

Set Your Mind

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[0:00] Matthew Capone and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church! And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.! A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here.

We are continuing this morning in our series in the book of Romans. And you'll remember that Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD.

It is called Romans because it is written to the churches in the city of Rome. And this letter to the Romans is about the gospel. It's about the good news of Jesus' death and life and his resurrection. I imagine that, you know, as you live your lives throughout the week, you're pulled in all sorts of directions and distracted by so many things as all of us are. And so as we come again to Romans, I want to remind you where we are in the big picture, okay?

Romans chapter 5, we talked about the fact that we are saved by Jesus' life and death and resurrection. We are not saved by our behavior or our works.

[1:07] So there's this great good news that comes out of chapter 5. Chapter 6 then goes on to say, But that doesn't mean we can live however we want. Even though we're not saved by our works, we still live lives of holiness before God.

So that then raises this next question. So we're saved, chapter 5. We still live lives of holiness, chapter 6. How do we do that? Chapter 7 goes on to tell us, Well, we don't do it.

It's not the law. It's not God's rules that empower us to live holy lives. Rules can't save you. More law doesn't lead to more holiness.

And so we get this payoff now. In chapter 8, we're getting the answer. How is it actually that we live lives pleasing to God? It comes by the Spirit of God.

If you have your Bible with you, you look at the last verse from last week, chapter 8, verse 4, which says this, We walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

[2:12] That's our introduction to this week's passage, which is verses 5 through 8. And our question is simple. How? How do we walk by the Spirit?

How do we live lives that are changed and transformed? We know that doesn't happen through rules. How do we live lives that are changed and transformed by Christ?

As has recently been the case with Romans, of course, we have so much going on in this passage, so I'm going to take the same approach I took the last time I preached from Romans, which is this.

I'm going to try to preach in a straight line.

I'm going to try to be as clear as possible from top to bottom. We are going to spend a lot of time on verse 5. We're going to spend a little bit of time on verses 6 through 8.

The reason for that is that verse 5 is really the foundation. Verses 6 through 8 then lay out some things that logically fall into place. So how? How do we walk by the Spirit?

[3:12] So with that, I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 8, starting at verse 5. One place you can turn is in your worship guide. You'll find this on page 7. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word.

Jeremiah chapter 23 tells us that God's word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces, which is a way of saying that there is nothing so powerful that God's word is not more powerful still.

So that's why we read now Romans chapter 8, starting at verse 5. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.

But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

[4:25] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you, and we thank you again this morning that you are our loving and gracious Father.

Father, that you haven't left us to figure out life on our own, but instead you guide us, you instruct us, you tell us how the world works in words that we can understand.

Even more than that, you sent your Son to save us from our sins. So we ask this morning that you would send your Holy Spirit now here in a powerful and extra special way, that you'd use the Spirit to open our minds and to soften our hearts, to unstop our ears, to clear our eyes, and that we would be able to see the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ, that you would grow our love and our affection for him, you'd grow our reverence and our awe for him, and that would lead us to follow him in obedience.

And we ask all of these things in his mighty name. Amen. Amen. Amen. I know that many of you, through either your work in the military or perhaps your work with scouting, are great readers of maps.

Now, I'll admit that I'm young enough to have spent enough time with Google Maps that I'm not a map reader. I'm actually just a map user. But I know that some of you are map readers, and you know if you're reading a map, there's one thing that's especially necessary.

[6:05] And that is essential that you need to have the key or the legend. The key or the legend spells out for you what different symbols on the map mean. You need to know which symbol shows you where the hospital is, which symbol shows you the airport.

How do you distinguish between different types of roads? And I mention that because as we go through Paul's letter to the Romans, and we've already seen this in a sense, we have to have a legend with us.

And what I mean by that is that Paul uses very technical, sometimes difficult language. And so for us to really understand, to get at the heart of his message, we have to know what those terms mean.

We saw that in chapters 6 and 7. We see the same thing before us this morning. To understand Romans chapter 8, we have to first clear the ground and know the key, the legend.

Now you might be wondering, man, that sounds kind of boring. You just used the phrase technical term. Why would I want to learn the key? And I give you an incentive here. Verse 6 says that you have an offer of life and peace.

