

Prayer of the Week:

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Sixteen)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

**Spirit vs. Flesh****Romans 8:5-9 (NTE)**

August 23rd, 2020

Recap

Two weeks ago, we explored the tension that our bodies have been subject to death because of sin, but the Spirit of God lives in us bringing life - even to our mortal bodies. This reminded us of two things:

One, that a new way of life has been opened up to us; we can choose to live according to the Spirit inside of us.

Two, that God's redemptive plan for us isn't just to save our souls into a disembodied heaven, but to redeem our bodies as well.

This week, I want to look at another comparison Paul makes between the flesh and the spirit.

Flesh

When Paul using the word “flesh” in Romans, he IS NOT talking about our physicality. He is talking about our mortality.

He isn't talking about our physical bodies, but rather the sinful nature that has corrupted our flesh and made us subject to death.

Flesh, then, is a shorthand way of talking about a disposition or mindset set against God. But what kind of mindset are we talking about specifically? Here's how the Common English Bible translates this verse, *"The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death..."*

Jesus, who is God made flesh, shows us that God is self-giving love. Selfishness is contrary to the way of God, which is why Paul says a mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.

The flesh, ultimately, is a mindset of independence from God. A way of seeing myself and the world as being totally independent without the need for others or for God.

Only focusing on yourself without concern for the other will lead to death.

Spirit

Contrast this to life in the Spirit which leads to life and peace. Using mindsets as a helpful way to think about this; the mindset of the Spirit would be self-giving love.

The way we tend to think about love in our time and culture is in terms of benefit to self. We are happy to love someone or something or an organization as long as we get personal benefit from that relationship. But self-giving love is loving others even when it costs me something.

The scriptures say that when we live with a mindset of the Spirit leads to life and peace.

The life he is talking about the resurrection life.

The peace he is talking about is union with God. The flesh is hostile toward God because it is turned in on itself, but the Spirit leads to peace through union with God. When we live according to the ways of self-sacrificial love we are walking in step with the Spirit of God.

Here's the good news: You are Spirit-filled people! Those who have placed their trust in Jesus have been given the Spirit of God and can now live in the ways of love empowered by the Spirit. We can rise above narratives of rights of self and instead care for neighbor. We can see right through "us and them" rhetoric and see the precious value of the other. We can expose the false narratives of blame and shame and seek the truth.

We can do these things as long as we humble ourselves before God and let the ways of the flesh die so that we can live according to the Spirit of God. May it be so for each of us.