

Title: Which Mindset?

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Text: Romans 8:5-11

The Two Mindsets

World Series Game 7:

It was a game that seemed to want to go on forever – like the 108 years the Chicago Cubs had waited to win a World Series. The Cubs jumped to an early lead, but then gave back the runs in the later innings. At the end of 9, the score was all tied up: 6-6.

This was not the way it was supposed to be – for Cubs fans at least. They had fallen behind 3 games to 1, but they had fought back, defying the odds, to force a Game 7. And then when they had Game 7 – and the championship – in the bag, they had let the Indians come back to life. With the last out of the 9th inning the Cleveland home crowd was going crazy. Cubs fans were staring in stunned silence at the scoreboard. A steady rain began to fall.

The umpires told the ground crew to roll out the infield tarp to protect the field, and the two teams retired to their respective locker rooms.

Rain Delay:

So what do you do with an unexpected rain delay after playing your heart out for 9 innings, only to see your championship slipping away? One player knew *exactly* what to do. His name was Jason Heyward. Heyward was not a big talker; he was generally happy to let other team veterans take the lead. But tonight he had something to say.

Heyward herded the entire team into a tiny weight room. No coaches, just players. Then Heyward made his speech. Teammate David Ross summed it up this way:

"He just said, 'We're the best team in baseball for a reason. Continue to play our game, support one another. These are your brothers here, fight for your brothers, lift them up, continue to stay positive. We've been doing this all year so continue to be us.'"

The rain stopped and the game resumed. A re-energized Cubs team went to the plate, scored 2 runs, and won the World Series.

Jason Heyward understood the power of having the right mindset. He had felt the air go out of the balloon on the field and in the dugout as the Cubs' lead slipped away, and with it their hopes and dreams for a championship. He could see the looks in the eyes of his fellow players. He could tell what they were thinking – and feeling. And he knew that the only cure was a different mindset.

The Two Mindsets:

Paul says that the same is true in every area of our life. He spells out for us the two mindsets that compete for our thoughts and feelings:

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Romans 8:5-6 NIV [amended]

*Those who live **according to the flesh** have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in **accordance with the Spirit** have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

*The **mindset** of the **flesh** is death, but the **mindset** of the Spirit is life and peace.*

Two mindsets: one is governed by the malware of Sin. The other is governed by the Spirit of the God who created us. One brings defeat and death. The other brings life and peace.

And like the soaking wet, worn out, and discouraged players huddled in tiny weight room under the stands, we must decide which mindset will be ours each and every day. Will we let our thoughts and behaviors default to the old broken ways of seeing the world? Will we let ourselves be enslaved by the malware of Sin once again? Or will we allow God's Spirit to energize us with His creative and restoring power? Life or death. It's as simple as that.

The Flesh Mindset

Hostile to God:

Paul tells us that when the malware of Sin is in control and we are operating under the "mindset of the flesh," we have a mindset that is "hostile to God."

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Romans 8:7a NIV [amended]

*The mindset of the flesh is **hostile to God**;*

We see God as the Enemy. Like Adam and Eve, we hide from Him. We blame Him for our problems. We see Him as a threat to our autonomy and freedom. We refuse His offer of love and forgiveness.

Unable to submit to God's Law:

Paul explains the *reason* for this hostility when he says:

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Romans 8: 7b NIV [amended]

*...**because** it does not submit to God's law, **because** it cannot.*

The little word "**because**" is omitted in the NIV. But Paul put that word in this verse *two times* to show us *why* our Sin-controlled mindset is *hostile to God*.

Imagine, for example, that you have a computer with an Operating System that has been taken over by a computer virus. The Operating System can no longer do what it was meant to do. It can't submit to the design and purpose of its creator. It is weakened and corrupted. But suppose the malware's real purpose is to *use your computer and its weakened Operating System to spread itself to other servers and computers*? Now we're talking about something that is positively malicious and hostile to the computer world.

Not submitting to God's Law means that you *are submitting to Sin's rule*. There's no neutrality in this spiritual war for your heart and mind!

Unable to please God:

Paul sums up what it means to be governed by the mindset of the flesh by saying:

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Romans 8:8 NIV

*Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot **please** God.*

When Paul speaks of “pleasing God,” he is using the language of coming to God with an acceptable, or “pleasing” offering. Coming to God with a “pleasing” offering meant entering into a loving and healing relationship with God. It meant that you would be part of God’s People, God’s family. It meant that you were truly living according to God’s Operating System. But if the malware of Sin is running the show, none of that can happen.

Life and Peace!

God’s Home:

Thankfully, there is another way. Paul writes:

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Romans 8:9 NIV

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

Again, Paul is using the language of the Temple or the Tent in the wilderness where God chose to dwell among His people. But now, you and I are the Temple instead of an earthly dwelling. This is what it means to have the Mindset of the Spirit.