[7:19] Do you want life and peace? Well, you're going to have to understand the key. Okay? So pay attention. You're going to have to understand the map. First, we have to understand what Paul means here by this phrase in verse 5, the flesh.

Now I want you to have, as we go through the book of Romans, I want you to have burning clarity about what this letter means. I don't want you to just hear a sermon and maybe gain a few insights or thoughts.

I want you to turn back to the book of Romans later in your life, and I want you to say, yes, I understand this now. I can discern it. I can make my way through it. And so to do that, we have to know exactly what Paul means by the flesh.

And so I'm going to point you to page 6 of your worship guide. This is to the right of the sermon passage, which tells us the best definition I can find for you. The flesh is human nature as corrupted, directed, and controlled by sin.

Okay? The flesh is human nature, directed, corrupted, controlled by sin. And it's critical at this moment that we know not just what the flesh means, we also have to know what it doesn't mean.

[8:33] It does not mean your physical body. And I mention that because as English speakers, that's really what comes to our mind first. Oh, the flesh, you mean that my kind of my embodied existence is what I am fighting against.

No, doesn't mean physical matter is bad. The Christian hope, the Christian story is actually an embodied hope. It's an embodied story. Whether anyone's told you this or not, you, if you go to heaven, will have a body there.

Okay? So your hope is not to be free to get rid of the body. Your hope is to get rid of the sinful nature. Now, it's understandable that we might think our bodies are what we have to fight against, that they're what we need to get rid of, because as we live life this side of heaven, we have very complicated relationships with our bodies.

Complicated relationships with our bodies, because maybe we don't like their size or their shape. We have complicated relationships with them because they're susceptible to disease and sickness. We have complicated relationships because as we age, they sort of betray and rebel against us. Okay? That's an aside, but it's an important aside, because again, I want you to have burning clarity. I don't want you to be confused what Paul means here by the flesh. The flesh is human nature as corrupted, directed, and controlled by sin.

[10:05] Okay, we've established the flesh. There's a duality here, so now we have to turn to the spirit. This is still in verse 5. We have a clue here what's meant by the spirit because it is capitalized.

So it's not speaking about a spirit in general. No, it's referring to the Holy Spirit, which is the third person of the Trinity. There's a reason this morning our confession of faith, this was on page 3 of your worship guide, was about the Trinity to remind us of what it is that we believe as Christians. As Christians, we confess and believe in the triune God. That is, we confess and believe in the God who is one God, but exists in three persons.

And each person of the Trinity has their own job description. The Holy Spirit has a lot of things under his job description. Some of the things the Spirit does are soften our hearts. The Spirit is the one who convicts us of sin.

Now, the Spirit helps us understand God's word. The Spirit does other things as well, which we'll see later in chapter 8. But that's what's being talked about here. The flesh, the nature of sin, the Spirit, God's Holy Spirit.

[11:20] And now that we have our legend, that we've kind of established our baseline, we can move forward in verse 5. So look again with me there. Verse 5 presents, again, this contrast.

It tells us there are those who live according to the flesh, versus, as opposed to, those who live according to the Spirit. Which is reminding us of the Christian teaching we have looked at many times, which is that there are two and only two ways to live.

You can live according to sin, or you can live according to the Holy Spirit. There is a war, there is a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit.

Now, at this point, we're kind of talking in these very high-level, 40,000 foot terms. You might be wondering, you know, what is the real difference on the ground between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit?

Now, in this section, this verse, Paul talks in very general terms. Thankfully, he doesn't always do that. There's another place where he speaks in specific terms.

[12:32] And I'm going to invite you to turn to page 8 of your worship guide. This is critical for us, and so I had it printed out for you as a reference. Galatians chapter 5, verses 19 through 23, goes into detail about what it looks like day by day in real time to live life in the flesh or life in the Spirit.

And so you'll see there, the works of the flesh. This is page 8 of your worship guide. And things like these is Paul's way of saying, and this list is not comprehensive.

Now, don't be distracted. There are some spicy things on here, so you might think, ooh, sorcery. That's exciting. You might see some things here that are kind of, we consider more scandalous sins, right?

