Spirit, those elements categorically and emphatically define that person.

Now, someone is going to ask the obvious question and rightfully so. They will ask, "*Well, what about Christians? Do they not sin as well?*" The answer to that is really very simple – YES! However, sin is not the genuine expression of the believer's new nature, but rather an invasion into who they really are. The reason is that they are fully redeemed positionally, but not practically. They, just like the lost man, still live in an unredeemed body that is not bent towards God. The flesh is still there and operating against them, and obviously, they sometimes yield to it. However, the believer's new nature has been redeemed and therefore their desires are Godward and towards holiness of life and purity of life. [Romans 7](#) is all about this struggle that goes on. Paul defined it this way in [Romans 7:21-23](#),

²¹I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²²For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

There will always be this spiritual struggle in the Christian, and in reality it is a good thing simply because it gives clarity to the fact that the individual has truly been born again. John MacArthur defined this struggle as follows,

"They still have to fight the battle of that changed nature being incarcerated in unredeemed humanness."



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Now, if they were to dissect the contrast here in [Romans 8:5](#), it would be a fairly easy task. People who **“live according to the flesh”** and **“set their mind on the things of the flesh”** are people who are simply gratifying their sinful Adamic nature. Their life is bent on living for themselves and gratifying their own personal lusts and desires. In reality, they have no relish, no delight, and no pleasure for spiritual things. They may say that they do. They may say that they want to go to heaven when they die, but the truth of the matter is that the glories of heaven that could await them later are not worth living their life for Christ now. To the contrary, their real desires are centered in the things of this life and of this world. Whatever may be their profession regarding spiritual things, their hearts are very much engrossed in earthly and fleshly things.

All the way through these verses, Paul is continually asserting the relationship between the flesh and death, and between the Spirit and life. One leads to the other. Obviously these set of verses are a contrast of different kinds of people – lost people and saved people, converted people and unconverted people. However, the greater purpose here is that of showing that only those who live and walk and set their mind on the things of the Spirit are truly saved. An individual must have the **“Spirit of life”** in order to have a **“no condemnation”** status. If they do not have that **“Spirit of life”**, then they have never been justified, are not being sanctified, are in a condemnation status, and therefore are not able to live and walk and set their mind on the things of the Spirit. What an incredible blessing that God has given to the believer with His **“no condemnation”** status. They are His and they have His Spirit and are able to set their mind on the things of God.

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Next, we come to [Romans 8:6](#) which says,

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

[Romans 8:6](#) presents the results of the two different mindsets that have been given to the believer in V5 – either flesh minded or Spirit minded. In this verse, to be fleshly minded is called being **“carnally minded”**. Paul gives two very simple equations that say:

- (1) Minding the flesh = death
- (2) Minding the Spirit = life and peace.

It is very interesting that all of the translations say the same thing. They do not say that being carnally minded or setting the mind on the flesh LEADS to death, but rather that it **“IS”** death. Moffat’s translation says that **“the interests of the flesh mean death”**. In actuality, v6 does not have any verbs in the Greek. The following is how it actually reads,

For the thinking of the flesh -- death, the thinking of the Spirit -- life and peace.

It is a simple equation of flesh equals death and Spirit equals life.

If someone was to describe death, it would really be fairly simple. Death is when a person is totally insensitive to anything – light, heat, touching, noise, - whatever. There is no sensitivity to anything when a person is in a state of death. It is impossible for them to respond to any stimuli whatsoever.



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They are dead and have no feelings and are not able to react to anything. So, when that idea is equated with the spiritual death of v6, it means that the individual whose thinking is dominated and controlled by the flesh is completely insensitive and dead to the things of God. It could actually be said that in that state they are dead to God. They do not hear God, they do not respond to God, they do not listen for God. In reality they are “God dead”. Anyone living in the flesh is dead to the things of God – dead. When someone dies, they immediately become insensitive and totally unaware of anything that is happening around them or even to them. In v6, the phrase to be “**carnally minded**” means that the individual is literally cut off from the life that is life indeed. It is hostility to God, resistance to God, and defiance of God. In reality, it is spiritual suicide of the worst kind.

