

Romans 8:5-11 NIV  
"Are you really alive?"

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. (6) The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; (7) the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. (8) Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

(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.

(10) But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. (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.

**This text informs us about mind-set.**

**Two different conditions exist.**

- One leads to misery and death.

- **The other brings joyful life**

Our mind-set affects our bodies; it also determines our eternal future.

**We wisely consider which mind-set guides us.**

**Some wag asked:**

**"In what section will you spend eternity—  
smoking or non-smoking?"**

This might not be an over simplification.

**We know our inner conflicts.**

In countless situations, we battle in our minds.

Should I marry this guy?

Should I have the doctor pull the plug on my loved one?

Should I always wear a mask?

How should I deal with obstinate people?



**Every war exacts a toll.**

Only six months ago, corporations and churches waged major battles over empowering women.

**Now two other wars preoccupy most folks;**

- **First how do we conquer Covid-19?**
- **Second, and related in numerous ways: How do we resolve simmering passions that led to this country's Civil War 16 decades ago?**

**Mind wars take heavy tolls.**

They cause families fights.

We sometimes war with neighbors.

## Conflicts arise with our coworkers.

**W.S. Gilbert teamed up with Arthur Sullivan to write famous operettas like H.M.S. Pinafore, Pirates of Penzance, and The Mikado. In another operetta, one of Gilbert's characters said:**

**I often think it's comical  
How nature always does contrive  
That every boy and every gal,  
That's born into the world alive,  
Is either a little Liberal,  
Or else a little Conservative.<sup>1</sup>**

**Gilbert, who wrote the lyrics, and Sullivan, who wrote the music, hated each other.**

**Though they collaborated for years Gilbert and Sullivan remained at war.**

**History records business wars, family wars, political wars, border wars, and world wars.**

**Yet no conflict equals the war within—the mind-battle.**

**What or who is winning your mind-war?**

**Most of us like to think: "We have it together."**

**The problem lies with others.**

**We know what we're doing."**

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<sup>1</sup> W.S. Gilbert, Iolanthe, 1882

**If we want peace and want to resolve our mind-war, the Bible gives clear indicators to help us see whether we're winning or losing the mind-war.**

**The first clue centers on those strong impulses within us.**



**Those urges often lead to anger, gossip, alcohol, pornography, lust, worry, lying, or the need to dominate others.**

**If you struggle to control any of these bents, you know the mind-control battle.**

The English criminal Jonathon Wild (1682-1725), who masterminded a huge robbery and fencing operation, was literally an outlaw until the instant he died. Climbing the gallows at Tyburn, Wild deftly picked the pocket of the priest administering the last rites and was triumphantly waving his trophy to the crowd below even as his unrepentant neck snapped.<sup>2</sup>

**Only you and the Lord know the yearnings with which you might struggle.**

**Here's the second clue.**

**How would you answer this question?**

**"Do you feel perfectly in control of your life?"**

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<sup>2</sup> *The Ultimate Reference Book*, p 375.

**Those who assume they're in control may be losing their war.**

**Why do I say this?**

Because Jesus himself faced daily mind-control tests.

Until he died on the cross, Jesus' mind-struggle tests continued.

**Do you wonder, "Bob, are you sure about that?"**

**Here's the evidence:**

In the Garden of Gethsemane, at the close of his ministry, Jesus repeatedly asked the Father to be spared going to the cross.

**"Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me."**

**Jesus' war intensified just before he died:**

**"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

These facts show that Jesus battled with mind-control his entire life.

**If Jesus grappled in that way, does that mean that we don't have a chance?**

**Jesus won his battle.**

**Jesus never yielded to any of those urges.**

We can win, too, but we must know how Jesus won.

**Do you feel as if you are winning or losing?**

**If you are losing, can you turn the war around?**

**We are in a life and death struggle.**

**Our text says: "The mind of the sinful person is death."**

Signs of losing include: grumpiness, giving in to fear and worry, selfishness, self-centeredness, being miserable and depressed.

**Losing the war means death in this life and death in the age to come.**

**Winning the battle brings a different future.**

**"The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."**

**We need to know what we're doing.**

No good general goes into battle without knowing who the enemy is, where the enemy is, and the weapons the enemy uses.

In the mind-control war, we need to know who the enemy is, where he is, and what he does.

On these details many church folks seem clueless.

I was at Dodger stadium in Los Angeles one afternoon in the 70s. In those days, the Dodgers consistently vied for the National League title. That beautiful day about 50,000 people sat in the stands. The Good Year blimp appeared above. They housed the airship at a hangar southeast of downtown LA. Norma and I saw it often.



A young man behind us said, "There's the blimp. I wonder why it's out. It doesn't usually come out unless there's a big event. I wonder if something is happening at the Coliseum."

At first I thought the young man was joking. Later as I heard the conversation between him and his friend, it became evident the kid was serious.

The young man was attending a big event and seemed not to know it.

We're involved in a colossal event and few have any idea of its implications.

What's going on here?

As our text says:

**"The mind of sinful person is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."**

Many assume that we're comprised of two natures, a good side and a bad side.

They see it as the battle between flesh and spirit—the evil flesh fighting against the good spirit.

The Bible never says that.

The battle within us—is part of a war between our minds and God's Spirit.