Sexual immorality, sensuality, idolatry. And I think it's easy at times to get distracted by those and think, well, you know, maybe I've finished with those sins in my life, and so obviously I'm living in the Spirit.

Well, Paul's not going to let us off the hook that easily because it also involves this. The enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, and envy.

[13:54] Have you envied someone recently? Do you have a dissension or a division with someone else?

Do you have a rivalry with another person? It's not just sorcery and orgies. Paul tells us these other things, right, are our life in the flesh.

That is what happens when the human nature is controlled, directed, dominated by sin. By the way, before I became a pastor, I think in my mind I sort of imagined, well, you know, when the elders of the church meet, what are they going to be dealing with in the congregation?

And, you know, at the top of the list you might think, well, sexual immorality and impurity and sensuality and idolatry. And the reality is, you know, those things do happen, right? There's an awful lot more of this, though.

Enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, and divisions. Which is to say, as we've looked at before, the flesh still has a pool on us, right?

[15:02] We still have the presence of sin in our lives. Now, thankfully, Paul doesn't just give us the negative here.

He also gives us the positive. So we see what it looks like to live life in the flesh. And then we get a vision of what it looks like to live life in the spirit. Again, this is Galatians 5, page 8 of your worship guide.

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Do you want to live life in the spirit?

That's what it looks like. Do you want to know if someone is a spiritual person? If they're being changed and transformed by the work of God?

Do you want to know if you are being changed and transformed by the work of God? That's what it looks like. That's the contrast.

[16:07] Life in the flesh, life in the spirit. I've got good news for you. We have cleared the ground at this point.

Okay, so take us a while to understand what's happening here. In verse 5, that takes us back to our original question. How do we live life according to the spirit?

How do we become people of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control?

Paul doesn't leave us hanging. He tells us right here in verse 5. We set our minds.

Those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit.

[17:05] Where you look determines who you become.

What you meditate on is what will decide how you live your life.

Those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit. I grew up camping and going to summer camp as a kid.

And that included a certain amount of canoeing. And if you're in a canoe, there are various strategies you can use with your oars to keep your canoe headed straight.

And that's great. You know, you can have your J stroke and your left stroke and your right stroke.

But ultimately, if you want to end up in the right place, you have to do this. You have to pick a spot where you want to end up and you keep your eyes up on that.

[18:22] Right? Because where you set your eyes, that determines your destination. Yeah, you need to use different strokes along the way to get there. But if you don't know where you're headed, none of that matters.

In fact, that's how you end up at the right place. That's also how you know when you're off course. Now the word mind here is more than intellectual.

It's easy for us as Westerners to think, well, when Paul says mind here, it just means I need to do more meditation and more reading and study. And it's certainly not less than that, but it is also more than that.

If you mind something, that is telling you about the entire orientation of your life. That is your hope and your vision and where you give your attention and your energy.

Faith, in other words, is not just one component among many components as you walk in this world. No, it is the lens, the commitment, as we've talked about before, the keystone that sets everything else.

[19:27] If you want to live your life in the Spirit, set your mind on the things of the Spirit.

Now that raises another question. Okay, I'm supposed to set my mind on the things of the Spirit. That's where I'm charting my course. What are those things?

You do not set your mind ultimately on the fruits of the Spirit because the fruits of the Spirit are downstream.

The fruits are what come when you set your mind in the correct place. No, you don't set your mind on the fruits. You set your mind on what it says here, the things of the Spirit.

Well, okay. What are the things of the Spirit? Look at me at page 5 of your worship guide, which says this. The rest of Romans 8 tells us what the Spirit is preoccupied with.

[20:31] How in Christ we are adopted, loved, and welcomed. That's the fixed point.

That's the destination. That is the truth that guides and directs and determines everything else in your life.

Helps us understand chapter 7, by the way. Remember the whole point of chapter 7 was the law can't change your heart. The law rules.

They can't bring new and beautiful things out into your life. But God can. And he does it by his Holy Spirit.

As your eyes are fixed on his work for you in and through Jesus Christ.