The word for “**minded**” or “**mind set**” is the Greek word “*phronema*” which is different from the word “*phroneo*” that was looked at in v5. “*Phroneo*” refers to **HOW** someone thinks and what their particular mind set is. However, the verb in v6, “*phronema*”, does not refer specifically to how an individual thinks, but rather to what they have in mind. It refers to an individual’s inclinations, to the direction of their thought life, and to the orientation of what they are thinking. For instance, a mathematician thinks about numbers and equations. A wild game hunter thinks about animals. A soccer player thinks about kicking and passing soccer balls. It is the general orientation and direction of their thought life. The word “*phronema*” is only used here in [Romans 8](#). It is used in v6, v7, and v27. It is the only place that it is used in the New Testament. It describes the faculty of fixing one's mind on something and thus it innately becomes a way of thinking. It represents and denotes the basic direction of a person's will – what they are inevitably going to choose to do. That is the essence of what this word is dealing with – in what direction a person exercises their will. The direction is either for God or against God.

From a purely theological perspective, people without the Spirit are both unable and unwilling to grasp spiritual realities, and so they rebel against God. In short, they do not really know how to “think straight”. In reformed doctrine that state is referred to as “total depravity”. The reason that people just continue to dwell on carnal and fleshly things is because that is their nature and their actual orientation. They do not have a capacity to grasp spiritual realities in and of themselves. Keep in mind that we are only referring to spiritual truth, not things like mathematics, architecture, engineering, or designing an airplane. These words are only referring to spiritual truth. What Paul is saying is that the direction or orientation of a fleshly minded individual and someone who is not born again is deformed and twisted by sin. The way that they think and view truth is distorted and biased to the flesh and not to the things of God. They cannot grasp spiritual realities, and so they rebel against God in their mind and their mindset, and thus in how they think. They see God not as a liberator, but as someone who places them into bondage. They do not see truth as something that sets them free, but rather something that greatly hinders their life. They do not see life from an eternal perspective, but from a temporal perspective. [Ephesians 2:1](#) is the perfect verse in describing this spiritual condition of deadness when it says,

¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,



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Keep in mind that Paul is still contrasting those who are lost with those who are saved, and he is using these various terms and descriptions to do that. He wants his readers to appreciate that a person's mindset has very eternal consequences to it. Why say that? It is because when Paul uses this particular word for "**death**", it is a word that means spiritual death. "**Death**" ("*thanatos*") refers to the end of physical life in contrast to a living relationship with God. As used in the New Testament, "*thanatos*" refers primarily to the destroying power related to sin and its consequences. It refers to separation from God in this present life, and ultimately, after physical death in eternity. One person is dead and experiencing death, and the other person is alive and experiencing life. A person cannot be in both states at the same time. From a spiritual perspective, a person is either spiritually dead or spiritually alive, either saved or unsaved. There are no intermediate spiritual states. The word "**death**" means spiritual death. It is the exact opposite of spiritual life and therefore includes sin, misery associated with sin, and a very real alienation from God – both currently and eventually. It is a word that refers to death in the broadest sense, and includes within its meaning the aspect of eschatological condemnation.

This verse is clearly describing an individual's spiritual condition. All men belong either to one or the other. They are either in the flesh ("**carnally minded**") or in the Spirit. They are either in a state of death or in a state of grace. Anyone whose mind is set on the things of this world needs to consider this fearful saying that "**to be carnally minded is death**". They are in a condemnation status. An unspiritual mind which reveals itself in unspiritual objectives, habits, goals, desires, and pursuits is "**death**". The individual is physically alive, but spiritually dead.

In this verse, it is important to appreciate that Paul is stating a fact. If someone has a carnal mind, that is a mind focused on the things pertaining to the flesh and to this world, they are spiritually dead. He is not talking about a potential state that someone may eventually arrive at if they keep thinking in a carnal manner. Rather he is stating an axiom and a truth. To have a "**carnal mind**" means that the individual is lost and dead. However, to have a mind that is focused on God and things above validates that they have been saved by grace and are walking in the Spirit. It is a genuine indicator of the state of an individual's true spiritual condition – they think and are mindful and conscious about the things of God. It is the orientation and direction and inclination of their life. If one's mind is not Christ-centered and instead their interest is constantly being placed on carnal and fleshly desires, then that individual is spiritually dead. That is the simple reality of this verse.

