

THE CARNAL MIND

By Bill Irby

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Paul wrote, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be" (Romans 8:6-7). Those who follow, even at a distance, the doctrines of Mr. Calvin, take these verses as proof that man, totally depraved from birth, cannot think a spiritual thought unless acted on personally by the Holy Spirit. This is a neatly drawn doctrine, having as its primary disadvantage the fact that it is not true.

We are not born sinners; we become sinners. We chose to sin and thus allow concerns of the flesh to control our minds. It is interesting to note that the word translated "mind" here has in it (according to Thayer and Bauer) the idea of the content of the mind or the way of thinking employed by the mind. So it is that we understand the verses as saying that a person who centers his mind on fleshly (carnal) things is not able to properly contemplate spiritual matters.

Of this there is no doubt. I will illustrate with an extreme example. I have in the years of my work had numerous occasions to talk with inebriated men and women about spiritual matters. I have in those instances attempted, politely, to decline the opportunity and to make an appointment for a later and more sober time. This is because folks under the influence cannot make the judgments and decisions required for spiritual progress and growth. Such folks will promise you and the Lord anything and everything, only to forget it all the next day.

So it is with other manifestations of carnality. Alcohol inhibits the ability to be spiritually minded, but so does greed and envy. Jealousy is a fleshly emotion, a feeling that comes up out of a mind that cannot see beyond the here and now. It goes without saying that hatred ruins any chance for a woman or man to be spiritual. Just as it is that a person must be sober to be spiritual, a person must repent of these attitudinal sins before spiritual growth can occur.

The carnal mind is also a mind so independent that it will not even allow God to rule it. We see it in the expression above, "Not subject to the law of God." Such a mind says "I" and "me" all the time. "I want this and that." "No one is going to tell me what to do." The spiritual mind recognizes that there is an authority above our own self, and that authority is God.

Now, remember this: A spiritual mind is not something impressed upon you miraculously by God. No, it is something we may choose to have when we choose to follow God's Will revealed as it is in His Word.