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# The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Chapter 8 Verses 5-11

In verse 5, Paul states, *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh."*

Take note of the word "mind." In the original language, the word "mind" is the place of a person's will, understanding, thoughts, opinions, impulses, inclinations, and feelings. The mind of a person is not a separate dimension to us as human beings. In other words, we often are led to believe that the realm of our mind is separate and hidden from those around us, but it is not. As humans we are *whole beings* with actions, thoughts, and words. The thoughts of our minds are often betrayed by our actions and words. Our actions and words are *connected* to our minds.

Now, with that stated, it is important to understand that our *minds* are what lead us into patterns of actions and words. But there is more! What are our thoughts thinking about or oriented to? In verses 5-ff, the Apostle Paul is laying forth two ways of being alive – two realms in which to live. There are two ways in which our minds think. We either think according to the flesh or according to the Spirit.

And so, there are two – and only – two realms of life. There is a life lived within the realm of the flesh and life lived within

the realm of the Spirit. We humans set our mind upon things that are of the flesh or things that are of the Spirit.

The realm of the flesh is the weak realm of sinful mankind. The realm of the flesh is the way of the lordship of Sin, which controls mankind through temptations, sinful desires, and man-centered "me" thinking.

The realm of the Spirit is the new way of thinking and behaving that comes from the Lord's Word and Sacraments delivered to people in the local church. It is the realm of the Lordship of Christ, and His Word, which teaches us, "[The Lord's] thoughts are not [our] thoughts, neither is [the Lord's] ways [our] ways." (Is. 55:8) It is the realm of thinking of God's people.

What this means is that when people are in bondage to sin, death, and the devil, their *minds* and *outlooks* are out of order. You know what this looks like! You have found yourself thinking, as a Christian, "How on earth can a person believe that the taking of a baby's life in the womb is morally o.k.?" Well, it is perfectly o.k. for a mind oriented to the flesh.

It is important to keep in mind that the realm of the flesh and the realm of the Spirit are two very different realms in which a person thinks, lives, and talks. For example, see the two different realms as displayed in the Ten Commandments:

<u>Realm &amp; Mind of Flesh</u>	<u>Realm &amp; Mind of the Spirit</u>
Atheism/Agnosticism	God
Man's Name	God's Name
Relativism	Truth of God's Word
Rebellion/Anarchy	Authority
Culture of Death	Gift of Life
Hedonistic Sexuality	Marriage & Family
Greed	Gift of Property
Comparing/Slander	Good Reputation
Consumerism	Contentment

Consider the same within the realm of the Creed:

<u>Realm &amp; Mind of Flesh</u>	<u>Realm &amp; Mind of the Spirit</u>
Evolved	Creation
Self-Justification	Redeemed in Christ
Anti-Church	Church

Finally, consider the same thing with the Sacraments:

<u>Realm &amp; Mind of Flesh</u>	<u>Realm &amp; Mind of the Spirit</u>
Discover Identity/Purpose	Baptized
Self-Promotion/Boastful	Absolved/Assurance
Collectivism/Facism/Group Thinking	Lord's Supper

As you can see, both the realm of the flesh and the Spirit are entirely different. Furthermore, a mind set on the flesh is going to be different from a mind set on the Spirit. And finally, a mind set on the flesh is going to speak and act differently than a mind set on the Spirit.

There are three important things to keep in mind at this point. First, as Christians, we are not *happy owners* of the Spirit. We do not possess the Spirit like we possess a lap dog or a pet hamster. The Spirit possesses us! And so, to set our minds on the Spirit is to receive to the work of the Spirit upon us through the Word and Sacraments in the Church. Secondly, as Christians we must keep in mind that even though we are possessed by the Lord, we still have the realm of the flesh at work in us (remember Romans 7)? Thirdly, pagans who do not have the Spirit are sold into the slavery of sin. Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised when pagans act and talk according to the realm of the flesh. How can they act and speak according to the Spirit when they do not have the Spirit? How can their minds be set on the Spirit when they are in bondage to the Lordship of Sin? We can't expect good fruit from a bad tree. Only good trees produce good fruit. And good trees only come from good seeds that are planted – the seed of the Gospel!