In other words, Paul is not talking about something that we make happen on our own. He’s not saying that we have to change ourselves or be more disciplined. He’s not talking about turning over a new leaf. He is saying that the great Creator God comes to live right inside us and that God establishes His Operating System in our hearts and minds.

God’s Life:

And when the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, we experience life as it was meant to be:

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Romans 8:10 NIV

But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

“Righteousness” refers to the Final Verdict that God renders for you and me. Paul is telling us that the Final Verdict of Not Guilty has already been decided, based upon what Jesus did when He died for us on the Cross. That verdict is our new reality and means that we can now be pleasing to God with His Spirit living inside us.

Paul told us that the mindset of the Spirit is “life and peace.” Now he tells us that is precisely God’s Spirit living in us who gives us new Life. What’s more, that same Spirit guarantees that even our own Death will be undone by God’s New Creation Life:

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Romans 8:11 NIV

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 because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Nothing can stand in the way of God’s Spirit making us brand new: not the malware of Sin; not even Sin’s most drastic consequence – Death. We are God’s New Creation!

Life and Peace!

Huddled in a tiny weight room under the stadium, Jason Heyward offered his 24 teammates a stark choice: win or lose the World Series. He wasn’t telling them how to hold the bat or which pitch to swing at. He wasn’t reminding them of the three errors they had made that had help squander their lead. He wasn’t singling out any one player to be the star of the show.

Instead, he challenged them to *think differently*. He challenged them to step into the mindset that had brought them to the World Series and had helped them come back from being down 3 games to 1. He challenged them to see that they could win this whole thing if they left their defeatist mindset in that weight room and played the 10th inning with their championship mindset. And that’s precisely what they did.

So which mindset are you going to choose? It’s the most important choice you will make – today and every day. Which spirit will live inside you, calling the shots? The spirit of Sin or the Holy Spirit? It’s up to you.

A long time ago Moses put the choice before Israel:

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Deuteronomy 30:15 NIV

"See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction."

Paul presents us with the same choice:

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Romans 8:6 NIV [amended]

The mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace.

It's up to you

“Which Mindset?” Group Notes:

Getting Started:

- Greet group members and thank them for coming.
- Open with prayer.

Ice Breaker:

- Share an unexpected act of kindness that you experienced recently.
- What did it feel like?
- What did you do in response?

The Two Mindsets

- In the letter that Paul wrote to Christians in Galatia (now part of southern Turkey) he challenges them to choose the Mindset of the Spirit instead of the Mindset of the “Flesh”:
 - *Galatians 5:16-18 NIV*
 - *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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 do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*
- The two Mindsets are utterly opposed to each other. One brings God’s peace and order into our lives; the other brings chaos and disorder. One restores us to our God-given purpose and glory; the other leads us ever deeper into the slavery of Sin.
- The Mindset of the Spirit frees us from the guilty verdict of the Law. Remember: the Law is God’s Operating System for humanity. When we are living according to the Mindset of the Flesh, we think and behave in ways that are contrary to God’s Operating System – God’s Law. But when we live according to the Spirit, God’s “Not Guilty” verdict through Jesus’ death for us sets us free from the Law’s condemnation.

The Acts of the Flesh:

- So what does the Mindset of the Flesh produce in our lives? Paul spells out the results of this way of thinking and living;
 - *Galatians 5:19-21 NIV*

- *The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*
- Sexual sin, the occult, hostility toward others, and substance abuse: all of these negative behaviors and attitudes were part of Paul's world, just as they are a part of our own.
- Going down this path means missing out on God's kingdom and not being part of his New Creation.

The fruit of the Spirit:

- What a contrast when we read his description of what happens when we live out the Mindset of the Spirit:
 - *Galatians 5:22-23 NIV*
 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*
- When Paul says that there is "no law" against these fruits of the Spirit he is saying that these attitudes and behaviors *fulfill* the Law in our lives. This is what God's Operating System looks like in real life.

Crucifying the flesh:

- So how do we make the switch from the Mindset of the Flesh to the Mindset of the Spirit?
 - *Galatians 5:24-25 NIV*
 - *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*
- The old mindset doesn't just go quietly away! It needs to be put to death. Paul uses the strongest language possible to describe this rejection of our old, Sin-infested life: Crucifixion.
 - This is what Jesus did for us when He died on the Cross: He crucified "the flesh" on our behalf.
 - We crucify our sinful nature when we choose to identify with his death for us.

- And we live out that decision by asking the Spirit to give us the power to say “No” to the old way of doing things when it tries to take over in our lives.
- Remember: it’s a daily discipline. Paul calls it “keeping in step with the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is leading us on our Exodus journey into God’s New Creation. Every step counts!

Prayer time:

- Every one of us has at least one area in our lives where we struggle to “crucify the flesh.”
- In our prayer time, encourage them to pray for victory for each other.