

19. The comparisons we must heed

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My daughter once had a gerbil named "Squeakers" when Michelle was a little child. Squeakers lived in an empty glass aquarium that was covered with a wire mesh. Actually he had it made in the shade. He had all the food and water he wanted and wood pieces and paper towel tubes to chew, and a wheel to spin all his heart desires. But there was one thing he really wanted – freedom. He wanted to be out and run around as he wished.

At that time, my daughter didn't have a cat, but for the sake of the story, let's imagine she also had a cat. I am sure that that cat would sit and peek around the corner away from the gerbil's aquarium and anxiously wait for that gerbil to make an escape of his life. While the gerbil is busy looking for a way to get out, the cat is licking his lips and moves his tail side to side slowly. If we can hear what the cat is thinking, it would be something like this: "Oh yes, little gerbil, you should be freed. You should come out of that aquarium... into my mouth."

If the truth be known, all the people in this world would live like that gerbil. Even though God graciously provides what we need, we constantly look for something different. We are not grateful people, period. If our parents didn't teach us to say, "Thank you," we would have never said those words to anyone. Because we would expect others do everything the way we want all the time. Whether you'd like to admit it or not, it is true. That is what the carnal part of us would do.

Satan waits for us to step out of God's protection and His will so that he can nail us as that cat would do to the gerbil.

This morning as we study the second portion of chapter 8 of the Book of Romans, we will notice several comparisons apostle Paul makes between what spiritual person and carnal fleshly person would do. I believe that the Lord has a valuable lesson for us to heed.

A. *IN THE FLESH* vs. *IN THE SPIRIT*

Romans 8:5 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, the things of the Spirit.

Can you guess the name of the most watched TV prime time program among the born-again Christians in America? "Desperate Wives" by ABC. It is one of the most raunchy and immoral TV programs there is as you can tell by the title. If you've been watching it, let me ask you this, "Would you watch it if Jesus is sitting next to you?" If your answer is, "No," why would you watch it when the Holy Spirit is living within you?

How can you be different from the carnal world when you are watching and enjoying the kind of movies and TV programs that encourage ungodly lifestyle or demonic things? Do they edify your spirit while you are watching those immoral programs or do they fan your carnal desires? You may say, "They are just movies and TV programs, they are not real. You are taking all the fun out of life, man." If encouraging your worldly carnal desires is considered as fun, then you are the ones the first half of v5 is talking about.

Apostle Paul gives an easy way for us to determine if we walk in the Spirit or walk in the flesh – to simply see where our mind is set. The mind is the strategically important battleground where the flesh and the Spirit fight.

Unbeliever does not have the Spirit of God and lives in the flesh and for the flesh. His mind is centered on the things that satisfy the fleshly desires. But the Christian has the Spirit of God within and lives in an entirely new and different level. His mind is and should be fixed on the things of the Spirit.

This does not mean that the unsaved person never does anything good, or that the believer never does anything bad. When unbeliever does good things, he or she does them for their own satisfaction. It means that the bent of their lives is different. One lives for the flesh, the other lives for the Spirit to please the Father in heaven like Jesus did.

B. DEATH vs. LIFE AND PEACE

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

If a person is not a born-again Christian, he or she is alive physically, but dead spiritually. The inner man is dead toward God and does not respond to the things of the Holy Spirit. He may be moral, and even religious. But he lacks spiritual life. He needs the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

If an unbeliever insists on his own way until his last breath, he will face eternal separation from God in hell. While he is alive, he wants to be away from God, so He simply honors and confirms his wish and allows him to be away from God for eternity.

C. WAR AGAINST GOD

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

As some of you know, my wife Karen and I went to Flagstaff for the AZ Calvary Chapel Pastors and Leaders Prayer Meeting that was held on last Tuesday. While we were there, we also visited Grand Canyon. It was the first time for me since I came to America 27 years ago. It was beautiful. I was awestruck by the creation of God.

We had fun. We rappelled down to the bottom of the canyon, we got on hang gliders and flew around the canyon like a pair of eagles in serenity. We jumped on a raft and floated down the Colorado River. Yes, I did all of those in my day dream. What I actually did was, looking down and took some photos and said, "Wow, it is a big hole. OK, let's go back to our air-conditioned hotel room, honey."

