

Your Mind and the Spirit

What does it mean to set your mind on the Spirit? How does this bring life and peace? How does the flesh war against the mind—and the Spirit? In this session, we will examine Paul's teaching about these questions in Romans 7-8 and consider the practical impact for ourselves and the people we minister to.

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Who is Sarx?

Greek "σαρξ" = the "flesh" or my "old nature"

His power is broken – Rom 6:6

But he still stays with me. Rom 7:18

He has strong opinions and tries to influence me. Rom 7:17

And he wants my mind to be his prisoner – Rom 7:24

When I let him control my thoughts I lose the power of the Spirit. I cannot please God. Rom 8:8

A closer look at the Battle

Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8:8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Who are the key players in this conflict?

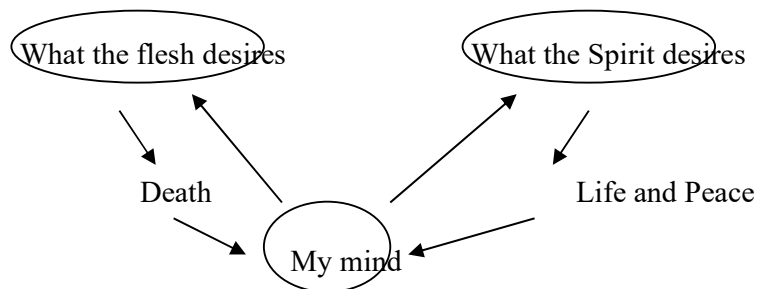
What is a key battleground?

What does the spirit want to do?

What do I need to do?

We cannot underestimate the importance of the mind in the work of the Holy Spirit. Whatever controls our mind will also control our attitudes and behavior. If we want the life and peace the Holy Spirit promises we must take responsibility for submitting our thoughts to him.

Illustration



Practical implications

1. The Holy Spirit will not take control of my thoughts if I am focused on what my old nature desires. He will not share a room with his enemy.
2. Without his help my old nature sarx will put me in bondage – even if I try to resist him.
3. I must realize that I am responsible for what goes on in my mind.
4. When I see the fruit of the sinful nature I need to purposefully place my mind on what the Spirit desires and let him control my thoughts.

Application

1. My mind and the teaching of the Spirit
2. My mind and the convicting of the Spirit
3. My mind and the leading of the Spirit
4. My mind and the empowering of the Spirit

Personal Response

Take a moment and listen to Sarx. What are some of the phrases that you hear often in your head from your sinful nature?

How does it impact you when you listen to his voice?

Have you ever tried to reason with Sarx? What is the outcome?

Now look at the things that Sarx said and turn your head. Ask God to speak to you through his Spirit in response to these statements. Write down what he says.

What is the nature of the Spirit's voice? How does it impact you when you set your mind on what he is saying?