

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME VIII
MINDSET
JUNE 5, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What is some evidence that a person is living for God and not for themselves?

Key Text: *“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. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ 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. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”* (Romans 8:5-8)

The second-largest volcanic eruption of the 20th century occurred at Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in 1991. After 600 years of quiet slumber, Pinatubo produced high-speed avalanches of lava flows and a cloud of volcanic ash hundreds of miles across the islands. Pinatubo’s colossal eruption triggered Typhoon Yunya, which caused devastating flooding and mudflows in highly populated places. The combined effects of Mount Pinatubo’s eruption and Typhoon Yunya impacted two million people directly who were living on Mount Pinatubo—800 people were killed and over 100,000 were rendered homeless—and caused property damage of a billion dollars, including irrecoverable agriculture, forestry, and land loss. Even aircraft flying at the time of the eruption experienced \$100 million of damage. When asked to account for the incredible destruction caused by the volcano, a research scientist with the Philippine Department of Volcanology observed, “When a volcano is silent for many years, people forget that it’s a volcano and treat it like a mountain.”

In our text for today’s lesson, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the destructive force of our flesh—our sinful nature. Like volcanic Mount Pinatubo, our sinful nature always has the potential to erupt, bringing great harm and destruction to ourselves and others. We make a big mistake when we ignore our volatile flesh – “the volcano” – and move comfortably back onto what we mistakenly think is a dormant mountain.

In Romans 8:5-8, Paul clarifies three differences between non-Christians and Christians.

1. A Difference in Mindset

“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.” (v.5)

Non-Christians set their minds on the flesh. This means their minds dwell intently on temporal, material, selfish appetites driven by the physical body. Note that *flesh* is *self* spelled backwards minus the *h*! In contrast, Christians set their minds on the things of the Spirit. This means our minds dwell intently on eternal, spiritual, godly things that glorify God and reach beyond our own human wants and needs.

Discuss: How would you advise a new believer to keep his mind set on the things of the Spirit and not on things of the flesh?

2. A Difference in Life Experience

“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (v.6)

Because the non-Christian sets his mind on the things of the flesh, his life experience is death—alienation from God (v.6a). Because the Christian sets his mind on the things of the Spirit, his life experience is life and peace (v.6b). The law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and death. Let’s take a look at life and peace:

- *“Life” (v.6)* – In the Bible, “life” denotes a fully satisfied existence found only in relationship with God who gives life. Jesus said in John 10:10, *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* For the one whose mind is set on the flesh, there is no life, only death.
- *“Peace” (v.6)* – In the Bible, “peace” indicates a binding together of what had been separated. It signifies the union we now have with God after being separated by our sin and the resulting inward harmony and tranquility we enjoy. Romans 5:1 says, *“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* There is no peace for the one whose mind is set on the flesh.

Discuss: In what ways have you experienced abundant life in Christ?

Discuss: In what ways have you experienced peace in Christ?

Discuss: How would you describe a life that is lived in alienation from God?

3. A Difference in Attitude Toward God

“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. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (v.7-8)

The mind that focuses on the flesh puts self above God – *“it does not submit to God’s law” (v.7)* – therefore, it is *“hostile to God” (v.7)* in its disregard for God’s law. Because it is selfish and self-reliant, the flesh-focused mind *“cannot please God” (v.8)*. If one lives for himself, he is not living for God.

Discuss: These questions can help us recognize if we are living for self instead of for God: 1) Do I welcome instruction from God’s Word (Ps.119:165)? 2) When the Holy Spirit convicts me, do I confess and repent or ignore Him (Jms.1:22)? 3) Do I tend to focus on being a better me or on knowing God better (Mat.6:33)? 4) Who has final authority over my life’s decisions (Lk.6:46)? 5) What delights me most (Gal.2:20)?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of the Book of Romans at www.enduringword.com

“What is the Conflict of Flesh vs. Spirit?” article at www.gotquestions.org

“How to Please God—13 Ways” article at www.crosswalk.com