[21:35] The law cannot change you or save you. God can. As we remember what he has done for us.

How in Christ we are adopted, loved, and welcomed can and does change everything we do.

Do you want to live life in the Spirit? Then evaluate every action through that lens.

Do everything in light of that. I told you before about my friend who years ago told me he gets up every morning. And every morning he has to ask himself this question.

Do I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead or not? And that's returning to first principles every day.

[22:52] Right? He's coming back. What's the really important question? If God the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, raised Jesus Christ from the dead, then you can face whatever comes.

If God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, raised Jesus Christ from the dead, then you can face whatever comes.

That is fixing our eyes on the things of the Spirit. By the way, that's why we come together here every Sunday morning.

Because our eyes are constantly being pulled in other directions. And God knows that every single week, at least once a week, we need to sit down and have our vision adjusted.

In the new members class, we talk about in our first class the importance of being in worship on Sunday morning. And I call it the 101 of the Christian life. And the reason it's the 101 is this, that we need to look again and again at Jesus Christ.

[24:23] And we need to be reminded week after week of what he's done. And God has called us to do that here together.

That, by the way, is my job as a preacher. When people say, well, that man, he's preaching or he's giving a sermon, often what they mean is, man, that person is laying down some rules and some laws and some commandments and some principles.

And you know what the Bible does have? Rules and laws and commandments and principles. But chapter 7 said, that's not going to change you. The job of the preacher is this.

To present Jesus Christ. That we would see his glory and his beauty. That you would remember how in Christ you are adopted, loved, and welcomed.

We sang it right before the sermon. This is on page 5. Hast thou heard him, seen him, known him? Is not thine a captured heart?

[25:41] Chief among 10,000 own him. Joyful choose the better part. What can strip the seeming beauty from the idols of the earth?

Chapter 7 tells us rules are not going to strip the beauty from the idols of the earth. No, not a sense of right or duty, but the sight of peerless worth.

Do you want the fruit of the Spirit? Do you want more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control? Do you want what verse 6 refers to in life and peace?

Then you must set your mind on the things of the Spirit. You must set your eyes on Christ.

I told you we were going to spend a lot of time on verse 5, which we have, and very little time on verses 6 and 7.

[26:59] So look there with me briefly. Verse 6 tells us the result of these things. The result of life in the flesh is death as opposed to life and peace.

Now it doesn't say that it will be death or that it results in death, although it does. It said it is death. It's death right now. And ultimately it is death because those who are in the flesh are under God's judgment.

Galatians 5, that long list. Remember on page 8, what does Paul say? As I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You know this. You know this intuitively. If you interact with people who this list describes, people with strife and jealousy and fits of anger, those people are not people of life and peace.

If that list in Galatians 5 is the list of your life, at least some of it, I know this. Joy is not a part of any of it.

[28:11] To set the mind on the flesh is death. It says another thing in verse 6. To set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. It doesn't say it will be life and peace.

It does not say it results in life and peace, although it does. It says it is life and peace now. And it is life and it is peace because you have been reconciled to God.

The end of anxiety and fear and strife ultimately and finally comes from fixing our eyes on him.

That's what gives us the hope and perspective and confidence to move from what is wrong to what is right. To see what God has done to reconcile us to himself.

Then in verses 7 through 8 basically say one thing. If you're in the flesh, you are fighting against God. It is impossible for you to do the right thing for the right reason.

[29:17] That is for God's honor and his glory. Doing things out of thanks to him for his work of creation and redemption. Theologians call this total inability.

Which is their way of saying only those in the spirit can do what pleases God. That's verses 6 through 8.

So we'll end how we started. How do we walk in the spirit? How do we become people of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, and self-control?

We do it by setting our minds on the things of the spirit. Which is to say we do it by setting our minds on Christ.

And so that's why we're going to sing. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Not be all else to me, save that thou art.

[30:33] Thou my best thought, by day or by night. Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you that you don't meet us with rules and commands that we can't meet.

But instead you come to us with your grace. Your grace that by your Holy Spirit fixes our eyes on you. And that you use to change us from the inside out.

We ask that that would be our hope in our life. That we would love and follow you in faith more and more. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.