- Our selfish ego stands on one side.
- God's pure, loving, unselfish Spirit stands on the other side.

**Do God's Word and Spirit control your mind? Or do you insist on doing as you see fit?**

**Remember: The mind of sinful person is death.**

Sinful minds often put us out of sorts with our loved ones.

We learn this truth early in life.

Conflict with God and other people taxes us far worse than what the IRS does.

Emotions affect our bodies, so our stomachs churn as if filled with rancid, pasty tomato sauce and we get monster migraines.

Bad relationships affect our confidence:

We become more tentative than a cat at a dog show; more negative than a losing politician.

Sin and quarreling affect our nights, too.



**We can't sleep. Down pillows feel like rocks.**

**We toss and turn more than the first 100 pancakes at a Boy Scout breakfast.**

Selfish acts also irritate our consciences.

**Do you remember how your conscience worked the first time you wronged someone, or did something illegal?**

**Our mindset affects how we handle the outcomes of our wrong-doing.**

- **Your choice may determine whether you'll be happy or miserable.**
- **Your stamina, ambition, and energy, how you get along with others, and your lifespan may also be affected.**
- **And whether you'll feel lonely, rejected, and angry.**
- **And decides your future with God.**

**Let's go back to point when we do something that makes us feel remorseful and guilty.**

- **Perhaps we lied.**
  - **Took something that didn't belong to us.**
- **Maybe we destroyed someone's possessions.**
  - **Perhaps our gossiping ruined another's reputation.**

**Living with the effects of wrong make a lousy life.**

**The sinful mind is death because our conscience actively works to condemn us.**

**We shouldn't overlook the guilt we feel because of our transgression.**

**Some folks who try to hide bad behavior become belligerent and defensive.**

**Wrong actions eventually make us feel unworthy and depressed.**

**That's Satan's specialty.**

**His name means—accuser.**

**Unforgiven actions keep accusing us, telling us we're unworthy.**

**Sometimes we feel sick, at times unworthy, we waste away.**



**In Psalm 32: 3, David described what happened to him when he didn't acknowledge his sin:**

**“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.”**

**Healing begins when we confess our wrongs to God, accept Christ's pardon, and live by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.**

**David wrote, “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.”<sup>3</sup>**

**Lawrence Richards pointed out a truth concerning the words “forgive and cover.”<sup>4</sup>**

**A Hebrew word “Nasa” means:**

**“lift up,” “carry or support.”**

**“In three different ways,” Richard says, “the Old Testament links ‘Nasa’ with sin.”**

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 32:1 NIV

<sup>4</sup> *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p -289

- (1) By their actions, human beings “take up” sin or iniquity.
- (2) The sinner takes up guilt or punishment for his/her sin.
- (3) God can “take up” and carry away that sin.

See how this works in real life.

**Stage 1 – We “take up” (Nasa) sin.**

Say that I visit Doc and Betty. They leave the room momentarily and Doc leaves his wallet on the table. His wallet appears to be fat with money. So I say to myself, “Doc has all of this cash. He’s rolling in dough. The last time I met him downtown, he avoided me. I’m short on cash and he won’t miss it, so I lift a few hundred from his wallet.” That’s the justification we spoke of earlier. So I “lift up” Doc’s money and carry it.

**Stage 2 – I discover that Doc’s dough gets increasingly heavy. At first, it’s no heavier than paper. Yet after I lift it, guilt weighs on even before Doc misses it.”**

I also sense his and Betty’s pain and my conscience bothers me.

H.L. Mencken said, “Conscience: the inner voice which warns us that someone may be looking.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> H.L. Mencken, (1880-1956) *Little Book in C Major*

**Conscience is more than fear we might be caught. God built the mind-pain mechanism *conscience* into us to let us know we’re damaging our minds. In the same way that nerve endings tell us we’re damaging our bodies, consciences tell us of wounds to our psyches.**



I’ll likely begin to feel unworthy and that God is punishing me for things not connected to Doc’s wallet.

I become grouchy, irritable and depressed, maybe even sick.

Friends to whom I admit my lifting say:

“Stop worrying. Everyone’s doing that now. Use a few sleeping tablets, and take these uppers tomorrow.”

Doc’s money gets heavier and my life more complicated.

I’m constantly taking up (Nasa) and carrying my guilt.

**Stage 3 – I confess my sin to Doc and return his money.**

Then I confess my wrong to God, accept Jesus’ forgiveness, and let God’s Word and Spirit guide me.

Notice how Isaiah 53:4 shows us this theme of  
“lifting up and carrying” in God’s forgiveness:

**“Surely he (Christ) took up (Nasa) our  
infirmities and carried our sorrows . . .”**

**It doesn’t matter what we’ve done.**

If we want change in our lives, the Lord  
stands ready to help.

**Does heavy guilt burden you?**

**Are you tired of carrying it?**

**Confess it to God.**

Quit doing wrong, and the Lord  
will gladly carry the load for you.

**Jesus already carried your wrong to the cross and  
will gladly lift your burden from your shoulders.**

**Accept Christ’s forgiveness.**

**Live according to God’s Word and Spirit.**

You’ll find peace of mind, and life.

**“The mind of sinful person is death, but the mind  
controlled by the Spirit is life and peace . . .”**



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