
THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT

Session IV: The Mind of the Flesh, Part II

- I. Under the Law
 - A. The speaker in Romans 7 is one who knows God's law from the OT, but doesn't know the power of the Holy Spirit at work in his life.
 - 1. The Law is often referred to as the Torah and is found in the first five books of the Old Testament.
 - 2. The Law was a good gift to Israel and taught the Israelites how to approach the one true God.
 - B. The commandments of the law aroused sin in the hearts of Israel.
 - 1. This is not because the law creates sin, but because sin takes the opportunity of an explicit command to arouse feelings of rebellion.
 - a) Adam and Eve in the garden
 - b) Romans 7:8 (NRSV) *"But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness."*
 - 2. Concentrating on sin to force right behavior doesn't destroy the sin.
 - a) "Thinking about sin to resist it still leaves sin and condemnation framing the question and defining the subject,"—Craig S. Keener
 - b) Trying to not think about coveting invites obsessive thoughts about that "thing" you want.
 - c) Romans 7:25 (NIV) *"So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."*
 - d) A person can have knowledge but not be able to act on it because their mind has not been changed by the Holy Spirit.
- II. The Purpose of the Law
 - A. The Law of God was not intended to provide salvation.
 - 1. "The material on which the law had to work was inadequate for generating true righteousness."—N.T. Wright
 - 2. The Law made the Israelites aware of sin. Romans 7:7 (NIV) *"Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law."*
 - 3. Galatians 2:15-16 (NIV) *"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."*
 - B. The Law prepared the Jewish people for the coming of Jesus who would redeem the world and condemn sin. Luke 24:44 (NIV) *"He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'"*

- C. The Law is God's Word for the Ancient Israelites and for us. The pictures of God's grace, character, and holiness reveals truth about God.
- III. The Believer and the Mind of the Flesh
 - A. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in Romans 7:7-25.
 - 1. Paul picks up discussion of the Spirit in chapter 8.
 - 2. This is a key indicator that the person struggling with sin in chapter 7 is not a believer.
 - 3. The "speaker" in chapter is weak and unable to overcome sinful desires.
 - B. Internal struggle
 - 1. Galatians 5:17 (NIV) *"For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want."*
 - 2. Is Paul teaching that a believer's spirit struggles with an equally powerful or more powerful flesh (sinful nature)?
 - a) The context of this passage is Paul's argument against the those who are trying to put Christians back under the Jewish Law.
 - b) Galatians 5:18 (NIV) *"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."*
 - c) The Spirit of God now lives in believers which enables Christians to follow God. To put yourself back under the law would then subject yourself to mind of the flesh.
 - d) Trying to live under the Law denies the freedom that God gives. Galatians 5:1 (NIV) *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."*
 - 3. There is a struggle between what God wants and what an unbeliever's life wants. However, that struggle should not be the case for Christians.
 - C. The Kingdom of God
 - 1. Jesus' death and resurrection ushered in a new reality. However, that reality hasn't been fully realized.
 - a) Already/Not Yet
 - b) We experience the life of the Spirit while still struggling against an "age" that hasn't fully ended.
 - 2. This does not mean that we are destined to fail.
 - a) We may fail at times, but the Spirit enables us to keep taking ground. We grow in sanctification.
 - b) This truth doesn't guarantee divine perfection on earth; instead, our victories in the Spirit over the flesh point to final victory in God's Kingdom. Hence, we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37)
- IV. Application
 - A. True victory comes when you accept Jesus by faith and walk daily in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. Focus more on God's promises, His word, and His faithfulness instead of the negative behavior you are trying to eliminate.
 - C. We are not fully in the Kingdom of God. This means that at times we will be weak, give in to sin, and think according to the flesh. That should not stop us from continuing to walk in victory.