Once again, Paul is giving a spiritual equation, not a spiritual consequence. The consequence is the reverse. Because unredeemed men are already spiritually dead, their minds are inevitably set on the flesh. The unsaved person could accurately be viewed as a spiritual corpse and consequently unable in and of themselves to respond to the things of God. Unless the Holy Spirit supernaturally intervenes by regenerating them, then convicting them of sin and giving them the spiritual grace and power to respond to God by faith, the unsaved person cannot respond on their own.

The opposite of this axiom is the latter part of v6 which says that "**to be spiritually minded is life and peace**". A mind set on the Spirit is the same as a mind possessed by the Spirit. It describes a



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mind controlled by and dominated by the Holy Spirit. For instance, it is the same idea as [Ephesians 5:18](#) which says,

¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

The verse encourages the believer to allow their life to be continually controlled by the Holy Spirit. If an individual has this mindset, the one which clearly demonstrates that they are saved, then they experience both the life and the peace that only God can give. A mind possessed by the Spirit is the only state of mind in which life and peace can even be realized or enjoyed. Life and peace cannot occur in a carnal mind. Why? It is because **“to be carnally minded is death”**. It is not that it leads to death - it is death. Death and dying occur in that kind of mindset – and it can be seen all of the time in the lives of the unredeemed.

Now, it is necessary to look at what is Paul saying when he talks about **“life and peace”**? The sequence of the two words **“life and peace”** are important simply because an individual cannot experience God’s peace until they first have experienced God’s life. Obviously, Paul is not talking about a kind of life where there are no problems, no struggles, or no trials. There are way too many Scriptures that promise believers that they will be impacted by those things. For instance, [James 1:2](#) says,

²My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

The word **“various”** there means manifold, or all kinds of different trials. Big trials, little trials, hard times of all types – emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, financial, and relational. They are unavoidable for the Christian or the non-Christian. [1 Peter 1:6](#) says,

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

[1 Peter 4:12](#) says,

¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you

Paul is not talking about an absence of trials, difficulties, and troubles. There is no place of just complete tranquility this side of heaven. So, what does he mean by the words **“life and peace”**? It means that the individual whose mind is controlled by the Holy Spirit is alive to God, alive to the things of God, alive to truth, and alive to eternal values and the supernatural life of God within them. It carries with it the idea of being sensitive to God, sensitive to His Word, and sensitive to His Spirit and His leading. It is being at peace **with** God and having the peace **of** God, even though there may be times when the believer’s life is interrupted by some sin or difficulty that easily besets them. Why? It is because they know that they are in a no-condemnation status before God. They know that. Their minds are controlled by the Holy Spirit and He as the believer’s teacher has taught them these great life transforming truths. [Romans 5:1](#) says,



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¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Greek word for “**life**” is “*zoe*” and technically it means the absolute fullness of life which alone belongs to God the Giver of life. It could be said this way - **it is God-life**, the very life that only God can give. The word “**peace**” refers to the inward feeling of tranquility which accompanies this life of God that is in someone who is born again. It shows itself particularly in the absence of fear in regard to death and judgment. Anyone may fear how they die, but the individual who is truly born again is not fearful of God Himself. He calls Him “**Abba, Father**”. He is at “**peace with God**” and God is at peace with him. He has the “**peace of God**” operating in his life. The contrast between these two kinds of natures – carnal and spiritual - is so very clear.