All the handouts from the Grand Canyon Visitors Center that are published by the U.S. Department of Interior state that the Grand Canyon was started 40 million years ago by evolution. The world is doing everything within their power to ignore and stand against what God has done for them.

The last thing any unbeliever wants is being subjected to the Lord. That is the very reason why they deny the truth of Christianity and make up their own religions by using portions of Christianity to authenticate their outward appearances. The flesh and carnal people battle against God, because they do not want to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are enmity against God.

In our study of Romans 7, we have seen that the old nature rebels against God and will not submit to God's Law. Those who have trusted Christ enjoy "peace with God" and "peace in God," while the unbelievers are at war with God.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Some of you may have seen this simple phrase, "Know God, know peace; no God, no peace." It is so true.

Isaiah 48:22 "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked."

D. PLEASING SELF vs. PLEASING GOD

Romans 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

I have known many alcoholics from my relatives and through ministries. Some readily admit that they are alcoholics, but some deny it and even say that they can quit it anytime. They don't want to admit that they are addicted and slaves to alcohol.

It is the same with unbelievers, either they don't know that they are slaves to satan and their carnal desires or they know it but they don't want to be freed up because they like being slaved by them. Once we, too, were until the Lord Jesus saved us.

This world is filled with the stuff that encourage us to please ourselves more than pleasing the Lord. The mankind has a tendency to forget why we were created in the first place. The Bible makes it clear:

Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. KJV

To be "in the flesh" means to be lost, outside Christ. Unbeliever lives to please himself and rarely if ever thinks about pleasing God. The root of sin is selfishness – my will, rather than God's will.

Speaking of sin, I'd like you to know the definition of sin that comes from the old English. Sin is defined as 'missing the mark'. The Bible says that we were created for God's pleasure, and if we are not doing what we are supposed to do by God, we are missing the mark. In other words, anything other than pleasing the Lord by bringing glory to Him is a sin.

The word 'pleasure' in Rev 4:11 is 'thelema' in Greek. It means "what one wishes or has determined shall be done". In other words, what the Lord wants from creating us is for us ultimately.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Don't think that God is using you and me like His toy as Oprah Winfrey preaches the repackaged New Age garbage to her audience.

Those who are in the flesh cannot understand and please God.

John 3:18-21 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their

deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

E. LIFE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Life in God's Spirit, however, stands in stark contrast to the life of the flesh. Not only that, but also we have the Spirit of the Living God, the very God Himself lives in all the born-again believers' hearts. That is the evidence of the born-again Christian. In other words, your body becomes the very temple of the Holy spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

The power of the Holy Spirit who empowers us is far more powerful than anything this world has including satan himself.

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Even though the body is destined to die because of sin (unless, of course, the Lord returns), the Spirit gives life to that body today so that we may serve God. If we should die before the rapture happens, the body will one day be raised from the dead, because the Holy Spirit has sealed each believer.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

What a difference it makes in our lives when the Holy Spirit lives in us! We experience new life, it even shows in our physical bodies. The people around us would even notice when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Life in Christ is abundant life.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

If you are a born-again believer, yet you are continuously dabbling in worldly temptations and dancing in satan's tunes, I ask you to consider carefully what you are doing.

It doesn't please the Lord and you are giving opportunities to the mockers of God to blaspheme our God's name because of your carnal activities – whether you are flirting with someone who is not your spouse, even a full blown adultery. Or it could be drinking alcohol or participating dirty jokes, or using the Lord's name in vain. The list can go on.

You may not even do any of those, but you can be far from God. Because you don't make God as your first priority of your life. All you can think of it is how much you

are making, how much return on investment in your stock portfolio. Then you have an idol. Why should you miss out the abundant life Jesus promises because of your own selfishness? Stop, turn your heart back to Him. You will never regret it.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) We can have a carnally minded life or the Holy Spirit filled life on earth. But the end result is a heaven and hell difference, literally.

2) We are created by God to bring glory to Him with our lives. Each time we make a decision, let's ask ourselves if we are doing just that.