So, the message in **Romans 8:6** is really very understandable. When the things of God dominate and control an individual’s outlook and perspective and when that individual is constantly responding to the directives of the Holy Spirit in their life, then there is “**life and peace**”. The word “**peace**” is the Greek word “*eirene*” and in its verb form means to bind together that which has been separated. So, in the context of v6, it describes the believing sinner as one who is bound together with God and His life after having been previously separated from Him by sin. It is that inward harmony and tranquility that results from yielding your life to God. It is impossible to be at peace with someone with whom you are always resisting and someone with whom you are always contending, debating, and arguing. In marriages, these kinds of things lead to divorce and separation. In the workplace, they lead to people being released of their duties. In life, they lead to conflict and bitterness. In the spiritual context, they lead to a lack of assurance and an impatience and frustration with God.

What is going to be mentioned next has very serious implications. It is impossible to have a mind set on the Spirit and to be spiritually minded, and yet remain dead to the things of God, dead and uninterested in the Word of God, or indifferent to God’s church. To the contrary, the mind of the Spirit is ALWAYS set on the Word of God, and ALWAYS in love with the church and the bride of Christ. Why? Remember from v2 that “**the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death**”. The Spirit is always effectively shaping the believer’s mind and shaping the believer’s walk because He is alive within them. That is His work, His ministry, and His vocation. He imparts spiritual life to them and He brings it to them and makes it their very life. It is not that He just speaks laws or rules and tells believers to do them. He is not simply a law-giver. Rather, He is a life-giver. He gives life. He takes the law of God and writes it on the believer’s heart and creates the life that loves that law and delights in God and treasures Christ. This is what it means to be born again, to be saved, and to be converted.

What a great privilege the believer has. They are in the Spirit, and **therefore** living according to the Spirit and minding the things of the Spirit. **This is not perfection, but direction.** This is a description of someone who is genuinely saved. They are spiritually minded and experiencing the life and peace that only God can give. One of the problems within the church today is that it has developed a definition of salvation that makes people comfortable with living in spiritual indifference, but unfortunately that cultural definition is not biblical. Churches are filled with people who have no



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meaningful relationship with Christ at all, but yet the church continually reinforces that they are saved. Unfortunately the church has very often deluded people into a false sense of security relative to salvation, and ultimately allowed unbiblical values to become imposed on and within the culture of the church itself. Within any church there are to well-defined biblical values that are clearly defined from Scripture. However, if the church lacks discernment and allows people to integrate into its fellowship without sharing those same values such as commitment, service, morality, prayer, evangelism, study, marriage, etc., then those people can only “devalue” that churches impact and influence. When the church integrates goats into the sheepfold, it only hurts the sheep.

What v6 clearly states is that God has changed the believer’s nature and it is evident in what they mind, what they think about, what they love and adore, what they are occupied with, and that for which they are willing to give their lives. It is all given to the believer by the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit – regenerating, calling, converting, and transforming believer’s lives forever. If those kinds of spiritual attributes are not present in a person’s life, then salvation has not occurred.

For years now, the church has seemed to embrace a new cultural language and a new cultural jargon along with all the new methodologies of the modern church era. The technology of the current church culture has in many ways led the church into an obsession with new things and with new ideas and new methods. The intent in mentioning this is not to denigrate technology or the use of technology in advancing the kingdom of God. In essence, technology is a tool that is available and it should be used when appropriate. However, the church in trying to be culturally relevant has developed new spiritual words and ideas that literally bleed off the offense of the cross and the gospel. Unfortunately, it has become very successful in its efforts. **The church has tried so hard not to offend men that in the process they have greatly offended God.** [Romans 9:33](#) says,

³³As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

The church culture is being inundated with new words and new ideas, and quite frankly, it is all very disconcerting and disturbing. The church culture now has what is known as “seeker friendly” churches. A “seeker friendly” church is simply one where the goal is to make non-believers comfortable in a Christian setting. Very often to achieve that purpose, contemporary music becomes a drawing card, “soft” messages become a drawing card, a relaxed and informal atmosphere becomes a drawing card, relaxed clothes becomes a drawing card, skits become a drawing card, and who knows what else. Obviously, there is absolutely nothing wrong with music or a comfortable atmosphere or relaxed clothing. **The problem is that the goal is wrong**. The goal is to make the unbeliever **relaxed and non-offended with the message**. It is the idea that if they can get them to like the Christians, then maybe they will like their Jesus. The idea is that our hymns, our church style, and our doctrinal messages are forever boring to non-Christians, so they need to re-think and change the methodology to better accommodate someone who is lost. However, should not it be that way? How can a non-Christian, someone who is lost and without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and someone dead in sin and trespasses, how can they even closely relate to what the church does? They mind the things of the flesh and they mind the things of the Spirit. They are lost and we are saved. They do not have the



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indwelling Holy Spirit, but Christians do. They think the Bible is outdated and old-fashioned, and genuine Christians believe it to be the most relevant document in the world. At every level Christians are in direct conflict with what lost men like and what they believe. [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) is the classic statement on all of this.

¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are [foolishness to him](#); nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned

From a very practical perspective, believers should never expect a lost person to either understand or appreciate what they do, or like what they do. They should never expect them to like songs such as “The Old Rugged Cross” or “O, How I Love Jesus” or “Holy, Holy, Holy”. How could someone who is constantly unholy like something that is holy? Believers should never expect the lost to “enjoy” a message that confronts their sin and spiritual unbelief. Most Christians do not like that kind of message, nevertheless a lost person. Who enjoys being told that if they do not repent that they will die in their sins and face eternal damnation? Why would they enjoy such things? They will not because they cannot until the Holy Spirit does a supernatural work in their life.

The ultimate task is not to try and make people comfortable with the gospel. **The real task is to allow the Holy Spirit to draw men to Christ through the gospel** – not music, not blue jeans, not soft preaching and story-telling, and not some comfortable atmosphere. Contemporary music and blue jeans and comfortable settings are not the gospel and they are not the life-transforming message of Scripture. **It is the Holy Spirit who draws men to Christ** and not how churches arrange their services on Sunday morning.

Just saying these kinds of things will create negative reactions in many professing Christians. They will say that someone who takes such a position is insensitive and too dogmatic and they not have a proper understanding of evangelism and how to reach men. The response to those kinds of concerns is that the problem is that the church has lost the true meaning of the gospel and how men actually come to Christ. [Romans 1:16](#) is really very clear,

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

The “**power of God to salvation**” is in “**the gospel of Christ**”. That is the **only place** that the “**power of God to salvation**” resides. Without the gospel there will be no salvation. Jesus said these illuminating words in [John 6:44](#),

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day

Unless God the Father and the Holy Spirit are working in an individual’s heart to draw them to Christ, they will never come to Christ - never. Jesus, speaking of His death, says this is [John 12:32](#),

³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.



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It is Christ being preached and it is Christ being lifted up that draws men to Him. Methodology is not the issue, music is not the issue, and a relaxed and informal setting is not the issue. There is no spiritual power in any of those things. If methodology had been the issue, then Jesus would have told the church so. He would have given His disciples instructions on “how” to manipulate all the various conditions for maximum results. However, there is nothing like any of that in the Scriptures. Paul would have given the green light to keep changing how to do church from generation to generation, but those kinds of freedoms simply are not in Scripture. They are not there. Why? It is because God does not want believers to trust in their methodology or in their programs or in their ingenuity and creativity. God is the sole author of salvation, and the reason is so that He and He alone will be given the glory. The more that programs and methods and creativity are involved in all of this, the more of the glory others will want and receive. The glory is God’s and God’s alone.

This is just an opinion on my part, but it seems that the church of our culture somehow believes that it does not actually need the Holy Spirit to draw men to Christ. All they need is to get all of the right elements in place and in proper alignment – and men will come to Christ. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. Unless the convicting power of the Holy Spirit of God draws a man to Christ, he cannot come. And if for any reason someone thinks that they can draw men with all of these other kinds of fleshly things, they have insulted the Holy Spirit. [Hebrews 10:29](#) says,

²⁹Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Genuine, biblical, life transforming salvation is a work of God and a work of the Holy Spirit that only they can perform. The church would be a lot better off not spending so much time on spiritual mechanics and creating new “spiritual” words and relaxed atmospheres, but rather spending a lot more time on its knees beseeching God in His grace to give men the gift of faith and repentance and to release the power of the gospel into men’s sinful lives.